Key characteristics and attitudes of airline passengers, with particular emphasis upon the low-cost sector: implications for pre-trip decision-making and airline choice

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KEY CHARACTERISTICS AND ATTITUDES OF AIRLINE PASSENGERS, WITH PARTICULAR EMPHASIS UPON THE LOW-COST SECTOR: IMPLICATIONS FOR PRE-TRIP DECISION-MAKING AND AIRLINE CHOICE

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The next time you attend a polite dinner party try this simple technique for a lively evening: ask for views on Ryanair, then sit back, relax, and enjoy the vitriol. Even the sort of people who are barely aware of the existence of economy-class cabins will weigh in with an opinion

(Calder, 2010)

Abstract

The inception of the low-cost carrier (LCC) into the UK in the early 1990s revolutionised passenger aviation. The now saturated short-haul market finds airlines increasingly manipulative of their business model, seeking to further differentiate their product offering from their rivals. With an abundance of airlines to choose from, the consumer is faced with what at times can be a complex decision-making process as to which airline to fly with.

This research seeks through empirical research to identify key characteristics and attitudes of airline passengers (with particular emphasis upon LCCs) and the implications for pre-trip decision-making and airline choice.

The study begins with an overview of the airline business models that dominate the UK passenger aviation sector, before introducing Birmingham Airport (BHX) as a case study airport on which part of the main findings of this research are based. A detailed literature review then seeks to offer insight to attitude formation and the decision-making process that facilitates behaviour, before examining the implications for airline choice.

The fieldwork was undertaken in two stages with passenger decision-making explored through structured-interviews conducted with passengers in the airside departure lounges at BHX (*n* = 490). In addition, the attitudes of airline passengers were explored using an online attitudinal survey, distributed internationally to a self-selected sample (*n* = 307).

The quantitative analysis of both strands of research suggests key differences exist in the decision-making processes and research methods employed by passengers' of airlines operating different business models, but particularly for passengers of LCCs. Both socio-demographic and situational factors are identified as influential in decision-making and choice processes. Attitudes, based upon actual experience and social representation are also considered significant. The findings present a classification of airline passengers based upon the primary research and suggest further quantitative research should explore decision-making over time and in different situational contexts.

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For my friends and extended family, life can begin again! Your support and encouragement have been invaluable and helped me through this process.

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Last but not least, to my mum and dad, for whom there are too few words to ever express how I feel. This thesis is for you.

List of abbreviations

ACE	Arrecife Airport
ACRP	Airport Cooperative Research Program
AGP	Malaga Airport
APD	Air Passenger Duty
AMS	Amsterdam Schipol Airport
ASA	Advertising Standards Agency
ATOL	Air Travel Organisers Licensing
BA	British Airways
BD	British Midland International (BMI)
BE	Flybe
BFS	Belfast International Airport
BHD	George Best Belfast City Airport
BHX	Birmingham Airport
BIA	Birmingham International Airport
BJV	Bodrum Airport
BMI	British Midland International (BD)
BRS	Bristol Airport
BRU	Brussels Airport
BTA	Business travel agent
BWCTO	Birmingham Welcome Centre and Ticket Office
CAA	Civil Aviation Authority
CAPA	Centre for Asia Pacific Aviation
CD	Compact Disc

CDG	Paris-Charles de Gaulle Airport
CWL	Cardiff International Airport
DfT	Department for Transport
DIY	Do-it-yourself
DLM	Dalaman Airport
DMU	Decision making unit
DP	Air 2000
DUB	Dublin Airport
DXB	Dubai International Airport
e-SQ	e-service quality
EDI	Edinburgh Airport
EMA	East Midlands Airport
EPA	Evaluation, Potency, Activity
EU	European Union
FFP	Frequent flyer program
FOC	Need to add in FOC (Free of Charge)
FR	Ryanair
FRA	Frankfurt Airport
FSC	Full service carrier
FUE	Fuerteventura Airport
GDS	Global distribution system
GLA	Glasgow Airport
HAM	Hamburg Airport
HE	Higher education
HER	Heraklion Airport

IATA	International Air Transport Association
IBZ	Ibiza Airport
IPS	International Passenger Survey
JAL	Japan Airlines
JER	Jersey Airport
kms	Kilometres
K-W	Kruskal-Wallis test
LCA	Larnaca International Airport
LCC	Low cost carrier
LDY	City of Derry (Eglinton) Airport
LGW	London Gatwick Airport
LHR	London Heathrow Airport
LPA	Las Palmas Airport
LX	Swiss International Air Lines
MAA	Madras International Airport
MAN	Manchester Airport
NATS	National Air Traffic Services
NEC	National Exhibition Centre
OFT	Office of Fair Trading
ONS	Office for National Statistics
PASW	Predictive Analytics SoftWare
PC	Personal computer
PEK	Beijing Capital International Airport
PFS	Paphos International Airport
SK	Scandinavian Airlines (SAS)

SN	Brussels Airlines
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
SSH	Sharm el Sheikh International Airport
TFS	Tenerife South Airport
TRB	Transportation Research Board
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UK	United Kingdom
VFR	Visit friends and relatives
VZ	MyTravel Airways
WTP	Willingness to pay
WW	bmibaby
ZB	Monarch

List of figures

List of tables

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction

1.1 Chapter introduction

This opening chapter seeks to establish the purpose and underlying motivations of the study, drawing upon various facets of life to explore the wider context in which airline passengers make travel decisions. Section 1.2 offers a general overview of the instrumental changes and key milestones that have occurred within the aviation sector within recent years, with particular emphasis upon the UK market. Section 1.3 considers the various terms used to define the new breed of carrier that has come to pass, before section 1.4 offers insight to the changing nature of the postmodern society in which we now live. Here key social changes will be identified and the role that work and leisure now assume is discussed. The research aim and objectives will be established in 1.5, before a structure of the thesis is presented in section 1.6.

1.2 Liberating aviation

Whilst it is not the intention to provide a detailed historical background of the liberalisation movement that occurred in air transport, its importance is deemed a necessary prerequisite in formulating a discussion that explores the characteristics and attitudes held by airline passengers. Lawton (2002), Doganis (2006) and Flenskov (2005) provide detailed historical viewpoints of the processes that led to the liberalisation of aviation, noting amongst other earlier key milestones, a turning point to have occurred in 1984 when the UK and Netherlands set an agreement to deregulate the services between the two countries. This initial step as Doganis (2006) pertains, led to multiple designations of airlines by each country.

In his work Doganis develops a critical line of thought, suggesting that despite progress made within the new-market bilaterals of the 1980s, many flaws still existed. The changes failed to fully liberalise the aviation market and the traveller was left with the realisation that they were still at a disadvantage in not being able to travel to certain destinations due to a limited range of services. Furthermore, the market protected high cost inefficient carriers and excluded low cost competitors. Thus in response to public protest and government intervention, the years that followed liberalisation revolutionised the air transport industry. In more recent times, led by the US, many European countries have moved towards ‘open-skies’ agreements, but as opposed to operating bilateral agreements like the US, the European market has pursued multilateral agreements in order to achieve further deregulation (Doganis, 2006).

The Department for Transport (DfT) and Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) consider that the structure of the aviation industry pre-liberalisation was rigid and inflexible, allowing inefficient carriers to survive and discouraged innovation and efficiency. The DfT (2003) recognise that liberalisation brought the air traveller new and additional services. Lawton (2002) however notes that some countries have not witnessed such success, thus failing to preclude barriers to air traffic movement. Only recently have countries such as within Asia taken steps to remove such barriers.

In addition to market deregulation, Schnell (2003) and Taneja (2004) consider a number of additional factors to have contributed to the impetus felt by airlines to reconsider their business models, citing a slow down in the economy, technological development and increasing transparency of fares through online retailing to name but a few. The late 1990s and early 2000s also brought with them the fall out from a global recession and the aftermath of 9/11.

Some ten years on, the situation has evolved full circle with airlines bearing the brunt of yet another global recession, but with the additional burden of increased pressures from the environment itself. Most notably heavy snow forced the closure of nearly all UK airports for several days throughout November and December 2010, whilst the eruption the Icelandic volcano Eyjafjallajoekull in April 2010 and the Puyehue-Cordon-Caulle volcanic eruption in Chile in June 2011, led to an unprecedented closure of UK and

South Pacific airspace at a reported cost to airlines of €1.3 billion (NATS, 2010; BBC, 2011; The Economist, 2011).

Pilarski (2007) considers that the cause and effect of changes in air transport have become blurred, with the slow financial recovery of airlines during such periods often attributable to the emergence of low cost carriers (LCCs). Whilst the presence of LCCs may be influential to the recovery of flag carriers and charter airlines, their existence is only a small part of the problem, as is demonstrated above. Whilst LCCs existed long before such problems arose, their increased dominance within the marketplace is deemed attributable to the reluctance of passengers to return to the high fares of old, particularly in periods of financial uncertainty.

1.3 The low cost carrier: towards a universal definition

Two decades since the low cost model emerged into the UK market, the country remains gripped by the phenomenon, yet the as the market begins to mature, the direction, purpose and ethos of *low cost* model remains a widely documented and contested matter.

Whilst many terms have been used to define the 'new' breed of air carrier, broadly documented as having changed not only the face of air travel, but society's approach to travel per se, a generic name or phrase by which to identify such airlines remains elusive to the business model. As Francis et al. (2006) recognise, the term 'low cost airline' is often used in reference to a homogenous product, but as they justly argue, there are many variations of the model that are interpreted by airlines on an individual basis.

Frequently cited terms within the public domain include the aforementioned low cost carrier/airline, no-frills airline, budget airline and discount airline to name but a few, further to which Tarry (2007:72) adds 'new model airline' on the basis that low costs are inherent to maximising airline profits. Airlines themselves have sought to define their offerings with slogans such as 'Europe's leading low fares airline' (easyJet website, 2010), 'The airline with tiny fares' (bmibaby website, 2010), 'Friendly low fares' (Jet2 website, 2010) and Ryanair 'Cheap Flights - Lowest European Fares, Low Cost Airline' (Ryanair, 2010). Of interest however, given the increasing divergence to 'hybrid' business models, the CAA (2006a) has suggested that 'no-frills' may no longer be an appropriate way to describe such airlines.

Given this, within the scope of this thesis, the term low cost carrier (LCC) is deemed most appropriate to define the new breed of airline, given that the primary focus is upon lowering operational costs of service. Whilst it has been acknowledged in previous research (see Francis et al, 2006) that there are many types of business model in practice, the term is considered to be encompassing of the general business ethos that many of the airline's currently operate.

1.4 The role of the LCC in postmodern society

The complex *relationship* that exists within the UK between consumers and low cost airlines remains contentious (Mason and Alamdari, 2007). The liberalisation of the UK aviation sector welcomed the export of the low-cost, no frills strategy from the US based Southwest Airlines to the UK in 1986 with Ryanair operating flights between Ireland and the UK, revolutionising air transportation within the UK and challenging the traditional hub and spoke network offerings that had previously dominated the market (CAA, 2006; Doganis, 2006, Barrett, 2008). Yet as Calder (2010) remarks, much of what has become the norm in low cost aviation – sales via the Internet and sales of in-flight food and drink - is deemed attributable to Sir Stelios Haji-Ioannou (founder of easyJet) who left Ryanair trailing some-way behind.

The phenomenon that is the low-cost model has created opportunities and challenges for airlines and consumers alike, redefining not only airline business operations, but also consumer attitudes and motivations towards air travel (Rose et al. 2005; Bieger and Wittmer, 2006; Teichert et al. 2008). The British middle-class does however remain reluctant to accept that airlines such as Ryanair and Jet2 have dramatically improved the quality of our travelling lives by commoditising the business of flying (Calder, 2010). The post-modern society is increasingly characterised by growing levels of income, age, ethnicity and lifestyle and coupled with developments in technology, the need for greater market diversity is highlighted (Firat and Dholakia, 2003).

In 2008, Mintel reported on the continuing shift towards a 24-hour culture within the UK, noting the implications of increasingly fluid work patterns amongst the British workforce and its impact on the leisure industry. The report highlighted the introduction of the Work and Families Bill 2005 and the European Working Time Directive 2003, as instrumental driving factors in the changes that have occurred within the workplace. Urry (2002) also draws upon the *time-space compression* that occurred during the 1990s with the introduction of the Internet into the mainstream and innovations with mobile technology. Recognising the blurring implications of the leisure/work dichotomy, McCabe (2002:61 citing Lash and Urry, 1994) suggests that the 'changing nature of work and leisure, access to information and the fragmentation of time and space, collectively blur the distinctions between fantasy and 'reality', freedom and work, tourism and everyday life...'

The expression 'work-life balance' has become an increasingly common term used to describe the attitudinal changes people have towards their work, health and family life, with employers increasingly accommodating and sympathetic to the needs of the working population (Mintel, 2008). In 2006 Mintel identified that more than one third of UK workers experienced less than two hours leisure time a day, a figure that has reportedly risen to between three and six hours leisure time on a typical weekday (Mintel, 2009). Demonstrating the complexities of combining work and family time, Bittman and Wajcman (2000:165) use the term *dual burden* or *second shift*, whereby, in the quest for a 'balanced life', families are increasingly under pressure. The same is also true of 'pre/no family' lifestages for whom the balance of spending time with a partner or friends is of equal importance (Jacobs and Gerson, 2001; Mintel, 2006).

The leisure/work dichotomy is further exemplified in the work of Bryant and Zick (1996 cited in Bittman and Wajcman, 2000) who suggest that women suffer from time poverty, having to juggle both childcare and paid employment in pursuit of egalitarianism within the Western intimate relationship. One may argue however that this view is both one sided and outdated, not giving due consideration to the pressures upon the male population, who in light of the make-up of many UK households, regularly take on the 'woman's' role, with many families not typical or representative of the 'traditional' two-parent family. Yet Bittman and Wajcman (2000) conclude that in reality there is little difference in the 'total work time' and leisure time of men and women and despite advances in modern society, a degree of specialisation on the basis of gender in relation to family roles still exists and in consequence, holds significance as to the way in which work and leisure time is distributed within households.

The shift in travel patterns (for leisure) over the last two decades is nevertheless telling, with increasing numbers of tourists opting for several short breaks throughout the year as opposed to the once traditional, two week summer holiday (Nordstrom, 2005; CAA, 2006; Yeoman and McMahon-Beattie, 2006). Data from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) revealed the UK faced its sharpest contraction in 2009, with outbound holidays falling more than 15% from 45.5 million in 2008 to 38.5 million in 2009. A further decline to 36.1 million holidays was seen in 2010 (Taylor, 2011a). The impact of the recession remains apparent today, with recent figures noting that whilst 1 in 3 adults plan to take a holiday in 2011, almost one in five were still undecided as late as May (Taylor, 2011b).

A study by Visit England (2010) reported on travel plans for 2010, noting an 18% increase year on year in the number of domestic holiday trips. The research identified travel behavioural change amongst two groups: 'switchers' predominantly families trying limit their financial expenditure and accounting for 13% of respondents and 'extras' comprising younger, single travellers considered generally more likely to take more overseas and domestic breaks - accounting for 15%. More recent research by TNS (Taylor, 2011c) demonstrated a similar trend for travel throughout 2011, with those with children most likely to holiday in the UK during 2011 compared to those without. Further, individuals between the ages of 55-64 years accounted for 41% of respondents most likely to take an overseas holiday in 2011. Regional variations were also highlighted in the report, with those living in the southeast most likely to travel abroad. Those least likely to travel overseas resided in the southwest, Scotland and Yorkshire and Humberside.

An increase in APD and heightened security are also documented to have significantly affected both domestic and international markets (Blalock et al. 2007; Mayor and Tol, 2007; McWhirter, 2011). Of note, whilst the increase in APD and its impact on air travel is well documented, research by TNS for Travel Weekly revealed a lack of awareness and understanding of APD amongst UK adults, with over 70% of those interviewed (2,046 respondents) stating they pay little interest to the tax paid on flights, with their only concern upon the final price (Taylor, 2010b). Awareness was higher amongst frequent flyers.

Whilst only a few of many socio-cultural factors have been identified here, alongside key fundamental changes that have taken place within the aviation sector, it is clear to see that the introduction of the low-cost model into the UK air passenger market has been far reaching. The following chapters seek to develop further upon this introductory section and consider the implications for both airline business models and consumers following the inception of the low-cost model.

1.5 Research aim and objectives

The aim of this thesis is

To identify key characteristics and attitudes of airline passengers, with particular emphasis upon the low-cost sector: implications for pre-trip decision-making and airline choice

The research aim will be achieved through the following four objectives:

- To understand the changing nature of the UK airline industry and implications for airline business models

- To investigate the evolution of passenger operations at Birmingham Airport (BHX)

- To evaluate the pre-trip decision-making process and attitudes of airline passengers. What differentiates the low cost passengers from full-service and charter airline passengers

- To develop a classification highlighting key characteristics and attitudes of airline passengers based upon their pre-trip decision-making

1.6 Thesis structure

This thesis will follow a conventional format. The first two chapters seek to identify the key changes that have taken place within the UK passenger aviation sector in recent years, before exploring the profile of the three key airline business models that currently dominate the sector.

Chapter 3 offers an overview of the evolution of passenger operations at BHX as a case study airport, seeking to identify the changing nature of the airport's operations, with particular emphasis upon the inception of LCCs. The following chapter, chapter 4 presents a detailed overview of literature that surrounds the decision-making process and formation of attitudes, with emphasis upon decision-making within the travel context and aviation in particular. Attention is also given to the complex field of consumer behaviour research, with a focus upon the growth of online purchasing particularly for air travel and the implications for airlines (and their retailing strategies), consumers and the broader sector that encompasses travel and aviation retail.

Chapter 5 moves forward to consider empirical aspects of this research, with the methodological underpinnings of this study addressed, locating the foundations of the research within an epistemological and ontological approach.

The preliminary research, pilot studies and planned methods for primary research are identified in chapters 6 and 7, with the two strands of data collection explored in detail. The results of both investigations will be considered separately in chapters 8 and 9, before chapter 10 brings both sets of findings together and discusses the results in light of the literature reviewed within the opening chapters of this thesis.

Chapter 11 draws the thesis to a close, setting out the key conclusions of the research before identifying recommendations for further research.

1.7 Summary

This opening chapter has sought to provide a conceptual overview of the aviation sector within the UK, with particular focus upon the inception of the low cost model into passenger operations. Attention was also given to the ever-changing socio-cultural society that exists and its implications for travel in its widest sense. These key themes will be explored in greater depth within later chapters.

The aim and objectives of this thesis were also identified as a clear indicator of what this research sets out to achieve. Finally, a succinct summary of the thesis structure was identified to allow the reader foresight as to the research process.

From here, the subsequent chapter will discuss the business models that prevail within the UK air transport sector, giving due consideration to the business operations and strategies that exist and the implications for airline passengers.

2. Airline business models

2.1 Introduction

The last sixty or so years mark tremendous transformation within passenger aviation, with fundamental changes that have taken place within the sector having reached far beyond its boundaries. It is the purpose of chapter 2 to consider the changes that have taken place and highlight the significance for the airlines and their business model. Sections 2.2 – 2.4 outline the three key business models and strategies that airlines have sought to adopt within the UK, with particular emphasis upon LCCs. Section 2.5 offers a summary of the chapter.

2.2 The low-cost carrier

For consumers, the augmentation onto a grand scale of the low-cost model was a largely welcomed concept that has increased competition and in turn driven down prices and opened up new destinations. Despite compromise on network connectivity for unrestricted fares, many customers (largely leisure passengers) have substituted traditional airline services for those operated by LCCs, deeming the trade-off a worthwhile investment (Tretheway, 2004). The CAA notes that business passengers have remained focused upon network connectivity, frequency and convenience over cost, but under pressure from organisations footing the financial cost of air travel, have been forced to fly economy on short haul routes. A notable 31% increase in business passengers flying economy on short haul routes during the period 1996-2007 was recorded (CAA, 2010a).

The business model adopted by LCCs is widely documented (Gilbert et al. 2001; Lawton, 2002; Calder, 2006; Doganis, 2006; Flouris and Oswald, 2006). In brief, characterised by achieving cost leadership through a basic business model (Alamdari and Fagan, 2005), the low-cost strategy was initially developed around low, unrestricted fares; sales made via the Internet, use of a single class, high density aircraft; high frequency service operations based at secondary airports and no pre-assigned seating or connecting flights (Francis et al. 2006; Hunter, 2006).

Today, the definition assumes even greater versatility with airlines consistently seeking new ways in which to reduce operational costs and extract money from the paying public. The shift towards a *à la Carte* approach has been widespread amongst LCCs in pursuit of increasing passenger revenue yield. In the first quarter of 2010, Ryanair alone reported a 23% increase in ancillary revenues (Davies, 2010), whilst ancillary revenues accounted for approximately 22% of turnover at easyJet (Josephides, 2010).

Gudmundsson (1998) and Flouris and Oswald (2006) note the importance of a focused business strategy for the survival of any organisation. Without a business model or strategy (from herein the terms will be used interchangeably), an organisation can drift without any apparent direction, adopting a reactive stance that can ultimately undermine the success of the organisation. Strategy also provides the company with structure, essentially holding all departments of the organisation together.

Vlaar et al. (2005) cite the work of Stewart and Zhao (2000) who suggest that a business model is a template around which a business is built and can stand to include the principle of profit generation. In a similar vein, but whilst highlighting a catalogue of terms used to refer to a business model, Morris et al. (2005) use the term to refer to the architecture of an organisation and the internal and integral processes that create value.

Elsewhere, Porter (1980) suggests that a business strategy should have one focus and one alone. Be it cost leadership, differentiation or an alternative strategic position to create a competitive advantage. Highlighting that each strategy requires different resources, capabilities and organisational structure, Porter suggests that an organisation must be clear as to its 'approach' and avoid becoming caught between different strategies.

A key theme that presides these definitions is that an organisation (in this context an airline) needs to have clear direction not only in the structure and management of the organisation but in its focus, not spreading itself too widely in its business operations, but focusing upon one key area. To this end, business models have been a contentious issue for many airlines in recent years (Baker, 2006; Taneja, 2006). Not only with the blurring of business models becoming ever more apparent, but also with notable casualties that have tried to pursue an alternative business model alongside main operations i.e. British Airways (BA) with Go (Cassani, 2003).

In a move towards developing a greater understanding of the business models adopted by airlines, Francis et al. (2006:84) propose an airline typology and suggest that instead of referring to low cost airlines, given the diversity between airlines, it is more useful to refer to ‘low cost airline *models*’. The typology is useful in that it considers how the low cost model has and can be adopted by airlines, whilst highlighting the blurring complexity between the business models of the traditional legacy carrier and the newer breed of airline with a focus upon delivering a greater cost efficient service. The typology offers five broad types of low cost carrier, namely: Southwest copycats, subsidiaries, cost cutters, diversified charter carriers and state subsidised competing on price. The classifications will be considered here from a critical viewpoint so as to fully explore the diversity of the low-cost arena.

2.2.1 Low-cost model typologies

The first of the five categories proposed by Francis et al (2006) is that of the Southwest copycats, which comprises airlines that are completely new or that have been remodelled by independent entrepreneurs. Airlines within this group are most closely aligned to the ‘Southwest model’ seeking to minimise costs through operating point-to-point services and using a single aircraft type that is operated at high levels of utilisation. Airlines that were at their inception representative of this model in the UK include Ryanair and easyJet. However, as Alamdari and Fagan (2005) and Francis et al. (2006) note, there are deviations evident within the application of the model and one may argue that easyJet no longer remains entirely representative of this category. The airline’s recent launch of a flexible pricing structure to attract business passengers (Hayhurst, 2010) and partnership with Nectar to allow card holders the opportunity to redeem Nectar points against the cost of flights, suggests a re-working of the traditional frequent flyer program (FFP) which air travellers are all too familiar (Travelmole, 2011).

Whilst Ryanair has inherently stuck to the original low cost model developed by Southwest Airlines (although arguably by offering an inferior level of service), with a focus upon using underused (secondary) airports; easyJet has largely operated from main airports. Gillen and Morrison (2003) highlight the implications of the blurring business models, not only for airlines but also external forces such as the airports they use. The research questions whether LCCs and FSCs are competitors in respect of their airport use, concluding that whilst airports should seek to provide a 'happy-medium' for both airline types, FSCs and LCCs should co-invest in the auxiliary services of their bundled products that will be used by their passengers.

In further demonstration of the diversification away from the 'Southwest copycats' model, Field (2007) considers that Southwest made steps in rewriting its model with the introduction of a priority-boarding scheme for the highest paying passengers on the flight, although the option to purchase priority boarding was not opened up by the airline until September 2009, much later than its UK counterparts. Whilst LCCs do not reward their highest fare paying passengers in the UK with such perks, passenger's can purchase priority boarding. Where Ryanair offers a priority boarding service at a cost of £5 (when booked online) (Ryanair, 2011), easyJet offers 'speedy boarding' at a variable cost depending upon the route (easyJet, 2010).

With further casualties of the LCC model having emerged, the longevity and sustainability of the low-cost model has been called into question (Barrett, 2004; Doganis, 2004; Alamdari and Fagan, 2005). Postulating the sustainability of the 'Southwest' model or as Barrett (2004) suggested the 'Ryanair model'; it is argued (although deemed unlikely) that the consumer may eventually fall out with the Southwest/Ryanair product.

Despite never being far from a contentious headline, Ryanair has continued to attract increasing numbers of passengers, with profits having risen by 20% year on year to September 2010 (CAPA, 2010). Yet Ellson (2011) considers that for the first time there is a hint that the travelling public's patience with the airline may have finally snapped, with the airline announcing in May 2011 that passengers are likely to fall by 4% during winter 2011. Whilst Ryanair cite a weak economic climate and high oil prices for their forecasted poor performance, Ellson (2011:69) believes there is more to the projected decline in passenger numbers than what the airline suggests. He argues that 'customers are fed up with being treated worse than cargo and slowly realising that the airline is not as cheap as it would like to portray itself.'

To this end, Johnson et al. (2008) offer insight into some of the more notorious examples of the airline behaving badly. More recently though, murmurs (albeit in jest) of a 'fat tax' for overweight passengers (Ryanair, 2009) and a tough stance taken on pay outs to passengers affected by the Ash Cloud (Guardian, 2010) (a matter the airline was later forced to readdress under European Union (EU) rules) have added further fuel to the fire. Whilst other airlines have sought to adopt similar business operations to those of Ryanair, none have arguably managed to manipulate and maximise the 'low cost' model in such a similar way.

The second category proposed is 'subsidiaries' which comprises LCCs that have been set up as subsidiaries of long established traditional FSCs in an attempt to compete within the low fare sector. Pilarski (2007:159) refers to the model as *Mini-me's*. Subsidiaries are often set up in response to market entry onto a route by 'Southwest copy-cats'. Airlines in this group operate under a similar guise to those within the 'Southwest copy-cats' category, however the parent carrier, despite the assumed autonomy of the LCC, can often restrict the subsidiary. Competition on routes between the airlines can also be a problem.

The formation of 'subsidiary' airlines is well documented (Barrett, 2004; Taneja, 2004, Hunter, 2006 and Dennis, 2007, Pilarski, 2007); with cynics concluding that the adoption of a carrier model within a carrier model does not sit well within the ‘no-frills paradigm’ and rarely proves successful. In the UK, bmibaby runs alongside bmi, whilst the Go venture by British Airways (bought by easyJet in 2002) proved less successful. Further afield, KLM with their subsidiary Buzz is also cited as a failed attempt of a subsidiary airline (Graf, 2005; Vlaar et al. 2005).

For a network carrier the main impetus to launch a LCC is linked to increased corporate value, whilst reasons for failure include conflicting airline strategies, model fit and the level of autonomy given to the LCC (the lack of identity and freedom is considered to frequently lead to crisis). As Hunter (2006) and Francis et al. (2006) conclude, marginal adjustments to the FSC model when setting up a subsidiary are not sufficient and can increase the propensity of airline failure.

The third category proposed by Francis et al. (2006) incorporates ‘cost cutters’ typically consisting of long established FSCs attempting to cut their operating costs through limiting the ‘frills’ they offer. Whilst continuing to operate a hub and spoke network, ‘cost cutters’ frequently rationalise the aircraft type they operate and have been widely recognised as having introduced unrestricted fares and direct sell via the Internet (Dennis, 2007).

The blurring of the business models is increasingly evident in front line business operations, with changes recognised as early as 2004 with Taneja citing Aer Lingus as a sound example of a FSC that has successfully taken on low-cost characteristics through cost cutting. More recently, BA has come under increased media attention throughout 2010 in-light of their fleet rationalization, crew cuts and proposed pay freeze, all part of a continuing attempt to remain competitive in an increasingly challenging aviation sector (Telegraph, 2010). Elsewhere bmi stopped providing refreshments to (all) passengers, now only offering them to frequent flyers travelling with certain air tickets (IATA, 2010).

Conversely from the low cost sector, ‘upscaling’ is evident with airlines seeking to differentiate themselves further. Jet2 was the first LCC to launch an inflight entertainment system showing television programmes and films on flights of four hours or more, charging £7.50 when booked online or £10 when purchased onboard for use of the touch screen media players (Air Transport News, 2011). Elsewhere, the introduction of a flexible fare pricing structure by easyJet has been heralded as the start of the airline's move towards a traditional airline strategy (Hayhurst, 2010).

The fourth category proposed within the typology is the 'diversified charter carrier' representing low cost subsidiaries developed by charter airlines, offering low cost scheduled services. Such airlines seek to achieve low costs in a similar way to the 'Southwest copy-cats', operating a single aircraft type, offering one-way fares, online reservations and charging for food and drink. As Doganis (2001) considers, the costs associated with the subsidiary status of such airlines is low given that parent airlines are widely considered by the market to have low costs. Many of the services operated by 'diversified charter carriers' serve European holiday destinations, but on a scheduled basis. Monarch Scheduled part of Monarch Airlines is an airline representative of this model type.

Finally Francis et al. (2006) consider the 'state subsidised competing on price' airline, which is financially supported by the Government in either an ownership or subsidized capacity allowing the airline to offer low fares without the need to cover their long run average costs. Such airlines operate using low fares by way of increasing tourist traffic to the country. With no such airlines registered in the UK, the Polish airline LOT and Alitalia based in Italy provide sound examples. Francis et al. (2006) note that many such airlines have historically only survived as a result of government financial backing.

The typology presented by Francis et al. (2006) is a useful starting point to explore airline models currently adopted by airlines. Whilst not all of the categories within the typology have particular relevance to UK based airlines (namely the' state subsidised competing on price' model), they do demonstrate the complexity and changing nature of the airline industry. In reference to the broader situation, Tarry (2008) recognises the mixed messages airlines such as BA and easyJet are exhibiting in their short-long term strategies by their virtue of their *drifting*. To this end, two key categories are arguably missing from the proposed typology: one comprising the raft of airlines increasingly moving away from the ‘Southwest copycats’ model towards a middle-ground somewhere between the LCC and FSC and one that is based upon the long-haul LCC approach.

Considering first the augmentation of airlines adopting what is frequently termed a ‘blurring’ or ‘hybrid’ business model with ’some frills’ (Baker, 2006; Doganis, 2006; Conrady et al. 2010). Whilst the industry has recognised the growth of such airlines in recent years, the typology proposed by Francis et al. (2006) fails to consider such airlines. A category termed ‘Hybrids’ is therefore proposed to incorporate airlines such as Flybe and arguably easyJet who between them have taken the unusual step of investing in two fleet types – a complexity that is under the traditional LCC guise unheard of (Flybe) and offering air tickets via a Global Distribution System (GDS) to attract a larger market share and offer flexible fares (easyJet) (Field, 2008 and Hayhurst, 2010). Where both airlines offer elements of the LCC and FSC models (to include more than just the two strategic techniques cited here), they cannot be placed neatly into either the LCC or FSC category.

Whilst traditional FSCs continue to dominate the long-haul market, Francis et al. (2007) and Daft and Albers (2010) consider that despite a slow emergence, there are signs of LCCs moving in. Whilst no long-haul LCCs are currently registered in the UK, Air Asia X offers a sound example of one such airline. Having just shifted its base from STN to LGW in an attempt to offer customers better transport connections and regional access (Travel Weekly, 2011a), Air Asia X demonstrates that the low cost model can be viable on long-haul routes. With the backing of an established FSC, the introduction of premium seats with lie-flat beds and inflight meal service marks an additional variation on the traditional low cost model – arguably aiding its growth (CAPA, 2009 and McWhirter, 2010). Such success stories are rare with the collapse of Oasis a stark reminder. The reported failure was documented as a result of mounting debts that consequentially led to financial ruin (Ionides, 2008), demonstrating that the model cannot always translate successfully into alternative markets.

Given the apparent success of Air Asia X, the model demonstrates viability of the long-haul low cost model, thus giving cause for it to be included within the LCC typology. A category termed 'Long haul, low cost' is thus proposed.

The additional categories proposed here demonstrate the evolving nature of air transport, with further modifications to the typology inevitable and the complete omission of certain categories altogether increasingly likely.

2.2.2 Labour and organisation structure of LCCs

It has long been known that a cost leadership strategy is fundamental to the success of LCCs, but such a strategy alone will not protect against other entrants to the market. Whilst LCCs are known for their price sensitivity, they are documented as a major contributor in airline competition and fare reduction (Fu et al. 2006).

The need to reduce unit costs through density operations in ways that look to increase aircraft utilisation and/or increase the number of seats per aircraft is well documented (Sorenson, 1991; Janic, 2000; Piga and Bachis, 2006). Employee relations and organisational structure are also prevalent to the low cost approach. Dobruszkes (2006) considers the emphasis LCCs place upon a multi-skilled and flexible workforce to which Hunter (2006:320) suggests helps to restore the balance between the long hours and lower wages offered by traditional FSCs to derive a 'high level of unionisation…and high level of employee loyalty'.

Recent events have demonstrated unrest amongst employees of FSCs, with strikes increasingly common across Europe (CAPA, 2010a). Within the UK, a two year dispute between BA and its cabin crew saw twenty-two days of strike action as a result of cost cutting, namely through reducing crew numbers and pay. The long-running dispute which was finally resolved in June 2011 led to strikes, cancelled flights and major air travel disruption (BA, 2010; Financial Times, 2009; Unite, 2010), although the damage is believed to go much wider (Economist, 2010). As Hunter (2006) observes, employee relations appear less volatile within the low cost sector, with strikes and walkouts rare, raising questions as to the extent pay and benefits contribute to employee happiness.

Markedly, labour productivity is perhaps the most significant contribution to the true low cost base. Striking a balance between keeping some inputs in-house and outsourcing others, flexibility is achieved in areas such as contract renewal. As Lawton (2002) recognises, by placing emphasis upon cost reduction and remaining central to their core activities, airlines that adopt strategies that do not deviate too much from the Southwest / Ryanair model, may do well in their pursuit of maintaining sound business operations.

With LCCs characterised by their predominant start-up use of secondary airports to take advantage of lower costs and charges, few carriers have been drawn to operate from larger, primary airports. As Pilling (2003) considers, to protect themselves from increased charges, LCCs are known for entering into long-term agreements with airports to avoid price-hikes in charges - citing the infamous Ryanair / Brussels Charleroi example. Yet, 2010 brought changes amidst a recession with Ryanair considering operating from major airports as growth slows and pulling out of established ‘high cost and problematic’ secondary bases including Frankfurt Hahn and Belfast City (CAPA, 2010b). Convergence, it appears may be the way forward for Ryanair.

2.2.3 Yield management, pricing and LCCs

Yield management techniques and pricing are also necessary prerequisites to ‘low cost’ principles. For airlines, yield management is concerned with ensuring that all seats on a flight are sold. Thus there is a balance to be struck between selling seats at a discount to passengers who might not have otherwise travelled and ensuring that passengers willing to pay more do not purchase discounted tickets.

In its crudest sense, yield management for LCCs is used as a form of price discrimination where seat prices are initially set at a discounted rate well in advance of departure rising to a premium immediately prior to departure (Coulter, 1999; Pitfield, 2005; Piga and Bachis, 2006). A process termed by McGill and van Ryzin (1999) and also adopted by Piga and Bachis (2006:1) as *low-before-high fares*. The introduction of LCCs eliminated many of the restrictive fares that were in place prior to deregulation, including Saturday night stop over's and advance purchase discounts (Giaume and Guillou, 2004), allowing the consumer greater flexibility with both their travel plans and budgets.

In a study of UK based LCCs and their pricing strategies, Pitfield (2005) found evidence of a correlation in price setting between airlines, notably in duopolistic markets. Price setting in respect of covering all fixed costs continues to remain a threat.

With no direct or indirect competition on a particular route, airlines are able to exploit monopolistic power and generate additional revenues above the variable cost, until such a point in time where competition increases and there is less freedom in pricing strategies that can be adopted. Where in the past aviation markets have demonstrated difficulty in achieving sufficient revenues, Pitfield (2005) suggests that LCCs such as Southwest and Ryanair have been an exception to the rule with regard to their ability to remain profitable in light of recent market struggles. To this end, Barrett (2004) considers how Ryanair has achieved market place acceptance in both mature deregulated routes and also newly entered routes. But as highlighted earlier, it seems that even Ryanair may no longer be completely free from vulnerability to the harsh realities of a severe economic downturn and changing passenger attitudes.

Nevertheless, Pitfield's argument is further exemplified by early financial results reported by UK LCCs for 2010 that suggest, despite the ongoing global recession and environmental problems; there are signs of hope. Whilst easyJet reported a sales increase of 5.3% in the three months to the end of

June 2010 (Fearis, 2010); Flybe announced a profit of £6.8m in the year to the end to March 2010 (McNeill, 2010).

Lobbenberg (2004 cited in Barrett, 2004) considers that the strategy of operating too many *nowhere* routes, could harm the longevity of the low cost model. But as Wood (2005) postulates, if the price is low enough, consumers will take advantage of cheap fares on *nowhere* routes, whether the purchase was intended or not. The growth of *nowhere* routes has in some cases generated tourism to once relatively unknown destinations and more often than not benefited both the local economy and airlines that have seized the opportunity to operate such services.

Dennis (2004) dubbed the Stansted-Prestwick route a *nowhere-to-nowhere route*, whilst recognising that passenger traffic reached 628,000 passengers in 2004 (with the LCCs generating the majority of traffic). In 2009, total passenger traffic on the same route was at 278,284 down 31% from the previous year (CAA, 2010b).

A number of factors maybe attributable to the decline, notably a slow down of the economy and subsequent reduction in spend on non-essential air travel, an increase in fares, a change in flight schedules and the substitution of domestic air travel to other modes. Whilst the example is of a domestic route, it demonstrates changes to the *nowhere* route and questions the longevity and viability of such operations for airlines. Another good example is that of Girona. Located within the north-eastern province of Spain, 'Barcelona North' (as it is known by Ryanair) saw the launch of the Ryanair base, increase passenger numbers from 500,000 in 2002 to 3.5 million in 2005 (Echevarne, 2008). Referring to purchasing patterns, Hess et al. (2007) conclude that as the length of the flight increases so too does price sensitivity, therefore limiting the end to which consumers will purchase a ticket just because it is cheap.

Where advance purchase discounts exist in monopoly situations, Gale and Holmes (1992 cited in Piga and Bachis, 2006) suggest that the number of passengers on flights can be evenly spread, to which Dana (1998) adds that airlines adopting such pricing methods are well placed to ensure that bookings are secured well ahead of departure. In contrast however, Pfeifer (1989 cited in Coulter, 1999) argues that a better yield management strategy may be one in which bookings are monitored and the allocation of full fare and discounted seats changed in response to demand, as opposed to setting the allocation at the beginning of the sales period. Arguably, the time and complexity expanded in tracking the fares would be tremendous and of no more benefit than the operations that are currently in practice.

On duopoly and oligopoly routes the situation may be somewhat different, with the airline competing within a fragmented market and reducing costs as a result. Fu et al. (2006) highlighted a lack of research in the area of unregulated airports and the implications for downstream airline competition between FSCs and LCCs. Employing a duopoly competition model for differentiated products, the implications of a rise in airport charges for FSCs and LCCs were considered. The findings demonstrated that whilst it would appear advantageous in the first instance for FSCs to support any increase in airport charges so as to negatively affect LCCs, it is only beneficial if any such price increase would remove the LCC from the market altogether (Francis et al. 2006).

Marcus and Anderson (2008) also consider consumer choice within a duopoly model and the pricing strategies that LCCs should adopt. The uncertainty of demand is presented as the greatest barrier to effective revenue management due to pricing structures employed by FSCs and the threat of unpredictable demand. The study concludes that LCCs should be dynamic in their pricing, but in doing so, should track the prices set by FSCs. In markets where there are a greater proportion of LCC flights, pricing strategies should be more aggressive in both the early and latter stages of sale. Adopting a different stance, Piga and Bachis (2006) conclude that in reality, LCCs do not adjust their fares to match those of rivals and should play on aspects of differentiation, an ideology supported in the early work of Sorenson (1991) and later by Shaw (2007).

Thus, whilst the underlying business concept of LCCs remains largely the same as it did at their inception into the UK market in the early 1990s, airlines are becoming increasingly innovative in their quest to charge for services, but at the same time are potentially jeopardizing their reputation. Table 1 presents a breakdown of the travel costs for a one-way flight with BA, easyJet and Monarch on the LGW-Malaga (AGP) route, departing 01/11/2011. The routes/airlines were chosen where a FSC, LCC and charter airlines operate head-to-head. Costs are shown on a per person basis and include travel for one adult, checking-in one hold item of luggage and paying with a Visa debit card.

	BA	easyJet	Monarch
Departure time (LGW)	07.40	06.55	07.15
Arrival time (AGP)	11.40	10.50	11.00
Basic flight price (One way flight)	£48.70 (£11 fare, plus £37.70 taxes & charges)	£28.99 (No breakdown of flight cost available)	£36.49 (£11.49 fare, plus £25.00 taxes & charges)
1 item of luggage	FOC	£14	£15.99
Visa Debit Payment	FOC	£8.00	FOC
Total cost	**£48.70**	**£50.99**	**£52.48**

Table 1: Comparison of costs incurred on a single flight on LGW-AGP route. Prices correct 11/08/2011. Source: ba.com, easyJet.com and Monarch.co.uk

The results are interesting in that they show BA offers the cheapest fare option of the three carriers. Whilst the headline fare was initially £19.71 more than that of easyJet, once additional extras were taken into consideration, the BA flight actually came in £2.29 cheaper than easyJet's offering. Monarch charged £3.78 more than BA. Whilst the price differences in this instance are minimal, on a return flight and with more than one passenger travelling, the costs could soon mount. Of interest, a value calculator is now included on the BA website highlighting the cost of differentials of flying with rival carriers (ba.com, 2011).

2.3 Full service carriers

In his work on airline business models, Taneja (2004, cited in Morrell, 2005) provides a detailed discussion of the business model that for many years proved successful for the FSC, suggesting that its viability in the market is no longer valid. In contrast, Tretheway (2004) contends that the FSC will continue to exist, albeit taking on a declining share of the market. Either way, met with a realisation that one business model alone is not suitable to serve the increasingly diverse global market, a transformation has and continues to occur.

Pre-deregulation the air passenger market was dominated by FSCs who were typified by service quality enhancements, full in-flight service, FFPs, services to a large number of destinations from hub and spoke airports with feeder services to many smaller airports and bundled services such as interlining baggage and coordinating flight connections (Gillen and Morrison, 2003). Whilst many of these factors still remain part of the FSC portfolio, as Taneja (2005) points out, conventional airlines no longer have the luxury of trying to serve all passenger markets as they once did. Now facing competition from LCCs and specialised operators targeting market niches (notably airlines such as the late Silverjet, Eos and Maxjet targeting business passengers), the FSC has had to respond with tactical measures.

As a result of increased competition and the liberalisation of the airline sector, simplified cost structures operated by FSCs have become the norm. Doganis (2006) considers the implications and factors influencing the downward trend in fare levels citing further liberalisation and additional 'open skies' agreements, the transparency of fares driven by the growth of Internet based air ticket sales and an over-capacity in many markets as key drivers. In consequence, the apparent and successful de-structuring of fares that has occurred in the FSC market has removed many of the fare restrictions such as Saturday night stopovers and acted as a key force in alleviating some of the pressures felt by FSCs. Taneja (2004) also recognises with reference to the pricing strategies that were once employed by FSCs, that confusion and mistrust was felt amongst passengers who saw an increasing spread of high and low costs.

In turn it may be suggested that FSCs have become a viable alternative to LCCs in terms of their revised pricing strategies and apparent public affordability post liberalisation. The issue of mistrust has now reared itself as a concern for many passengers of LCCs and has arguably given consumers additional impetus for booking with FSCs in light of their comparatively up-front and transparent pricing.

In 2007 the Office of Fair Trading took action against 13 airlines that did not include all fixed and non-optional costs such as taxes in prices on their website, forcing the airlines to review their advertising practices (OFT, 2007). Those found culpable of misleading passengers were: easyJet, bmibaby, Flybe, Thomsonfly, Thomas Cook Airlines, Monarch, Jet2, Globespan, Wizz Air, Sky Europe, Germanwings, Ryanair and Aer Lingus. Elsewhere an advertising campaign employed by Ryanair saw over 100 complaints referred to the Advertising Standards Agency (ASA), who found the airline culpable of misleading advertising of cheap fares (OFT, 2009).

Whilst FSCs are themselves not completely elusive to negative press, with these and many further instances of apparent misdemeanor recorded, it is understandable that air passengers may be swayed towards booking with FSCs over their LCC counterparts.

A key selling point that has remained integral to the FSC model is its capacity to offer connectivity between airports and carriers. The ability to provide an interlined service implies that if operational problems arise, many FSCs can continue to connect passengers to their final destination as they operate largely from hub airports and are frequently an airline alliance member, thus allowing services of partner carriers to be exploited. Tretheway (2004) considers both the continued importance of connectivity for passengers and airlines alike, noting the implications and potential knock-on effects on other routes as a result of withdrawing a particular service – a dilemma that does not present itself to LCCs. Furthermore, Morell (2005) considers that although networks can help to reduce costs, conversely they can and may bring failure due to the growth in point-to-point services and use of smaller aircraft requiring alternative services and facilities.

Whilst connectivity can offer a streamlined service for passengers that will frequently ensure repeat custom, FFPs can too generate customer loyalty. As Taneja (2004) suggests, FFPs remain successful for FSCs and have consequently resulted in increased frequency and share purchases. Yet, with a realisation that passengers are frequently members of more than one FFP, airlines risk their ‘loyal’ passengers defecting to the competition. Zins (2001) recalls the work of Brierley (1994), in which the complexity of loyalty within a travel and tourism setting is discussed. The research suggests that based upon lack of alternatives or high personal sacrifice, passengers may seek airline services elsewhere. With competition within air services rife, coupled with the increasing dominance of LCCs within short haul markets (Williams et al. 2003), FFPs remain a strong factor in retaining passenger loyalty amongst FSCs.

2.4 Charter airlines

Charter airlines acted as the original template for the low cost model, yet with the inability to offer the flexibility that the market required, charters soon began to lose out to the new breed of carrier (the LCC), in exploiting the market. Emphasising cost reduction, the charter business model was traditionally typified by dense seat configuration and high passenger load, irregular and often inconvenient schedules, basic in-flight service, point-to-point services (largely) from secondary airports and low publicity and distribution outlay costs through use of travel distribution systems (Papatheodorou and Lei, 2006).

Today, the picture is not significantly different, yet there is perhaps far more outsourcing taking place. To the characteristics noted above, pre-bookable seats, 24hr operations and a single class cabin may be added (Williams, 2001). On the point of single class cabins however, particularly on long-haul charter flights, some charters do currently offer dual class cabins. Thomson

Airways provides is a sound example offering a premium class cabin on long haul flights (Thomson, 2011).

As Papatheodorou and Lei (2006) recognise and has been proven in this discussion, the differences between the charter, LCC and traditional FSC models did not last for long, as it became and remains, increasingly difficult to distinguish between the carrier models.

Today, charters remain a direct competitor to LCCs on many of the routes they operate, with a number of carriers selling seats independent of tour packages and operating an increasingly competitive cost structure (Binggeli and Pompeo, 2005). Charter airlines have also dabbled with the low cost model (My Travel Airways with My Travel Lite; and the then Britannia - now Thomson Airways, launching Thomsonfly). Yet within a few years, both LCCs were submerged into their parent company. My Travel was three years later bought out by the tour-operating giant, Thomas Cook (BBC, 2007) and Thomson merged with First Choice, under the umbrella of TUI (Blackden and Muspratt, 2007).

There is evidence of charter airlines following a similar course of divergence to that of the LCC, with hybrid carriers emerging from within the model. In the UK, Monarch provides a good example, whilst outside of the UK, Air Berlin is considered a sound example, splitting overall sales between low cost and charter operations. Additionally, there is evidence that LCCs (led by easyJet) are now seeking to move into tour operations, with the move considered to be positive for consumers (Cowan, 2010; Hatch, 2011).

In the shift that has seen charter airlines drift towards the low cost model, many now offer an inclusive package as standard, yet with additional flexibility for consumers to remove meals, luggage and transfers as optional.

In 2005, Binggeli and Pompeo (2005) suggested that charter airlines would continue to dominate on many of the medium-haul routes which have comparatively weak traffic, namely to Egypt and Canaries. Of interest, using

BHX (the case study airport) as a point of illustration, charter flights continue to dominate and exceed scheduled provision on routes including Arrecife (ACE), Bodrum (BJV), Dalaman (DLM), Fuerteventura (FUE), Heraklion (HER), Ibiza (IBZ) Larnaca (LCA), Las Palmas (LPA), Paphos (PFS) Sharm el Sheikh (SSH) and Tenerife (TFS) (BIA, 2009).

The notion that LCCs would be the only way forward for regional airports was quashed in research by Papatheodorou and Lei (2006), who highlighted the significant contribution FSCs and charter airlines offer to aeronautical and non-aeronautical airport revenues, which at times exceed the contribution of LCCs. Additionally, Williams (2001) firmly stated that charter carriers would not be replaced by, what he termed, 'no-frills' scheduled airlines, yet suggested attention should be given to routes where charters might be particularly vulnerable i.e. on short haul operations. Williams (2001) and Doganis (2006) offer a sound overview of the operational factors bonding the charter model with that of the LCC.

On a strategic level, charter airlines are influenced not only by regulatory and market developments within the EU, but also by policies adopted by non-EU countries to which they operate and the wider tour operator market in general (Lobbenberg, 1995). The sector was very liberally regulated until the point of the third package when charters were integrated into the EU single market in 1993. At this stage, charter carriers found themselves with the opportunity to break into scheduled operations (Lobbenberg, 1995).

The paper by Lobbenberg is insightful in tracing many of the challenges and opportunities that have historically faced charter carriers (yet also remain apparent today), highlighting the move into schedule service operations and the commercial opportunities that have arisen from being able to carry cargo. Additionally, the practices of vertical and horizontal integration are cited as strengthening operations (Williams, 2001).

Whilst consolidation continues to gather pace within the charter airline sector (principally as a result of the changing nature of tour operations), the greatest threats would appear to remain with LCCs and the changing nature of the travel market, principally in shifts of travel behaviour patterns and the growth of dynamic packaging. It is therefore the challenge of charter airlines to identify how best to tackle such challenges and respond accordingly.

2.5 Summary

Recent decades have witnessed fundamental changes to the UK passenger aviation sector with the influence of the Government, airlines themselves, economic forces and research and development within technology and telecommunications noted as just some of the key drivers to have shaped the industry. In turn, societal changes have and continue to be instrumental in the path of change. As the sector continues to evolve it would appear, despite critics suggesting otherwise, that in their broadest sense both the FSC and LCC models are here to stay.

As the business models themselves continue to evolve, debate continues as to what constitutes the LCC, FSC and charter models and the most successful business approach for airlines to adopt. For the foreseeable future at least, it looks likely that FSCs will continue to dominate long-haul markets, although there is evidence of consolidation within the sector occurring with mergers between airlines (i.e. BA and Iberia). For the LCC, increased presence within the short-haul market looks set to continue, but with movements into long haul markets already taking place, further expansion looks likely. Charter carriers appear to be sitting tight on their short haul ‘bucket and spade’ routes, whilst dabbling in long-haul travel operations and seeking to increase their presence on routes shared with LCCs, where competitive threat remains rife within saturated short haul markets. Overall, with a growing need for airlines of all types to differentiate and compete not only amongst themselves but with other transport modes, a growing convergence and evolution of the business model is likely.

Having identified the complexities of passenger aviation in respect of business models within this chapter, chapter 3 seeks to map the changes that have been highlighted here and in chapter 1, using Birmingham Airport (BHX) as a case study example. The airport has experienced fundamental changes in recent years with the introduction of low cost operations fundamental to business operations that have taken place. Given the profile of the airport, it will also be used as a case study for the main body of this research, allowing passengers of the three main carrier types to be interviewed.

3. Birmingham Airport: Case study

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 identified and discussed the three key airline business models that dominate passenger operations within the UK, setting the scene for chapter 3. It is the purpose of this chapter to now explore the impact the aforementioned changes discussed within the two preceding chapters, have had upon passenger operations at BHX.

The profile of BHX identifies it as a sound case study for investigating the pre-trip decision making of airline passengers. The composite of airlines, routes and schedules in operation at the airport provide a platform for a comparative investigation of LCC, FSC and charter airline passengers. From a historical perspective, the airport offers a snapshot of the evolving nature of aviation within a regional context.

Section 3.2 begins with a brief overview of regional airports within the UK, before sections 3.3 and 3.3.1 respectively consider BHX as it is today, whilst also offering a historical glimpse into business operations of yesteryear. A insight into recent passenger activity at the airport is offered in section 3.4, before a chapter summary is given in 3.5.

3.2 Regional airports in the UK

In 2003 the DfT commissioned a report into the ‘Future of Air Transport’ (DfT, 2003). Key proposals set out with regard to regional airports demonstrated support for economic development within the UK regions. Emphasis was placed upon providing passengers with greater choice, whilst reducing pressures on the more over-crowded airports in the southeast and minimising long-distance travel to and from airports.

In the updated CAA 2007 ‘Air Services at regional Airports’ report, a slow in the growth of UK aviation particularly on domestic routes was reported. At the same time however, increased competition between regional airports was deemed to have led to a reduction in some airport charges and competition between airlines was accredited as fierce, with LCCs continuing to gain ground (CAA, 2007). A change in travel patterns as passengers outside of London made use of regional airports rather than travelling to the capital, was also recognised, challenging regional airports to continue expansion whilst maintaining their attractiveness to passengers in terms of convenience and speed. A greater focus on environmental issues by regional airports was also reported.

3.3 Birmingham Airport

As the UK's second largest regional airport, BHX is also ranked as the sixth busiest airport in the UK (CAA, 2010c). With passengers totaling 9.09 million in 2009, numbers were down from 9.58 million in 2008 (BIA, 2009). The mission of the Airport Company remains 'to be the best regional airport in Europe', with the long term vision of the Airport Company 'to provide for the future air transport needs of the Midlands, with quality facilities and services...within a programme of sustainable development, which balances the economic importance of the Airport to the Region with the need for environmental controls and mitigation' (BIA, 2007).

In 2006 BHX had a 3.8% market share of UK passenger aviation compared to its closest competitors East Midlands (EMA) and Manchester Airport (MAN), who held a 2.0% and 9.3% share respectively (CAA, 2006c). By 2007 BHX's share of the Midland's regional market was estimated at 36%, with forecasts predicting an increase to 57% by 2030 (BIA, 2007:19). This the most recent available data, highlights an arguably weak market penetration with approximately 64% of current demand lost to rival airports, a significant percentage for the Midlands largest airport. During the 2009 peak travel period, 49 airlines (32 scheduled and 17 charter) operated from BHX to a total of 176 destinations (BIA, 2009).

3.3.1 Overview of BHX

Originally named Elmdon Airport and from 1960 until 2010 Birmingham International Airport, the new rebranded Birmingham Airport lies eight miles southeast of Birmingham. Its central location lends itself to attracting a high volume of passenger traffic as a regional airport, but also finds BHX susceptible to leakage (as above), with a number of alternative airports within commutable distance. Its latest repositioning seeks to define BHX as a 'truly global airport' with marketing communications bearing the message 'Hello World' to 'demonstrate the global links offered and its multicultural environment' (Birmingham Airport, 2010). With reference to the Airport's location and recent rebranding, Paul Kehoe (the Airport's CEO) said 'We want people to think about their journey in a new way, and not to be bound by old habits...The rebrand is far more than just a new logo. It's a change of identity which aims to create positive awareness about our potential, foster a sense of pride and grow loyalty from people living within our catchment." (Birmingham Airport, 2010).

In 1975 BHX was classified as a major international airport and in the 1978 Government White Paper, the Airport was categorised as a 'B' regional airport, meaning operations would concentrate on the regions need for international services as opposed to developing inter-continental flights (Negus and Staddon, 1984). Today, BHX has a catchment of approximately 8 million people within one hours travel time and a further 28 million within two hours (BIA, 2007), positioning the airport as a viable alternative to those located in the South East. Nevertheless, the airport witnessed demand for air travel served within the region fall ten percent to 40% in 2007, with 34% of passengers in 2006 relying on airports in the South East (BIA, 2005 and BIA, 2007).

The Airport has however come along way since its first flight departed in May 1939. A series of texts document in detail the historical development of BHX with Cheater (1979) offering insight to the first forty years of operation at the Airport, and Vines (1991) focusing upon more recent events between 1970 to the early 1990s. Elsewhere, Negus and Staddon (1984) consider aircraft operations at BHX, omitting historical insight into events at the Airport. It is not the intention here to regurgitate such information, yet to set the scene for the research in hand.

In its 72 years of operation, ownership of the Airport has passed hands several times, but since 2007 the shareholding arrangement is with seven West Midlands district councils (49%), Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan and Australia's Victorian Funds Management Corporation (48.25%) and the Employee Share Trust (2.75%) (Birmingham City Council, 2009:7)

The location of the airport has long been an issue documented over the years. Some forty years since its opening, Cheater wrote ‘The City of Birmingham has always been known for its progressive attitude and belief in the future. But the airport has been a problem. Progress has been hindered by a number of factors, not least of which has been its geographical situation...’ (1979:34). Negus and Staddon further exemplified the situation noting ‘Nothing has ever come to Birmingham Airport without the most persistent lobbying and campaigning...’ (1984:113).

Today, BHX can be reached in 70 minutes by train from London Euston, yet uncertainty remains over whether the proposed High Speed Rail will connect to the Airport, reducing journey times further from the Capital. Elsewhere the findings from a recent Government report concluded an extension of High Speed Rail to London Heathrow airport (LHR) would be viable, but concerns were also raised as to its cost (DfT, 2010). Unsurprisingly, concern was lobbied by BHX as to the impact of the LHR extension on regional airports and their communities (Birmingham Airport, 2010c).

The development of the NEC (National Exhibition Centre) next to the site of BHX was in part a major catalyst for increased tourist arrivals to the region (Maudsley, 1971:2), with BHX seen as ‘a major, vital and efficient element in the regional/international transport system’. To support the demand for growth, a new airport terminal opened in 1984 (now known as Terminal 1) with capacity for 3 million passengers, whilst at the same time the first Maglev system (magnetic levitation system) was built to connect Birmingham International Station and the Airport (Vines, 1991). The continued growth also brought the Airport's second terminal, the 'Eurohub' in 1991, the first terminal to combine domestic and international passengers, thus providing impetus for scheduled route development (BIA, 2005).

With passenger numbers having more than doubled to 7.5 million per annum by 2000, a further terminal development providing a two-storey arrivals' concourse, a new pier, baggage reclaim hall, customs and immigration halls and additional check-in desks and retails outlets was opened. In 2003 the Maglev was substituted by the current Air-Rail Link monorail and in 2009, the 'International Pier' replaced the outdated 1984 structure, with its three tiers handling departing and arriving passengers, housing offices for airport staff and providing air bridges to wide-bodied aircraft (BIA, 2010)

The aforementioned 'Future of Air Transport' report (DfT, 2003) set out a strategic framework to support the development of the UK air transport industry, with a plan to 2030. Support was shown in the report for further development at BHX by way of a runway expansion and the construction of a second runway by 2030. A review of the proposals by the Airport Management concluded in the 2007 Master Plan (BIA, 2007), that the Airport would only pursue an extension to the existing runway as its main priority. In 2009 planning approval was granted for the runway extension subject to section 106 of the Planning Agreement and as it stands, it is hoped the runway could be opened by 2014 (Birmingham Airport, 2010b and 2010d).

3.4 Birmingham Airport passenger activity

Passenger activity and profile data collected from BHX in 2008 is the most up-to-date independent statistical data currently available. The findings of the latest round of research undertaken by the CAA and International Passenger Survey (IPS) during 2010 are still to be published.

In 2010, the total terminal and transit passengers at BHX amounted to 8,572,398 passengers. When compared with data from 2008 and 2006 respectively, BHX received a total of 9,109,466 passengers (with a business: leisure passenger ratio of 19:81); a downward change from 23:77 in 2006 is noted (CAA, 2006c). The passenger numbers alone highlight the full impact of the economic downturn over the four-year period. On short haul routes, the substitutability of air travel for alternative surface transport modes and the tightened security procedures in place could also be influential.

In 2010, the most populated scheduled domestic routes (by total passengers) from BHX were Edinburgh (EDI), Glasgow (GLA) and City of Derry (LDY), all of which reported a fall in passenger numbers year-on-year. On international routes, Dublin (DUB), Amsterdam (AMS) and Paris Charles de Gaulle (CDG) witnessed the greatest numbers of scheduled traffic (CAA, 2010)

Table 2 presents an overview of passengers travelling from BHX on international and domestic trips by country of residence based upon CAA (2006) data. Whilst the data is relevant to 2006 operations, it is used here as the most up-to-date profile data available, serving as a useful illustration as to the make-up of passenger operations at BHX.

A significant difference can be seen in the total number of international trips made by business and leisure passengers, yet the overall difference on domestic trips is less significant.

International trips				**Domestic trips**			
UK		**Foreign**		**UK**		**Foreign**	
000s	**%**	**000s**	**%**	**000s**	**%**	**000s**	**%**
5,912	65.9	1,534	17.1	1,462	16.3	0,067	0.7

Table 2: International and domestic trips from BHX 2006. Source: Compiled using CAA data (2006c)

The large discrepancy in the number of international trips between UK and foreign passengers is prevalent in tables 3 and 4 . Where international trips are concerned, UK leisure passengers account for 58.7% of the market share against just 9.8% of foreign leisure passengers. This finding is expected. Yet, where business trips are concerned, foreign trips account for .1% more than UK trips. The significance of BHX for international business travellers, whilst not particularly high, demonstrates that the regional airport offers an important service for the incoming business sector.

For domestic trips, UK leisure accounted for the greatest percentage of passenger traffic from BHX in 2006. Time savings derived from travelling by air as opposed to using surface transport may be particularly influential. Cost too could be influential when compared to alternative modes. Perhaps unsurprisingly, domestic trips by foreign visitors are limited.

International trips							
Business				**Leisure**			
UK		**Foreign**		**UK**		**Foreign**	
000s	**%**	**000s**	**%**	**000s**	**%**	**000s**	**%**
0,646	7.2	0,652	7.3	5,266	58.7	0,882	9.8

Table 3: International business and leisure trips from BHX 2006. Source: Compiled using CAA data (2006c)

Domestic trips							
Business				**Leisure**			
UK		**Foreign**		**UK**		**Foreign**	
000s	**%**	**000s**	**%**	**000s**	**%**	**000s**	**%**
0,698	7.8	0,024	0.3	0,764	8.5	0,043	0.5

Table 4: Domestic business and leisure trips from BHX 2006. Source: Compiled using CAA data (2006c)

Table 5 presents data pertaining to the group size of terminating business passengers at BHX during 2006 (CAA, 2006c). The data shows that UK business passengers accounted for the greatest proportion of travelling passengers that travel alone. Elsewhere, where group size increases, it does so on trips made by UK leisure passengers. For leisure, the average group size of passengers travelling from BHX in 2006 was two persons per group.

Group size	UK Business (%)	UK Leisure (%)	Foreign Business (%)	Foreign Leisure (%)	All passengers (%)
Travelling alone	83	21	78	56	38
Passenger plus one	12	42	15	28	34
Passenger plus two	2	11	4	8	9
Passenger plus three	1	15	2	5	11
Passenger plus four	0	6	1	1	4
Passenger plus five	2	5	0	2	4
Total	100	100	100	100	100
Total Passengers (000s)	1,325	5,936	642	852	8,755

Table 5: Group size of departing passengers from BHX 2006. Source: Compiled using CAA data (2006c)

In 2008 the gender split of passengers travelling from BHX was relatively equal, with male passengers accounting for 51% of total passengers (14% business and 37% leisure) and female passengers totalling 49% (5% business and 44% leisure).

Table 6 presents the profile of all passengers by age. The 2008 BHX findings show that the majority of passengers are aged 45-54 years (21.8%), with the age groups 35-44 years and 55-64 years also well represented. The least represented group is 0-19 years (2.2%). Comparisons with CAA 2006 data (who use the same age groupings) shows a 5.8% decrease in passengers under the age of 19 using the airport over the two year period, yet a +5 percent increase in those aged 55+ years. The results are arguably reflective of a growing divide in the affordability and disposable time levels of both groups. The changes evident across all other groups are small.

Age (Years)	2008 BHX data (% Total passengers)	2006 CAA data (% Total passengers)	% Difference between 08/06 data
0-19	2.2	8.0	-5.8
20-24	7.4	6.2	+1.2
25-34	16.3	15.8	+0.5
35-44	19.9	22.1	-2.2
45-54	21.8	20.5	+1.3
55+	32.4	27.4	+5

Table 6: BHX passengers by age – percentage change 2006-2008. Source: Compiled using CAA (2006c) and BIA (2009) data

In 2005 a MORI poll was commissioned to explore the sentiments of 802 local people towards BHX. The results were weighted to reflect the total population of the area (BIA, 2005b). The following findings are of particular interest. Eighty-two percent of the sample indicated that they use BHX, with 68% using the airport at least once a year. However, over half of the respondents (64%) also make use of alternative UK airports when their chosen destination is not served by BHX. A large potential market is clearly lost to other airports through route unavailability. It would be wise for BHX to consider such data with care and identify where market share is lost, with the intention of filling the gap. Overall, 68% of respondents said that when thinking about the airport generally, they were fairly or very favourable towards it. Again here, lessons could be learnt as to what passengers were not so satisfied with, so that improvements could be made. Data was not available as to what passenger’s were/were not satisfied with.

3.5 LCCs at BHX

The introduction of LCC services to BHX is a relatively recent phenomenon, challenging both the traditional charter and FSC short haul market operations (BIA, 2005). A gradual increase in the demand for low-cost services is evident, with a range of LCCs operating domestic and short haul routes that ensure the airport is well placed to serve both business and leisure passengers (BIA, 2005)

By 2005, just over half of all passenger activity at BHX was attributable to scheduled traffic, with charter traffic accounting for a further thirty-three percent. The remainder of passenger activity was attributable to LCCs (BIA, 2005).

In 2005, it was predicted that one of the major growth areas for BHX would be in the long-haul sector (BIA, 2005), with significant growth also forecast within low-cost travel, with potential routes anticipated to include traditional short haul European 'sun-routes' and European cities for both business and leisure. In addition, central and eastern Europe was seen to present new opportunities (BIA, 2007). The predictions did in fact hold true, with LCCs and charter airlines holding the top six positions at BHX, as the largest airlines by passenger traffic in 2009 (BIA, 2009).

The domestic market at BHX has now reached a point of saturation, with domestic traffic forecast to be the slowest growing sector, principally a result of very few opportunities for domestic route development in recent years. Current predictions of passenger traffic at BHX are highlighted in table 7. The figures suggest that continued and sustained growth is expected over the next 20 years. Of interest, the 2030 aggregate forecast is lower than that predicted by the DfT (2003), indicating that the airport may have been cautiously optimistic with its predictions. In fact, data published by the CAA (2010) demonstrates that passenger numbers at BHX actually dipped during 2010 to 8,584,000 passengers, a decrease of 6% on 2009 figures. The anticipated double-dip recession and slow recovery of the economy could be attributable to the decline.

Year	Total passengers (millions)
2006	9.2
2010	11.5
2015	15.3
2020	19.6
2030	27.2m

Table 7: Forecasted passenger traffic at BHX. Source: BIA (2007: 20)

Table 8 on the following page presents ICAO (2011) data demonstrating airline traffic by flight stage for the years 2001-2009 on the route BHX-ALC (Alicante). The route was chosen to demonstrate the growth of charter and LCCs operating point-to-point services to the 'sun' destination, whilst the bi-annual data helps to illustrate route evolution, withstanding the aftermath of 9/11. Where airlines operated more than one aircraft type, the data has been aggregated by year.

What is interesting to note from Table 8 is the evolution of the route. From charter airlines monopolizing the routes in 2001 and 2003, the introduction of the LCC in 2005 saturated the market. Only one FSC carrier operated on the route during the decade and that was BA Citiflyer in 2005. Given the total number of flights, it is assumed that the flights would have been special flights (i.e. repositioning or one-off services) as opposed to scheduled services. With LCCs and charter airlines operating head-to-head in the years 2005, 2007 and 2009, Monarch (ZB) continued to dominate the market, providing the most passenger seats and generating the greatest passenger seat revenue. The most successful operation appears to be that operated by My Travel Airways (VZ) in 2003, where the airline had full control of the market.

Year	Airline	Flights (Total)	Pax seats available (All aircraft)	Pax seat revenue (Total £000)
2001	DP	52	12116	11651
2003	VZ	554	100644	83181
2005	BA	11	1210	1045
	WW	320	47121	39288
	BE	173	25604	22497
	ZB	96	21165	14499
	VZ	302	55420	45261
	BY	2	279	152
2007	WW	372	54290	43478
	BE	4	472	260
	ZB	312	64921	51677
2009	WW	233	34042	28590
	ZB	315	66060	54100

Table 8: Airlines operating on Alicante route from BHX 2001-2009. Source: Adapted from ICAO (2011)

Similarly, table 9 presents a historical overview of the BHX-AGP (Malaga) route for the period 2001-2009. The data has again been adapted from ICAO (2011) airline traffic by flight stage data. As with the previous example, only BA Citiflyer operated on this route during 2005, the only FSC to have done so. With only nine flights during the year, as before, it is assumed that as opposed to scheduled services, they were one-off special flights.

My Travel Airways operated the most profitable route in terms of passenger seat revenue during 2003 when it held a monopoly on the route. In 2005, WW emerged as the most successful carrier on the BHX-AGP route, yet it appears that the success may be attributable to a slow down in operations for MyTravel. bmibaby continued with a successful year in 2007, yet the inception of Monarch signaled a turning point for the carrier, leading to cuts in 2009. The charter airlines remain dominant on this BHX-AGP route, although as a LCC, bmibaby has clearly had financial success operating head-to-head with the established charter airlines.

Year	Airline	Flights (Total)	Pax seats available (All aircraft)	Pax seat revenue (Total £000)
2001	DP	78	18174	16886
2003	VZ	569	102558	84200
2005	BA	9	990	918
	WW	389	57261	48187
	BE	230	34270	26909
	ZB	232	51000	36374
	VZ	303	54810	43712
	BY	4	859	371
2007	WW	457	67092	55821
	BE	2	236	98
	ZB	402	85950	69714
2009	WW	267	39499	33360
	ZB	321	66989	54456

Table 9: Airlines operating on Malaga route from BHX 2001-2009. Source: Adapted from ICAO (2011)

Whilst the two previous examples offered a limited glimpse into passenger operations at BHX, they clearly demonstrate the growth in operations following the inception of LCCs at BHX and are reflective of the current situation, specifically where LCCs and charter airlines operate alongside one another. The increased provision of flights has helped to remove situations where airlines operated in isolation, with greater choice and availability for the consumer. Whilst charter carriers remain dominant in terms of revenue yield on both routes, the LCC nevertheless remains a dominant player.

3.6 Summary

This chapter sought to highlight through the use of BHX as a case study, the changing nature of passenger operations at the UK regional airport. The discussion offered insight as to the presence assumed by regional airports within the UK, before charting the rise of BHX as a significant player within regional operations.

What is clear from the data and discussions presented, is the significant inroads LCCs have made at BHX, offering greater choice to passengers as to the services that are available to them. As a regional airport that once rode high on the back of its full-service and charter operations, it has witnessed a seismic shift in its product portfolio. In welcoming the LCC to the airport, BHX has encouraged greater competition on short haul routes with charters and FSCs, whilst at the same time through developments that have taken place on-site at the airport, allowed its full-service long-haul operations to grow.

It was the purpose of chapter 3 to illustrate the diverse nature of BHX as a regional airport and lay the foundations for the background to the primary research that will be undertaken. However, before data collection can begin, it is important to identify the wealth of academic research and literature surrounding this study. Thus chapter 4 brings together literature that explores the background to attitude formation and characteristics of airline passengers as a pre cursor to exploring their implications for pre-trip decision-making and airline choice.

4. Literature review

4.1 Introduction

It is arguably no longer sufficient to say ‘air traveller’ and encompass within this one phrase the diverse needs and requirements of those travelling by air. Referring to the phenomenon that is tourism, McCabe (2002:71) notes ‘tourist destinations are no longer the primary spaces to parade identity and status...(they) are not class-neutral; rich and poor alike can all share the same holiday, side by side...since travel is the universal preserve of the classless society.’ The same is true of air travel, no longer a reserve of the upper class or rich, air travel today is a luxury enjoyed by what McCabe terms the ‘classless society’.

Airlines are increasingly met by the challenge to attract loyal air passengers to their brand and cater for their increasingly demanding and cost focused needs. What follows seeks to explore the changing nature of the aviation industry and its consumers, with particular reference to behavioural and consumption issues.

Chapter 4 opens with a discussion that seeks to distinguish between low cost leisure and business passengers, recognising key trends and challenges within the sectors. Section 4.3 introduces attitude formation and behaviour, before 4.4 considers the role of psychology in behaviour and within its sub-sections, identifies different realms of behaviourism and the implications for air travel.

Section 4.5 considers typologies that exist within tourism and the classifications that seek to define travellers and tourists. Decision-making in the context of air travel is then addressed in 4.6, with its sub-sections considering the role of perception, influential factors, sociological factors, culture and emotion and their implications for passenger decision-making.

Determinants of information search, that is how passengers go about locating information, is considered in 4.7, whilst 4.8 and its sub-sections move the discussion forward to consider impulse purchase behaviour and its role within the context of air travel.

4.9 looks more specifically at the online arena and investigates the many facets of online shopping from the consumer and retailers viewpoints, to shopping motivations and risk/regret minimisation, before considering the implications of website design and pricing factors. The chapter is summarised in section 4.10.

4.2 Air travellers

4.2.1 The low cost Leisure traveller

The inception of the low cost model into the UK was widely speculated to increase the affordability and accessibility of air travel to lower socio-economic groups (Seaton, 1992 cited in Holden, 2005), yet in reality the truth is somewhat different. As the CAA documented in 2006, there has been little evidence of a change in the demographics of people flying with LCCs for leisure purposes. During the period 1996 – 2005, the CAA (2006c) recognised that the greatest increase in the propensity to fly amongst all income groups was seen within the income band £23,000 to £34,500; notably spanning the average household income of £26,000.

A further perception is that the LCC is widely attributable to the growth of the European weekend leisure break (CAA, 2006). Indeed, consumers have benefited from increased flexibility in the workplace to take advantage of LCC services to European destinations spurring a growth in the weekend break. As Larsen et al (2006:101) note, ‘budget airlines have compressed Europe’s cities into a transnational network of cheap and accessible playgrounds.’ To this end, the growth in second home ownership within Western Europe during the late nineties and early noughties (Dijst et al. 2005), coupled with an increase in the number of trips to visit friends and relatives (VFR) has also helped to develop the market (CAA, 2006). Expansion within these sectors has generated growth in the number of independent travellers, that is individuals ‘who make their own transportation and accommodation arrangements, choosing not to buy prearranged packages or tours’ (Hyde, 2000 cited in Woodside et al, 2000:177).

In recent years however, the economic downturn has seen travellers reassess their travel plans as incomes have been squeezed (Seckler, 2009 and Unknown, 2009). The impact on the propensity for UK travellers to take short breaks has too been recognised (Mintel, 2010). According to the European Commission Directorate General (2010), the most common explanation for not going on holiday during 2009 was due to financial constraints. Whilst the period 2007-2009 saw an increase in the number of short breaks overall, on average the number of short breaks taken by individuals was down. The increase is said to be accountable to holidaymakers having replaced their main holiday with one cheaper short break.

To a certain degree LCCs have through their route development come to exert a level of influence upon the destination choice of leisure passengers. As the work of Yeoman and McMahon-Beattie (2006) considers, the destination choice process for the leisure passenger will in the future, if it is not already, be based upon where the LCC flies, rather than the destination dictating the choice process. By using low prices to attract passengers who might not have previously considered making a journey by air, Gillen and Morrison (2003, cited in Warnock-Smith and Potter, 2005) consider the likes of Ryanair to be ‘market making’ LCCs. Not only has the LCC been influential in changing our travel patterns, it would also now appear they have the power determine our destination choice.

From the airlines perspective, Pilarski (2007) considers that cyclicality manifests itself in a variety of ways. On the demand side, consumer preferences are influential in the scheduling of services with weekend and holiday travel patterns very different from the working week, whilst on the supply side airport curfews can also restrict travel.

Recognising the impact of the economic climate, Pilarski (2007) notes that as travel is a luxury, its consumption falls more substantially than other commodities. Nevertheless, many businesses would argue the contrary, seeing travel for business as a necessity. However, Holden (2005) suggests that as tourism has become more significant and mainstream, it has become more of an expected experience rather than a luxury. Nevertheless, airlines have felt the effects of economic cycles more so than other products. A recent report by Begbies Traynor found a 31% increase in the number of UK travel companies facing critical financial problems in the second quarter of 2011 (Begbies Traynor, 2011). Key casualties to have emerged within the last year include Thomas Cook whose share prices dipped dramatically in July 2011 (Travel Weekly, 2011b) and who are now seeking a merger with Co-operative Travel, Dream Holidays and Gills Cruise Centre to name but a few.

Focusing on airlines specifically, a recent financial forecast by the International Air Transport Association (IATA) (March 2011), clearly demonstrates the impact of the wider economy on air travel. The IATA report highlights regional differences in the economic performance of airlines, with the European recession, banking and government debt crisis, documented as the reasons for the weak home market's performance (IATA, 2011). Whilst leisure travel has been particularly hard hit, there is evidence IATA suggest, that the long-haul business market is more robust.

4.2.2. The low cost business traveller

Supporting the data presented by IATA, the Ascend Corporate Travel Survey 2011 reported a 5.5% expected increase in the number of business flights that are planned within the next year and an additional 5% increase in company air travel budgets (Ascend, 2011). Whilst the impact of the recession is far from over, the signs from industry are indicating that growth is evident.

With price elasticity a key differential between the business and leisure market (Mason and Gray, 1999), it is difficult to comprehend the increasing market share business passengers represent within the low-cost sector. Under increased pressure from organisations to drive down the cost of business travel expenses, many business travellers now appear to see the LCC as a viable alternative to the FSC (Fourie and Lubbe, 2006). A recent study by Neal and Kassens-Noor (2011) concluded that since the decline of the United States (US) economy in 2007, business passengers have begun to represent a declining proportion of FSC passenger volume in the US, with increasing numbers of passengers now travelling with Southwest.

The CAA (2010a) also highlighted the significant in-roads that LCCs have made into the business market, supporting the work of Fourie and Lubbe. The CAA report published amidst an economic downturn, found that on the two biggest short-haul markets (London-Amsterdam and London-Dublin), easyJet has around a quarter of the London–Amsterdam business market and Ryanair more than a third of London–Dublin route (excluding passengers connecting at the destination). However, the use of LCCs by business passengers is not a recent phenomenon, with 71% of UK business passengers indicating that they used LCCs for business trips during 2004/05 (Mason, 2006).

Although Mason (2001) and Evangelho et al. (2005) suggest that the size of the company for whom the business traveller works will affect price elasticity and the organisations' willingness to spend, evidence suggests that there is an increasing shift in organisations using LCCs for corporate travel. Whilst larger organisations may by and large continue to hold a preference for travel with FSCs due to negotiated rates and the benefit of participating in a FFP (Evangelho et a. 2005; Travel Weekly, 2008), many smaller businesses and particularly those situated within the regions, are clearly taking advantage of LCC services (CAA, 2006; CAA, 2010a). Of note, even where businesses are not switching to LCC services, there is evidence to support a sharp decline in business travellers using premium cabins. On short haul flights to and from London alone, use was down from 41% in 1996 to 5% in 2009 (CAA, 2010a).

With many budget holders within organisations focused upon tightening the purse strings and encouraging business travellers to opt for no-frills services, the transition from FSC to LCC can give rise to conflict, with the business traveller accustomed to the luxuries that come with flying with a FSC (Mason and Gray, 1999). Although the business traveller may be happy to travel on-board a LCC for leisure purposes, as Fowkes et al (1991) and Bansal and Eiselt (2004) consider, consumer motivations differ from one decision-making context to the next. For the business passenger the facilities and services that form part of the package provided by FSCs may be seen to greatly enhance the travellers working day and therefore take preference over travel with a LCC, with whom only limited facilities are offered as standard and chargeable as required. As Rickard (2010 cited in Rigby, 2010) pertains 'organisations have a moral duty to make sure their staff travel in reasonable comfort.'

Research by Fowkes et al. (1991) suggested that journey planning for business travel might be considered to take place at two extremes. First, a situation where the company/manager dictates the journeys that are made and second, where the decision is left to the individual making the journey. The authors suggest that consideration needs to be given to the fact that in the former case, it is the travel decisions of the company that are being measured. When the individual makes the travel decision, as is often presumed, they will not always opt for the highest quality service, but in reality take into account the cost to the organisation. It is unlikely that the situation will be at either extreme, with a company allowing employees some level of autonomy in their decisions within an overall company travel policy.

There are however considerable benefits for the business traveller in choosing to fly with a LCC. Operating point-to-point services with minimum turnaround times, LCCs can deliver high frequency and generally on-time services, sheltered from the problems often associated with FSCs (Doganis, 2006). In addition, the business traveller can take advantage of the one-way tickets offered by LCC. Despite the removal of fare restrictions on many FSC flights, LCCs can offer increased travel flexibility over their counterparts where ticket restrictions are concerned (CAA, 2006). For the business traveller opting for a LCC flight, the threat remains that in the event of a cancellation or the flight being re-routed, that they will be required to bare the brunt of any inconvenience or out of pocket costs, which would otherwise be covered by a FSC.

Many LCCs now operate similar facilities to their FSC competitors, including mobile phone check-in as piloted by Air Berlin (Airline Business, 2007) and the use of self-service check-in kiosks used by easyJet (Baker, 2007). Even on-board phone use was trialled by Ryanair, despite being later scrapped (Financial Times, 2010). Whilst all of the services offer time savings for business passengers, the question as to the longevity of such services given that they come at an extra cost, must be questioned.

4.3 Attitude formation and behaviour

Allport (cited in Fishbein, 1967:6) considers the historical foundations of *attitudes* and notes the elasticity of the term, which can be used to refer to an individual or a broad pattern of culture. He cites the early work of Thomas and Znaniecki (1918, see Allport in Fishbein, 1967) which is considered *par excellence* in the field of social psychology to define *attitudes* as ‘individual mental processes which determine both the actual and potential responses of each person in the social world. Since an attitude is always directed toward some object it may be defined as “a state of mind of the individual towards a value.” In turn, Thurstone (cited in Fishbein, 1967:77) suggests that an attitude can be defined as ‘the sum total of a man’s inclinations and feelings, prejudice or bias, preconceived notions, ideas, fears, threats and convictions about any specified topic.’

The discussion by Allport considers the various origins in which attitude theory may be embedded, concluding that attitudes can be characterised in numerous ways including: natural and social attitudes, conscious and unconscious attitudes, mental and motor attitudes, individual and group attitudes and latent and kinetic attitudes. Attention should also be given to the complexities of the term *attitude* and the difficulty there appears to be in

making the definition both all-encompassing, yet focused enough to simply include the basic notions.
A more recent definition proposed by Dibb et al. (2006:177) defines attitude as ‘an individual’s enduring evaluation, feelings and behavioural tendencies towards an object or activity. The objects or acts towards which we have attitudes may be tangible or intangible, living or non-living.’ Elsewhere and in a much earlier setting Allport (1935:810 cited in Ajzen, 2005:28) defined attitude as ‘a mental and neural state of readiness, organised through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual’s response to all objects and situations with which it is related.’

Attitudes are thus formed as a result of information that we receive (Malim and Birch, 1998). Information is received at different times, with more emphasis given to certain pieces of information over others. Yet how this information is interpreted, at what time it is received and how it is combined, will ultimately influence the attitudes that are formed by the individual. An individual’s personality will also play a large role in this process. To this end, Malim and Birch, 1998 and Dibb et al. 2006 consider that attitudes comprise three components: cognitive (perceptions or beliefs), affective (feelings or emotions generated by the object) and behavioural (behavioural intention/actions based upon cognitive/affective responses).

Whilst the aforementioned definitions of ‘attitude’ imply relatively stable sets of evaluation through the cognitive component, individuals have the ability to assimilate new information and change their attitudes over time. As Ajzen (1988 cited in Malim and Birch, 1998:649) recognises ‘people do not always behave in ways that are consistent with their attitudes. They may...be faced with conflicts between contradictory attitudes.’ Aligning an individual’s attitude to a scale may arguably offer only partial insight into their belief, with implications for attitude measurement in research recognised.

Whilst an individual’s attitude may be challenged at times, they are on the whole most likely to employ ‘reasoned action’, whereby they will consider the implications of their actions before engaging in behaviour (Ajzen and

Fishbein, 1980). The theory of reasoned action suggests that attitude towards the behaviour (the individual's judgement as to whether the behaviour is good or bad); the relative importance of behavioural beliefs and normative considerations and the subjective norm (the individual's perception of social pressures to behave in a certain way) will help to form an intention and consequential behaviour. A high correlation of attitudes and subjective norms to behavioural intention and behaviour have been identified within this and later research.

Building upon the behavioural and normative element of the theory of reasoned action, Ajzen (1991) constructed the concept of 'planned behaviour', considering the importance of perceived behavioural control. It differentiates itself from the earlier theory of reasoned action recognising that behaviour is not always voluntary and controlled, but also deliberative and planned.

Referring to attitudes modelled on behaviour that has been previously witnessed or experienced, *observational modelling* proposed by Bandura (1973) purports yet another perspective. In practice, an airline passenger that has previously experienced good service or witnessed good service delivery by an airline may be more inclined to book a flight with the airline than if the opposite had been true. A similar notion is purported by Shaw and Wright (1967, cited in Fishbein, 1967) who suggest that existing beliefs about an object will determine future beliefs that are formed.

Elsewhere Festinger (1957) considers the theory of cognitive dissonance in which conflict is thought to exist between three related cognitions (thoughts / beliefs / attitudes). To illustrate, if an individual is strongly opposed to the business ethics of a specific LCC, but when booking a flight to visit a family member finds that the only airline that operates to the intended destination is the airline they dislike, dissonance may occur. He (*ibid*.) suggests that the cognitive elements are threefold: consonant (in agreement), dissonant (conflicting) or irrelevant. The size and tension that cognitive dissonance produces will be intrinsically linked to the importance the individual attaches to it, the ratio or consonant/dissonant elements and finally the amount of cognitive overlap.

The dissonance met by the individual will be uncomfortable and in consequence they will be motivated to alter one or more of the elements. A notion of forced compliance, in that some kind of pressure to adopt a public attitude that is at odds with another thought, belief or attitude may therefore be present. In addition, ‘post dissonance’ can feature once a decision has been made. Emphasis is placed upon the good points of the option that has been chosen, whilst noting the disadvantages of the other option(s). The feeling of discord may often lead to ‘selective exposure’ in which information is sought to support the choice that has been made (Festinger, 1957). In the case where a consumer has had to choose the most attractive flight from two or three possible options, they may seek reassurance from ‘selective exposure’ to confirm that they have made the right choice. Limited availability or route choices are likely to be key issues to give rise to such attitudes developing.

A prevalent theme evident in the definitions considered here is that attitude is not behaviour, but the precondition of behaviour. In turn it would appear that many definitions do not define between different attitudes and consider the term *attitude* in a very general manner.

4.4 Psychology and behaviour

The nature and scope of human psychology is far reaching, reflected in the complex and multi-faceted area of study in which it is located. Whilst social anxiety can lead to changed behaviour through the aspiration or need to socially better oneself (de Botton, 2005), the biological processes and understanding of behaviour are arguably more complex in quantifying and making sense of how individuals rationalise, process and formulate their attitudes into decisions. Schools of thought existing within the scope of psychology are numerous, yet those thought to be most influential and frequently cited include behaviourism, humanism and Freudism.

Whilst the theoretical concepts propose alternate perspectives as to the conceptualization of human beings, each school of thought contributes to the development and comprehension of the human mind - at times demonstrating similarities in their approach.

4.4.1 Behaviourism

In the context of pre-trip decision-making and low-cost air travel, the realm of behaviourism through its various facets, offers alternate viewpoints as to the study of behaviour. Early work within this field founded by Watson, excluded self-study or introspection, dealing only with overt behaviour. More recent commentators have sought to reinforce that motives and personal characteristics determine a person's disposition that leads to behaviour (Decrop, 2000). Behavioural psychology became prominent in the 1950s; with recognition given to the influence external stimuli can have on individuals, i.e. that behaviour is learnt in response to social environments.

Pavlov introduced *classical conditioning*, having recognised that repetitive exposure to a previously neutral stimulus could become capable of eliciting a response because of its association with an unconditioned stimulus, thus automatically producing the same or similar response (Gross, 2005). The effectiveness of an advertisement is linked to the emotional content of messages. The use of repetition, classical conditioning, humour and fear can be particularly powerful in eliciting emotional responses towards a product or service. Classical conditioning is thus a form of associative learning.

Osgood et al. (1957:4) sought to criticise the early of Watson and Pavlov calling it 'naïve'. They suggested that the simplicity of the approach 'highlights its inadequacy – signs almost never evoke the same overt responses as the things they represent.'

Elsewhere, Malim and Birch (1998) cite Davies (1987) who considers that an anxiety state, in which an anxiety-producing situation occurs at the same time as another stimulus, is often learnt in classical conditioning. Thus whenever the stimulus-object appears, anxiety is aroused. The concept is particularly relevant in pre-trip decision making, as a previously bad experience or awareness of poor service may lead to a stress-induced situation whereby an individual discounts an airline based upon a previous bad experience or knowledge of poor service.

The notion of classical conditioning may be considered an extension of Zajonic's *mere exposure effect* or perhaps an explanation of it (Zajonic, 1968 cited in Malim and Birch, 1998). The *mere exposure effect* suggests that the frequency an individual meets with an attitude object (stimulus), will influence their perception of it. That is, if an individual frequently sees advertising for an airline, they may over time develop a preference for that airline over its rivals or if the opposite is true, choose to avoid the airline where possible. To this end, it is has been suggested that business and leisure passengers hold different perceptions of airline service levels and within each group, similar service levels will be expected (Müller and Gosling, 1991 and Humphreys et al. 2002).

Whilst in reality the concept is perhaps not so pre-determined, with many other variables influencing behaviour, it does nevertheless illustrate the effect repetitive exposure can have upon an individual.

The use of branding and the implications of online marketing and 'store' layout are thus inherent to the phenomenon that is the *mere exposure effect* and the individual's decision-making process. As consumers use information recalled from memory and past experience as well as external information to inform choice, brand recognition is integral to the decision-making process of airline choice. Love it or hate it, the garish media advertising and frequent promotional offers (namely free flights or inclusive taxes) by airlines such as Ryanair and easyJet, have set them apart from the generally refined marketing of traditional FSCs. The practice demonstrates how successful such salubrious marketing tactics can be in effectively capturing consumers through the use of 'in-your-face' sales advertisements.

On similar lines, Osgood et al (1957) contend that whilst many different meanings of the term ‘meaning’ exist, it inherently refers to the fact that signs have certain ‘meanings’ which when used consistently, can elicit certain behaviours in particular situations. Thus, the way in which an individual behaves in a situation will depend upon what the situation means or signifies to them.

The *mere exposure effect* is also linked to the work of Skinner. *Radical* or *operant conditioning* as it is more commonly known, is another form the associative learning of attitudes and put simply, concerns the reinforcement of behaviour by reward or punishment. Whilst the theory of covert behaviour developed by Skinner is linked to *classical conditioning*, it is said to take a more ‘extreme’ approach (Pervin and John, 2001).

To illustrate, in the context of purchasing an airline ticket, FFPs can be seen as one way in which consumers are *rewarded* by FSCs for their custom. Whilst, FFPs are not prevalent in the low-cost model, the example demonstrates the use of positive reinforcement (rewards) to encourage repeat travel with an airline. A study by Morrison and Winston (1995) found FFPs to be particularly important amongst travel groups, yet more specifically amongst frequent-flyers and flyers that are close to receiving benefits from the FFP. For LCCs the travel options offered to the customer at the time of booking allow the consumer to be rewarded through monetary savings by streamlining their travel booking, yet *punished* through additional charges if *optional* extras are selected. Ryanair has arguably adopted the radical conditioning approach to its check-in policy, allowing passengers to printout boarding cards at home or forfeit having to pay a fee for them to be printed out at check in (BBC, 2011a).

4.4.2 Humanism

Humanism is an approach to have emerged in reaction to behaviourism and psychodynamics, purporting a stance in which individuals have free will and the ability to choose how they will act. Rogers, the founder of the movement, suggested that individuals perceive the world in a unique way and draw upon both conscious and unconscious perceptions – with emphasis upon the latter (Nye, 1999). The phenomenological approach focuses upon the 'self' and a move towards self-actualization. Whilst Rogers's work was based upon the motives of humans and non-humans, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs focuses solely upon the human element, purporting that once individuals satisfy biological needs their motives will move towards achieving self-actualisation (Reisinger, 2009). As Maslow's Hierarchy assumes that the move towards self-actualisation will be linear, it fails to take into account that individuals may differ in the way they try to satisfy their (multiple) needs and potential conflicts in meeting those needs.

Data from a CAA report published in 2006 considered the development of the LCC market, yet the findings appear in contrast to the humanistic approach advocated by Rogers and Maslow. In the report, the perception that LCCs marked a shift in air traveller income profiles is challenged. The study shows that whilst air travel increased in the ten years to 2006 across all income bands, it did so most notably within the middle and higher income groups.

The CAA data supports the notion that once individuals have met their biological needs, attention will shift towards meeting higher level needs such as leisure travel. Yet the use of LCCs by higher income groups does not meet with the higher order needs that self-actualisation perpetuates. In humanistic theory, one would expect that as income levels rise, individuals would seek a more fulfilling travel experience, say with a FSC or by travelling within a business or first class cabin to experience the additional *extras* that are not offered by a LCC. The findings of the CAA report therefore call into question the motivation of air passengers using LCCs.

Both Mill and Morrison (1985 cited in Hudson, 2000) and Holden (2005) have modified Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to help explain tourism motivation. Similarly here, the Hierarchy is linked to passenger travel motivation and use of LCCs.

Level 5 -
Self-
Actualisation:
LCCs may allow
increased access to air
travel & broaden travel horizons

Level 4 - Esteem:
Can LCCs increase self-esteem?
LCC image not synonymous with LCCs

Level 3 – Relationships: LCCs do not build relationships based upon loyalty programmes, but supposedly reward with lower costs

Level 2 – Safety: The airline is 'safe' and takes the necessary precautions to ensure that passengers are safe and secure.

Level 1 – Psychological: Emphasis upon basic needs being met on the aircraft: **t**oilets, provision of food and drinks (albeit for a charge)

Figure 1: The influence LCCs on travel motivation (adapted from Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs)

The Hierarchy considers movement between the stages in a linear fashion and implies that all lower level needs must be met before the individual can move onto higher levels. However, it could be that some of the basic (psychological) needs are not provided by the airline (without being purchased additionally). Nevertheless, the individual can move towards self-actualisation as the competition LCCs have generated has allowed passengers to benefit from competitive airfares and thus facilitating participation in travel more frequently, for purposes that allow them to broaden their travel horizons. Whilst dated, the popularity of the Hierarchy remains due to its simplicity and relative effectiveness in illustrating motivation.

4.4.3. Psychodynamics

Elsewhere the concept of ‘psychodynamics’ as proposed by Freud, considers that the forces of an individual’s personality motivate behaviour (Nye, 1999). Freud’s idiographic approach, supported by the work of Jung who distinguished between introverts and extroverts (Jung, 1998), deems personality to be unique to individuals. Freud’s work considered that unconscious motivating forces play a central role in motivation and his well-documented work on the id, ego and super-ego; illustrates the conflicting roles of personality. Where id is the pleasure and impulsive part of the mind that does not take into account the consequences of an action, the ego is the conscious/rational part of the mind acting as a mediator between the id and the super-ego, the moral component of the psyche.

In choosing which airline to fly with, the complexity of the human psyche may become apparent, evoking emotion from the various facets of the individual’s personality. To demonstrate, the low-cost model is considered here inline with the work of McGoldrick et al (1999) who contemplates behaviour during seasonal sales.

The appeal of a bargain, McGoldrick et al. (1999) suggest can be attributed to two influences: acquisition utility (the assessment of the value of the good compared to the outlay) and transaction utility (the perceived merits of the deal). Thus under Freud’s psychodynamic premise, the id may encourage the consumer to book a flight optimistic that are receiving a bargain, with feelings of satisfaction from the savings they derive. Excitement may also be generated by the risk that the availability may be limited. As Wood (2005) considers, the purchase of a good or service for motives of excitement, escapism or other 'hedonic' motivations count as the main types of unplanned purchase. Research by Rim (1982) and McClure (1984) also concluded that extroverts in contrast to introverts tend to be more open, comfortable and carefree/extravagant with their money and spending. Purchases may often therefore be made to avoid missing out.

At the same time the super-ego will err on the side of caution, with the consumer considering the consequences of their purchase and the possible implications it may have. That is, if the flight is booked in haste, full thought might not be given to the total cost of the trip. In a similar vein, McCleary and Whitney (2001) suggest a consumer's attitude to the travel experience they are planning is linked to the level of research they conduct, i.e. anxiety leads to overcompensation in research conducted. Amidst this scenario, the ego will weigh up the alternatives in hope of finding a happy medium between the impractical hedonism and morally grounded behaviour.

Furnham and Heaven (1999) consider that it is difficult to try and predict leisure behaviour from personality traits, as any given activity may fulfill different needs for different people. Further, the same individual may have different feelings towards an activity at different times or in different conditions. Business passengers provide a good illustration, whereby for business travel the flexibility to change plans last minute and to benefit from business facilities provided by FSCs are often held in high regard, yet when travelling for leisure the same individual may settle for reduced flexibility and be willing to travel with any airline that fulfils their requirements (Belobaba, 2009).

The theory of 'self-concept' has been proposed as an explanation for discrepancies between the self and ideal self, and suggested as an indicator of purchase behaviour (Furnham and Heaven, 1999). However, as noted, the relationship between a brand and self-image is complicated by the fact that consumers change their self-image according to the situation they are in.

The relationship between money and personality is also worthy of consideration (Furnham and Heaven, 1999). Noting the early work of Luft (1957 cited in Furnham, 1984) who suggested that the weekly income of an individual determines how their peers perceive them, one may argue in the fifty years that have elapsed since the research was conducted, individuals remain frequently to a degree, defined by their personal income. Whilst there continues to be an emphasis upon levels of personal income and a trend towards the purchase of luxurious brands (largely influenced by celebrity culture), there has also been a notable shift within society towards saving money with a growth in retail that reflects a 'throw away culture' with an emphasis upon cheap goods (Cooper, 2010).

Further, the work of Hanley and Wilhelm (1992, cited in Furnham and Heaven, 1999) demonstrated a relationship between self-esteem and money, concluding that individual's who displayed tendencies of compulsive shopping were more likely to have low self-esteem. The argument proposed, whilst tenable, is rather generalized.

Dann (2002) stands in contrast to Freud, suggesting that motivations for tourism cannot be considered as an unconscious process. Having developed a motivational theory, Dann (2002) supported by Crompton (1979, cited in Hsu and Wang, 2008), considers tourism in respect of push and pull factors. Push factors being socio-psychological motives that motivate people to travel whilst pull factors are focused upon the attributes of the destination that attract tourists.

Elsewhere, Pearce (1988, cited in Holden, 2005) suggests that people have 'careers' in tourism, arguing that, as with work, tourism is consciously determined and purposeful. Yet as travel is our own choice, a travel career is most likely oriented towards intrinsic as opposed to extrinsic motivation. The basis for a travel career is that motivations for participating in tourism change with age, life-cycle stages, past experiences and the influence of other people. To this end, so do the choices respondents make with regard to their willingness to spend and choice of airline. Pearce's theory is demonstrated through a model similar to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs – a leisure ladder. With five levels it considers: relaxation and bodily needs, stimulation, relationship, self-esteem and development and fulfillment.

The different schools of thought outlined here, thus offer some explanation as to how behaviour is manifested, and whilst each theory adopts a different viewpoint, explanation as to how attitudes are formed and decisions taken in respect of air travel are proposed.

4.5 Typologies of travel behaviour

Tourist typologies are concerned with the classification of travellers into discrete groups based upon their behavioural attributes (daily routines, activities, interests, opinions, values, needs and perception). Lifestyles therefore arguably give more information about the individual than socio-demographics alone. Whilst typologies remain widely reported within tourism, there is less evidence within airline literature (Shaw, 2007). The number of types / classifications of tourists varies between typologies; however it is clear that there are similar themes between the classifications that are proposed.

The work of Lowyck et al. (1992) criticises typologies for this reason, suggesting that they are all too similar and that it is possible to define tourists based upon the supply of tourism which does not have to include psychographic information. A key theme to tourist typologies is that the focus largely (and quite rightly) is upon the behaviour of the tourist in respect of the destination. There is little emphasis upon the journey and choice decisions surrounding travel to the destination.

The early work of Perreault et al. identified five distinct groups (or types) of leisure traveller: budget traveller (economy oriented), adventurers low desire for relaxation and high desire for taking risks), homebodies (who want relaxing vacations), vacationers (plan ahead, but are undecided about their vacations) and moderates (high disposition for travel, but do not like travel at the weekend or sports) (Yiannakis and Gibson, 1992).

The Gallup Organization (1989 cited in Hudson eds.) also found that respondents experience travel differently regardless of their frequency of travel, origin or destination. The five groups emerged as: adventurers, worriers, dreamers, economisers and indulgers.

Both classifications, whilst focused upon tourist activity in the destination, are useful in that they make reference to the journey and frequency of travel.

Elsewhere Stewart (1993 cited in Hudson, 2000.) considers a model proposed by the Henley Centre based upon holiday taking, which suggests that as people become more affluent, their experience of travel also grows. At different stages, destinations vary in their popularity, but importantly so does the change in motivation for travel. The four-phase model, which focused upon personal income growth and travel confidence, identifies Phase 1: Bubble Travellers (the initial phase of foreign travel where motivation is one of curiosity, with many travelling as part of a package holiday); Phase 2: Idealised-Experience Seekers (consumers are more affluent and have basic travel experience and greater confidence); Phase 3: Wide Horizon Travellers (further progression in affluence and travel experience) and Phase 4: Total Immersers (beyond what is currently understood as tourism - the tourist wants to immerse themselves in the language, culture and heritage of the country). Again, whilst the typology has a strong focus upon destination choice, its inclusion of economic issues is of interest.

Many of the most cited definitions have also largely focused upon recreational (leisure) tourism. Cohen's (1972 cited in Hudson, 2000) original classification of tourists differentiated between institutionalised and non-institutionalised forms of tourism, proposing the terms organised mass tourist, individual mass tourist, explorer and drifter. Later Cohen suggested a new typology based upon tourist experiences helping to distinguish between the degree of emotional and psychological attachment the individual has to their home environment, and its influence on the intensity and desire of the tourist to experience the destination.

As with many typologies, Cohen's classifications are not fixed and it is recognised that an individual may or may not search for these typologies during their lifetime.

Perhaps the most well documented typology inherently linked to aviation research is Plog's psychographic classification, which considers personality theory and travel behaviour (Plog, 1973 and 1994 cited in Holden, 2005). The theory is concerned with understanding a tourist's intrinsic desire to choose a particular type of holiday or destination, by measuring their personality. Plog contends that socio-demographics have little use in terms of predicting travel behaviour and that group typologies are a better means of identifying travel patterns. The value of socio-demographics in predicting travel behaviour should not however be underestimated. Shifts in populations, distributions of income and age; and migration patterns profoundly influence travel and the growth of aviation within developing countries. The changes thus highlight the increasing importance and role of demographics (Taneja, 2002).

Plog's original work was borne from research undertaken for airlines wanting to convert non-flyers into flyers, and proposed a range of typologies spanning from allocentrics (variety seeking, adventurous and confident) to psychocentrics (self-inhibited, nervous, non-adventuresome). The scale included psychocentrics, near psychocentrics, mid-centrics, near allocentrics and allocentrics.

Whilst the research was conducted on behalf of airlines, the categories proposed have little emphasis upon the travel element. Under Plog's classification, those considered allocentric are said to prefer more exotic holidays and unstructured itineraries and more involvement with local cultures, whilst psychocentrics are thought to prefer familiar destinations, packaged tours and 'touristy' areas. 'Energy' was added later to consider the level of activity the traveller likes – high-energy travellers prefer high-levels of activity, whilst low-energy travellers prefer low-energy activities. Plog found the majority of the population to be mid-centrics, somewhere in between the allocentric and psychocentric traveller. Yet given that travellers do not always travel for the same purpose, Plog's theory is arguably unsuitable as a permanent tourist label.

More recently, Decrop (2000) suggested that it is no longer reasonable to speak of one universal decision-making process when planning a trip. The typology proposed by Decrop is perhaps most relevant to this research in that it considers the attitudes of individuals towards travel and the level and depth of pre-trip research they undertake.

The seven classifications of tourist are identified here, but with emphasis upon traits related to the decision making process over destination attributes. First is the alternative tourist: intellectual, trip is well prepared, mass-tourism aversive; Surrogate tourist: likes to discuss holidays and make recommendations, plan lots and collect information; Unplanned tourist: minimises planning due to time pressures, desires flexibility, desire to stay free, limited research; Unwilling tourist: has to make the trip because of work or family demands; Homebody tourist: goes to the same place time after time out of habit or as they own a second home, risk aversive, can optimise time through familiarity with destination; New modern tourist: adapt decision making to new situations and the decision-making unit; and finally the Gestalt tourists: combines plans and environment to direct behaviour, will make sacrifices to go on holiday, holiday is about a state of mind.

It is thus clear that the decision-making process has been considered in detail by Decrop; nevertheless there is no emphasis upon the research methods employed by the tourist.

4.6 Decision making in travel

The following section seeks to consider the role of decision-making within travel, drawing upon the implications of perception, emotion and the wider socio-cultural influences upon individual decision-making

4.6.1 Perception and decision-making

The role of perception is widely documented within tourism literature and readily discussed in respect of the ‘destination’, yet little attention has been given to the role that perception takes in light of air travel and most notably low-cost air travel. Understanding how individuals perceive and understand information requires the study of perception, learning and attitudes. A number of authors have previously developed models of consumer behaviour focusing upon pre-trip decision-making Mouthino (1987); Woodside and Lysonski (1989); Um and Crompton (1991 cited in Hyde, 2000).

Meyer and Reynolds (1967:3 cited in Ateljevic, 2000:193) argue that perception is an important influential force suggesting that 'what we perceive is very often as much a product of what we want to perceive as of what is actually there.' A traveller's evaluation of the service delivered by an airline is thus arguably based upon the individual's perception of the airline in respect of satisfying their personal needs. Further, in a discussion related to the attention that individuals pay to destination image, Ateljevic (2000:193) cites Mayo and Jarvis, 1981) who consider selective attention or 'perceptual defence' as the '...extent, a person perceives what he [sic] expects to see...because [such expectations] determine what he [sic] pays attention to.' Thus from this perspective, perception may be seen as an inherently personal attribute.

The 'tourist gaze' proposed by Urry (2002) takes an alternative stance considering that an individual's perception is influenced not only by tourist experience per se, but also through a variety of non-tourist practices such as television, radio, literature and magazines. It is thus socially organised, systematically encountered and influenced by external forces. It is not static and varies across societies, cultures and is influenced by non-tourist social practices. The theory suggests that when individuals 'go away' they look at the environment with interest and curiosity, gazing at what is encountered. The concept can be extended to include the journey to the destination and the influence that media exerts on the perception an individual has of the airlines that are available to take them to their destination. Programmes such as 'Airline' and advertising campaigns by LCCs clearly leave 'impressions' in the consumers mind, added to the 'experience' that the air traveller actually has once onboard. Bhatia (2007) recognised the impact of television and a range of other media as influential on the Indian travelling market.

Elsewhere, Berkman and Gilson (1986 cited by Ateljevic, 2000) adopt a middle ground, proposing a two-strand theory that considers stimulus and personal response factors. Where stimulus factors relate to the characteristics of the stimuli being perceived (i.e. colour, shape, texture), the personal response factors are internal and influenced by the individual's interests, needs, personality and social position. In reality, this viewpoint is most likened to the manner in which an individual develops perceptions and in turn forms opinions and consequentially takes action.

Decrop (2000) considers that perception relates to the translation of external information into internal information and is influenced by sensation, attention and memory. Whilst learned behaviour is related to perception, by the fact that learned knowledge and skills are stored in the memory are recalled and associated with beliefs and feelings. The definition of *attitudes* proposed by Allport (1935 cited in Decrop, 2000:104) suggests they are a 'learning predisposition to respond to an object or class of objects in a consistently favourable or unfavourable way.' Based on this definition, it may be argued that attitude is made up of three components: cognitive (perception, belief), affective (evaluation, affect) and conative (action, intention).

With reference to the process of pre-purchase decision-making, Crotts (2000) suggests that once a need or problem is established, an internal memory search is conducted, with information sought from the long-term memory and examples drawn from prior experience. When an internal search is inadequate, an external search is required with information usually drawn from four basic categories. The categories include: personal (friends and family); marketer-dominated (brochures, adverts); neutral (travel clubs/guides/agents) and experimental sources (inspections, pre-purchase visits and store contacts). The Internet is often considered as a fifth independent source but whether this seeks to include the more recent phenomena of social networking websites and forums such as Facebook and Trip Advisor, as opposed to just written text / information is unclear.

To this end Field (2008) postulates, that branding is of the utmost importance where perception is concerned, suggesting that as long as people perceive an airline brand as low-cost, they will look to book with them when price is of the utmost importance in their mind. Field tackles the common misconception that LCCs are always cheaper than FSCs, yet suggests that with this assumption fixed in the minds of consumers, the branding of LCCs is key to their success. Shih (1986) further supports this point, noting that perception and image are influential in tourist decision-making and in some cases; the influence of perception and image is even greater than factual information. Bokaie (2007) also highlights the importance of low-fare perception. Recognising an increase in LCC fares, Boakie suggests that passengers are themselves becoming more discerning and caring about how the low-cost carrier treats them.

Foxall and James (2003) and Bacon (2005) recognise that few customers are 100% loyal to a brand with most buyers practicing what Ehrenberg (1988) terms 'multiband purchasing', with purchases being made from a small repertoire of brands. With this in mind, the work of Degeratu et al. (2000, cited in Beldona et al. 2005) highlights the increased importance of brand names in the case of low-involvement products as opposed to high-involvement products when buying online.

The purchase of an LCC air ticket could be viewed in this regard, with the brand name significant in the purchase. Yet, where package holidays are concerned and depending on the consumers purchasing outlook, price may be perceived as an overriding feature in determining the final choice of airline. Arguably when purchasing a package, individuals are more likely to state their preferred tour operator than airline. Scheduling is also like to be an important feature for business passengers. From the retailers perspective, there is a desire for the airline not to been seen as a commodity, but for tangible differentiators to be recognised and encourage the consumer to make a purchase.

In this vein, Boorstin (1973 cited in Wood, 2005) considers the basic principle upon which retail outlets have frequently been developed, that is, if a product is priced low enough, a consumer would purchase it if needed. Yet arguably, if the product was priced low enough and the funds are available, a consumer may make a purchase on the spur of the moment, whether it is needed or not. This has emerged as a common motivational attribute in the purchase of many LCC air tickets, with consumers seeking to take advantage of the low prices, regardless of whether the journey was intended or not (Wood, 2005). Furthermore the practice is arguably common amongst business travellers, for whom the cost of buying two flights to enable flexibility with a LCC is frequently cheaper than purchasing one flight with a FSC, yet still offering the same level of flexibility.

Yet airlines need to avoid commoditisation and differentiate themselves through their branding. To this end there needs to be psychological differentiation between airline brands whether it be based upon fun, luxury or environmental concerns. Whatever the difference, it needs to hold aspirational differentiation and add value for the air traveller and encourage brand loyalty. With the consumer able to buy tickets from a large number of outlets, there is an increased need for brand loyalty at the point of sale.

In order to make a decision, Hawkins et al. (1995 cited in Crotts, 2000) suggest consumers require three types of information: an appropriate evaluating criteria for a solution to the problem; a number of alternative solutions, and for the characteristics of each alternative to feature on an evaluative criteria. Whilst rather mechanical in its approach, the process does recognise that options will be evaluated and choices consequentially made. The process is unlikely to be linear however; with the evaluative aspect evolving as new information emerges.

The decision-maker will thus be left with a choice based upon an evaluation and selection of the alternatives and their attributes. Perception and awareness are involved in both the awareness set (result of perception) which includes all potential airlines the individual has in mind and the considered set/evoked set (result of perceptions and preferences), which only contains the airlines that the traveller considers reasonable alternatives after deciding to make a trip. The final choice of airline is selected from these alternatives.

Parasuraman et al. (1985) initially proposed the SERVQUAL model in the mid-eighties, but have since revisited it and updated it many times. The model is well cited within academic literature for its use in identifying gaps in service quality that can emerge when customer perceptions and expectations fail to meet with the individual's experience. It seeks to measure customer satisfaction in terms of the relationship between expectations and outcome. Where outcomes exceed expectations, the customer will obviously be very happy, but dissatisfaction is likely to ensue where expectations exceed outcomes. Where the two are equal, the customer will be satisfied.

The model considers the affects of past experience and word-of-mouth on the formation of customer expectations, in addition to personal needs. It does not go further however to consider socio-demographic variables that may be influential in the formation of passenger's perception of service delivery.

Elsewhere, Gilmore (2003) considers that the model is not without criticism, highlighting the debate over the need to measure expectations as well as perceptions and the ambiguity surround the term 'expectation'. Additionally, Gilmore suggests, before highlighting a more detailed critique, that the model appears to focus upon the processes of service delivery as opposed to the outcomes, limiting its value.

For the purposes of this discussion, the SERVQUAL model is deemed as an appropriate tool in seeking to explore if and where gaps exist in the service delivery of airlines in meeting the needs and expectations of airline passengers.

4.6.2 Influential factors in decision-making

Consumer behaviour and decision making is widely detailed within academic literature for its links to demography. Stern (1962) recognised a plethora of factors as influential to decision-making (with particular emphasis upon impulse purchasing) including economics, personality, time, location and culture. Whilst in a wider purchasing context, Sultan and Simpson (2000) consider nationality to influence both the expectations and perceptions of passengers. Other studies, have also suggested age, income, education and household size to influence purchasing decisions and consumption (Akbay et al. 2007; Cleveland and Laroche, 2007; Liu et al, 2001 cited in Prayag, 2007).

Personal income restrictions are considered in the well-documented work of Crawford and Godbey (1987, cited in Nicolau and Mas, 2004) who propose a 'leisure constraints model' to typify factors inherent to travel decision making and later by Nyapaupane and Andereck (2008). Elsewhere, Nyapaupane and Andereck draw distinctions between age and income referring to the work of Jackson (2005 cited in Nyapaupane and Andereck, 2008) highlighting that as individuals become older they are less restricted by opportunities and costs, but more so by time – due to career and family commitments.

Linked to the discussion of demography, Wang (2002) considers that whilst there has been much attention directed towards consumer behaviour and classifying types of consumers, the different consumer roles that can be adopted by the same person has been overlooked. In turn Wang suggests that in order to understand the different consumer roles of the same consumer, it is necessary to look at the temporal role of society, that being: daily work and daily leisure, weekdays and weekends and the work within the year and holiday with the year.

In addition Wang (2002) notes that consumption is influenced by temporal-spatial structures such as levels of disposable income, availability of goods and services, price and time to name but a few. These influences are all intrinsically linked to the three types of consumer roles that Wang suggests all consumers adopt in Western societies: the daily consumer (more profane and functional); day-off/weekend consumer (more time to pursue pleasurable activities and transcend the temporal-spatial boundaries; and the vacation consumer (pursues responsibility-free or constraint-free consumption). The model recognises that consumers move between the different ‘layers’ of the temporal-spatial boundaries.

People are considered more likely to assume ‘peak’ consumption during their holidays when they are both free from temporal constraints and spend in a less-constraining way. Further, not only do people spend more on holiday than they do in their everyday life, but they are also more luxurious in their spending (Wang, 2002). To this end, Crotts suggests that purchase involvement is a temporary state of an individual / household, triggered by a particular purchase, and can be seen as a spectrum with habit at one end and extended (complex) decision making at the other. He suggests that the middle ground involves limited decision-making and may be initiated by something as simple as seeing an advert that reminds the consumer of a previous trip.

At the complex-end of the spectrum, consumers are seen to be highly involved in the planning process and comprehensively evaluate all possible alternatives. Gitelson and Crompton (1984 cited in Woodside and Martin, 2008) concluded that purchasing a holiday is a complex decision that requires thorough research and evaluation of alternatives, whilst McIntosh and Goeldner (1986) considered the importance of the financial commitment of such a purchase.

Where habitual decision-making is concerned, Crotts (2000) suggests the process does not have to involve any actual decision-making per se, rather, repeat purchase may be borne from prior satisfaction lending itself to an internal information search, without the need for external information being sought. In this regard, Crotts argues that purchasing based upon habit can ensure satisfaction and reduce the process of information searching. Yet, whilst no additional information may be required, habitual decision-making does not necessarily guarantee satisfaction. Air travel by its very nature is intangible, therefore whilst service standards are likely to be in place, the in-flight experience is likely to differ from one trip to the next, with perception and expectations also influential.

In considering habitual travel decision-making and in particular choice of destination, Hawkins et al. (1986 cited in Crotts, 2000) suggest such decisions can be placed into one of two distinct categories: destination-loyal decisions and habitual decisions. On similar lines, one may therefore argue that the same may be true of airline passengers. Thus airline-loyal decisions and habitual decisions could be considered in this context. Using the same premise as Hawkins et al. decisions made in the former context will be made where an individual is very loyal to an airline (often as a consequence of FFP membership), whilst the latter group may be induced to change their habits/behaviour, as they possess little commitment to the airline.

Decrop (2000) provides thought on the context in which decisions are made and their influence on the decision-making process. Defining *context*, he suggests three dimensions, namely: environmental/situational influences, social and cultural influences, and group dimensions.

Defining environmental and situational factors, Decrop (2000) cites Belk (1975) who suggests that five variables can influence decision-making. The factors pertaining to a particular time or place and not attributable to the individual or the object of choice, include: physical surroundings (weather, geography, décor and signs), social surroundings (other people, their characteristics and personal interactions), temporal perspective (time of day/year, time constraints), task definition (the purpose of the trip and who it is being booked for), and antecedent states (momentary mood/conditions that can influence decision making).

Where social and cultural factors are concerned, a reference group may act as a proxy for the individual to base their attitudes, beliefs, values and norms upon. Such behaviour may lead to a conforming or ‘keeping up with the

Joneses' situation, whereby an individual chooses to fly with a particular airline, as that their friends use the same airline.

Culture may be seen as a broader, impersonal reference group influencing the knowledge, behaviour and customs of the individual and consequentially affecting their behaviour as a consumer. Underlying subcultures based upon age, race, religion and social class may lead individuals to deviate from 'wider' norms that are not compatible with their subculture. Conversely, Holden (2005) suggests that social class in particular, no longer features as a determinant of lifestyle and behaviour, with personal characteristics more important in creating identity than conforming to social norms. Elsewhere Decrop (2000) contends that the family is likely to be a major reference group, as it is the source of most of the individual's norms. Friends and special interest groups may also represent valuable decision-making units (DMUs). The launch of Trip Friends a feature developed by Trip Advisor in conjunction with Facebook in 2010 supports this argument. The feature that allows travellers to see a list of their friends (on Facebook) that have visited an area or destination they want to find out more about, taps into the important research source that is friends and family (Travel Weekly, 2010b).

Much of the literature on consumer decision-making in respect of travel focuses upon destination choice, with little if any attention, given to the choice of transport mode to take the tourists/individuals to the destination. Many of the early models proposed (also encompassing the broader field of consumer behaviour) demonstrate simplicity in terms of the decision-making process, identifying the stages of decision-making as linear, sequential and frequently hierarchical. Additionally, there is perhaps an underlying theme that brand loyalty will be developed and an emphasis upon pre-planning and saving will emerge (Wahab, Crampon and Rothfield, 1976 cited in Hudson, 2000).

Moutinho (1987) introduces a reflective approach to the decision-making process, recognising pre-purchase influences, post-purchase evaluation and future decision-making. The model is sound in that it recognises that the reflective process of consumer behaviour and acknowledges that the tourist product is increasingly purchased as individual components. Yet as Gilbert (1991 cited in Hudson, 2000) suggests, 'future decision-making' could have been included in 'pre-purchase influences' where attitude, the evoked set and perception can be dealt with in a more complex way.

Adopting a somewhat ethical approach, Mathieson and Wall (1982) proposed a decision-making model that focused largely upon the impacts of tourism, yet despite their environmental awareness, they failed to recognise that impacts are dynamic and will change depending on the trip being planned. Aspects of the model are however, perhaps increasingly important today, with the environment and air traveller's 'carbon footprint' more at the fore in people's minds than ever before.

Nevertheless, a key criticism of many of the traditional consumer behaviour models is recognised by Philips et al. (1995 cited in Decrop, 2000) who suggest that traditional models are of little use in situations where the decision-maker lacks experience, where the problem is less defined or where emotional decisions play an important role as they lack attention to such detail. Further, access to information through technology, namely the Internet, has led to many of the early models appearing outdated.

4.6.3 Sociological factors in decision-making

There is a wealth of literature that considers travel from a sociological perspective, attempting to define its complexities and seek understanding of how individuals are influenced by and how they themselves, influence travel.
The phenomenon of social construct considers the behaviour of individuals as a consequence of the beliefs assumed or dictated to them by the society or culture to which they belong. To this end, McCabe (2002) recognises that individuals define themselves within postmodern society not only through their work but also through their consumption of everyday activities and places.

In reference to the UK, Lawson (2009:4) considers what he recognises to have been the establishment of a turbo-consumer society over the last three decades, noting 'At its core consumerism was a social phenomenon: the act of consumption had become our primary means of understanding ourselves and how we related to each other. It became the way in which society reproduced itself – not least because it marked a seismic shift in our identities…now we identified ourselves with others by what we consumed.' The picture painted is arguably evident the world over, albeit predominately in developed countries.

The term 'tourist' is used in a plethora of ways and other categories of tourist activity have been identified to allow 'ordinary members of society' to demonstrate their actions and behaviour using labels to promote their social identities. To this end, tourism may be interpreted as a form of consumerism (Watson and Kopachevsky, 1996 cited in Holden, 2006:51), although reasons for 'purchasing tourism may be far more complex than just a functional need, involving the construction and defining of one's own identity.' As Urry (2002:5) considers 'if people do not travel, they lose status: travel is the marker of status. It is a crucial element of modern life to feel that travel and holidays are necessary.'

The importance of this can be seen in the scale of contemporary travel. In the first four months of 2011, destinations worldwide recorded 268 million international tourist arrivals, up 12 million on the total during the same period during 2010 (UNWTO, 2011). In the UK specifically, data for June 2011 shows overall visitor numbers and expenditure at their highest ever for June, with 2.89 million visits - 9% more than in June 2010. Figure 2 demonstrates the clear contrast between business and holiday (leisure) visits to the UK from June 2009 - June 2011. The graph shows the impact of the economic climate on business trips throughout 2009, with strong recovery throughout 2010, whilst holiday and VFR visits remained relatively stable.

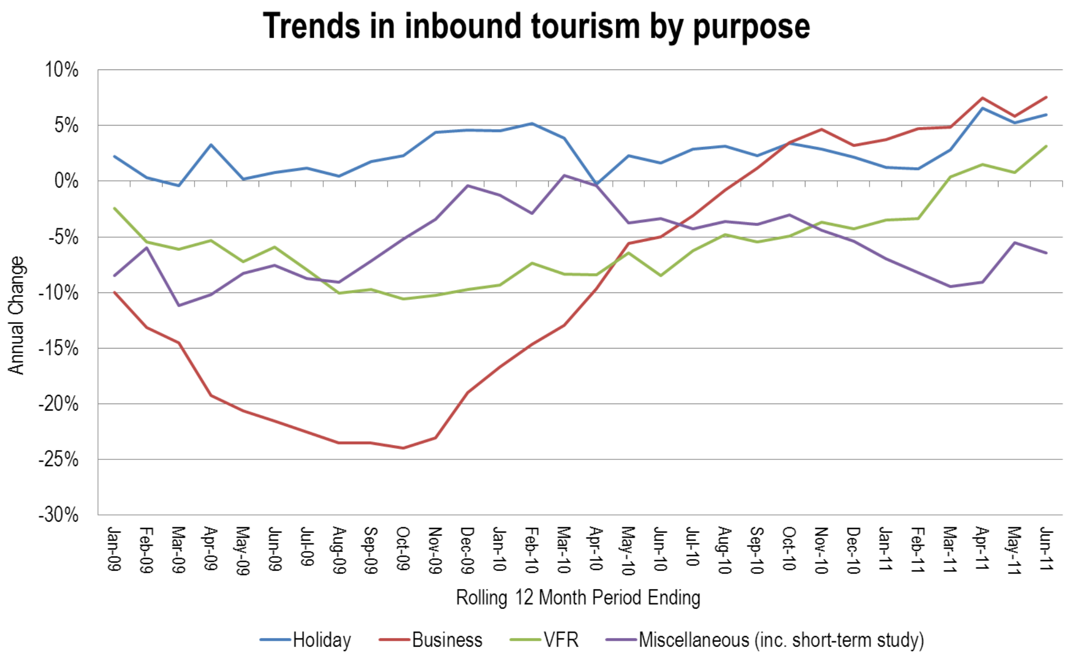

Figure 2: Trends in UK inbound tourism by trip purpose 2009-2011 (Source: Visit Britain, 2011)

The cultural society within which we live is intrinsically linked to human behaviour and consumers' value systems. Conformity to societal values, that is the culture of the environment in which we live, being at its crux. Thus individual's desires are not only influenced by their values, but also by the society to which they belong (Kim et al. 2002). In this respect two definitions of culture are proposed. First that it is 'the collective programming of the mind…' (Hofstede, 1997 cited in Lee and Kacen, 2008: 21) and second that it is 'patterned ways of thinking, feeling and reacting…the essential case of culture consists of traditional ideas and especially their attached values' (Kluchohn, 1951 cited in Lee and Kacen, 2008:86).

Elsewhere, MacCannell (1999) considers the work of Veblen who offers a synopsis of leisure in the book 'The Leisure Class'. Veblen considers the uneven distribution of work in society and the status components of leisure, that is the way that it is consumed as a symbol of social status. MacCannell on the other hand considers leisure/tourism in respect of 'differentiation' in which the totality of differences between social class, age, race and ethnicity are considered. He suggests that highly differentiated societies such as those in Western Europe and North America are in a constant flux of change in which social life constantly sub-divides and re-organizes itself.

With reference to the *culture* of the modern world, MacCannell (1999:21) refers to the work of Marx, who suggests the 'most important relationship in modern society is not that between man and man (as in peasant society) but between man and his productions. With the possible exception of life in the family and other similar social arrangements left over from a simpler time, man in our modern society is related to others only through the things he makes'. In turn MacCannell (1999) proposes that consumers in capitalist societies recognise that they do not always need what they buy and that purchases can often be described as 'symbolic' purchases. The purchase of flights, particularly where travel that has been spurred on by the evolution and growth of LCCs is concerned, may be one example of the symbolic purchasing that MacCannell proposes.

Most commodities come with a 'sign-value' that transmits a message that passes beyond its use as a product. The study of signs is known as semiotics and can help to develop an understanding of tourism as a form of social behaviour. Holden (2005) considers the work of Mowforth and Munt (1998:132) who suggest that through travel, individuals can construct an identity and transmit a message about themselves to society, 'It is symbolic in the way in which travel and tourism embody certain attributes: personal qualities in the individual, such as strength of character, adaptability, resourcefulness, sensitivity or even 'worldliness'.' Reinforcing this point, Furnham and Heaven (1999:242) cite the work of Mayo and Jarvis (1981) who suggest that tourism (be it for business or leisure), is a highly symbolic activity, '...as a symbol, travel can communicate a great ideal about an individual: success, achievement, sophistication, worldliness'. The opportunity to travel, therefore, can be extremely important in reinforcing certain types of image.

Image is clearly central to perception and the consumers understanding and evaluation of the brand. Images can be formed on a number of conceptual levels and evolve through three stages, namely organic, induced and complex (Gunn, 1988 and Gartner, 1989). Where organic images are based upon general sources of information, i.e. media, education and word of mouth; induced images relate to tourist-directed information such as brochures and travel agents; and images gained from the destination are considered as complex images. For airlines, this would translate to images gained first hand experience of using the airline services.

Dann (2002) suggests that metaphors operate within tourism and are widely used in travel promotion, through the use of visual clichés and pictorial icons to convey and reinforce established ideas. However, as Dann (2002:4) recognises, there are potential problems with what he terms ‘multivocal signs’, in that metaphors are capable of more than one interpretation and therefore open to misinterpretation.

Social differentiation may also be considered through the use of symbols and signs to sell a destination, as it was by Pierce (1839-1914 cited in Holden, 2005). Pierce identified three classifications of symbols: iconic (represent what they refer to); the indexical (can only be interpreted with reference to what is being pointed at in a given context); and the symbolic (which are independent objects to which they refer).

Mowforth and Munt (2009) point out that as individuals have become more aware of the symbols they are consuming, tourism has assumed a significant role in social differentiation and can be characterized by at least three variables: those who cannot participate in it; the destinations where people choose to go; and the type of tourism activities they pursue whilst on holiday. In the context of this research one may argue that the mode of transport or even the airline itself can play a significant role in social differentiation, a line of thought supported by Kim et al. (2002) who suggest that purchases can be made for functional or performance benefits, to express personality, social status or affiliation or to fulfil a need for change or novelty. Whilst purchasing an air ticket could be deemed a necessity to travel to / from work or as a luxury to travel on holiday, the class in which a passenger chooses to travel could be linked to attributes of social status and wealth.

Passariello (1983 cited in Burns, 1999:87) attempted to explore why particular social groups are attached to specific tourist modes, highlighting three interconnecting factors to explain patterns in tourist travel behaviour. Recognising that discretionary income can limit choices of style, distance and length of travel (a phenomenon supported by Holden, 2005); cultural self-confidence, childhood and educational experiences are also deemed to be influential. A cultural reversal is also believed to takes place whilst travelling, with meanings and rules of normal behaviour turned on their head.

Passariello's (1983) work is important in that it is based upon empirical research and demonstrates that tourist *style* stems from the tourists culture and personal situation. Yet the extent to which a 'cultural reversal' always takes place is argued. Travel behaviour can also be influenced by availability of transport options, another factor that is not given due attention in Passariello's argument.

Douglas (1979, cited in Dekel et al. 2007:246) postulates the assumption that goods carry social meaning, asserting 'goods mark out social categories and can be used to discriminate ranks and values'. The thought process is supported by Urry (1990) who considers the implications of status in air travel, recognising the segregation of passengers by class i.e. first, business and economy and also by scheduled and package flights. On similar lines, referring to travel, but with particular reference to the destination, Furnham and Heaven (1999) consider that people 'place drop', just as they 'name drop'. Yet, the same is true of air travel. Whilst people do not talk about travelling with Ryanair and easyJet in the same light as they do when travelling with Singapore Airlines or Qantas, there is an impetus by individuals to talk about LCC flights in respect of how cheap (or not as the case may be) their flights are or the service standards delivered by such airlines.

Elsewhere, Mowforth and Munt (2009:130) draw upon the work of Adler (1989) who considers that tourism has always been a way of expressing taste and establishing class, yet as the authors note, with the rapid number of people taking holidays 'the democratization of tourism has created a social headache when it comes to classes attempting to differentiate themselves from one another.'

The term 'marker' is also frequently used to refer to an object or famous landmark or some other kind of sign and is associated with the concept of the 'signified'. MacCannell (1999) considers that markers are important, as the first contact that a tourist has with a site is not the site [sic] itself, but a representation of it. The marker is also extended beyond the site to include a range of different sources of information that first bring it to the tourist's awareness, i.e. travel programmes and tourists guidebooks. In aviation, the same is true. Airlines are often likely to be known to the individual in advance of the trip through such representations.

With reference to a tourist attraction, MacCannell (1999:132) considers that 'the eventual shape and stability they have is, like signs, socially determined. It is social determination that makes the attraction, the structural differentiations of society, appear as *things* to consciousness.' These thoughts are inline with those of Urry (2002) who considers the 'tourist gaze'. Urry (2002) also draws upon the work of Campbell (1987) to suggest that daydreaming and anticipation are central to the modern process of consumerism and that an individual's motivation for consumption is not necessarily materialistic, but satisfaction can indeed be sought from the anticipation and imaginative pleasure. Yet as Urry (2002:13) notes, reality rarely provides the pleasurable experiences and 'each purchase leads to disillusionment and to the longing for ever-new products.'

Whilst the aforementioned authors focus upon a 'destination' the ideas and principles behind their theories, can arguably be translated into a discussion of airline choice. The concepts are simplistic and readily transferrable to air travel. The 'disillusionment' that Urry refers to, is also a key cause for concern for airlines, with the need to deliver a service that is inline with the expectations of the consumer.

The need for social identity is a theme considered by Bourdieu (2009) whose work draws upon *habitus* and *cultural capital.* The concepts are influential in demonstrating the thought and behavioural processes of individuals to include their beliefs and disposition through the internalisation of cultural influences they encounter. As his work suggests, individuals are not programmed to behave in a particular way, but are influenced by the culture and society within which they live. The influence of culture on consumer behaviour is considered in the following section.

4.6.4 Culture in decision making

The culture in which consumers are immersed is believed to hold implications for their motivation and propensity to buy goods and services. Several definitions of culture have been proposed with Hofstede (1997: 21) suggesting that culture is 'the collective programming of the mind…' whilst Kluchohn (1951:86) defines culture as 'patterned ways of thinking, feeling and reacting…the essential case of culture consists of traditional ideas and especially their attached values'.

It is difficult to generalise a discussion of consumer behaviour as consumption patterns vary and consumers buy products for different reasons (Kim et al. 2002). The needs, preference and choices facing a consumer are also often affected by complex social and cultural influences. The consumers value system, which is prejudiced by the consumer's social influences and cultural background, will also be influential in purchase and consumption decisions (Samil et al. 1988; Yau, 1994 cited in Lee and Carter, 2005).

Culture undoubtedly affects consumer behaviour, exerting influence over the consumer and their desire to buy certain products or brands. The individual's desires are not only influenced by their values, but also by the society to which they belong, cultural influences and background (Kim et al. 2002; Lee and Kacen, 2008). In their research, Lee and Kacen distinguish between individual and collective cultures with the former not seeking advice or compliance from others whilst the latter, seeks recommendations from friends and family. The difference between 'individualists' and 'collectives' is also, they suggest, prevalent in post-purchase satisfaction and evaluation.

The paper considers primary research that sought to identify behaviour in different purchase situations of respondents from four different countries. The results found that normative social influences were more important for people from collectivist cultures than individualists (which was in accordance with previous research). Thus it is suggested that researchers and practitioners need to be more aware of cross-cultural differences when considering buyer behaviour. It is also suggested that retailers could take advantage of these findings and introduce 'bring a friend' or family days into societies where there is a collective culture.

For air transport the concept of 'individualists' and 'collective' buyers holds implications with regard to the booking processes and marketing techniques that are employed. Awareness of who makes the bookings for flights / related services and decisions with regard to what destination to visit, could help the airlines to match the needs of the consumer with practical applications. This principle would also further extend to the business travel market and the buyers of travel related products within organisations.

In contrast, Gitelson and Crompton (1983 cited in Hyde, 2000) distinguish between travel decisions based upon trip length and familiarity with the destination. Suggesting that individuals who are taking a familiar trip will use past experience and seek advice from family and friends in their travel planning, those travelling over longer distances or visiting unfamiliar destinations are considered to seek greater quantities of information from different sources.

Additionally, there is debate as to whether or not the level/amount of information search conducted is linked to the individual's level of purchase involvement. Research by Gitelson and Crompton (1983) and Fesenmaier and Johnson (1989, both cited in Hyde, 2000) conclude that there is a link, yet others have suggested that the relationship might not be linear, given that the services are intangible and consumers can discover little about the attributes pre-purchase.

4.6.5 Emotion in decision making

Both Hausman (2000) and Crawford and Melewar (2003) consider that consumers suppress their natural impulsive traits to act in accordance with social norms. In an attempt to explain consumer behaviour, Schiffman et al. (2008) propose a model that adopts four independent views: economic, passive, emotional and cognitive factors. For the purposes of this discussion the ‘emotional’ view is of most interest.

Whilst marketers are aware of the different models of consumer behaviour, one may argue that they frequently prefer to see consumers as either economic or passive in their behaviour, but as Schiffman et al (2008) consider, in reality most people are driven to make purchases with deep feelings and emotion – particularly when purchasing flights for a holiday.

When a consumer makes an emotional purchase there is less emphasis placed upon the pre-purchase research, instead emphasis is placed upon mood and feelings. This is not to say that emotional decisions are not rational, some decisions might just be linked to the ‘you deserve it’ or ‘treat yourself’ feeling that people get and want to reward themselves.

This is arguably a very common state of mind for individuals when booking a holiday, flight or even ‘extras’ such as airport lounge facilities. The idea that for the large part of the year they have worked hard, when it comes to a holiday people are more likely to feel that they deserve the break and hence their attitude towards purchasing goods and services becomes more emotive and in many cases more money is spent than first planned.

Consumer's moods are also very important in decision-making. Schiffman et al. (2008) distinguish between mood and emotion, suggesting that a mood can be defined as a 'feeling state' or state of mind. In contrast, an emotion is a pre-existing state a consumer will at the time of the shopping experience.

Mood is important in consumer decision-making as it impacts on a consumers shopping behaviour (Swinyard, 1993). Some retailers attempt to create a *mood* for consumers, for example all Thomson holiday shops have a coconut smelling air freshener to create a mood of being on holiday and for airlines operating inconjunction with tour operators, 360^{o} views of hotel rooms, visual graphics and create your own brochures, allow the consumer to experience a place beforehand.

Research conducted by McGoldrick et al. (1999) is insightful as it reviews the cognitive, emotional and behavioural factors of 'seasonal sale' shopping, a tactic frequently adopted by airlines. The appeal of a bargain, McGoldrick et al. suggest can be attributed to two factors: acquisition utility (the assessment of the value of the good compared to the outlay) and transaction utility (the perceived merits of the deal).

In addition to the satisfaction assumed from the financial savings that can be made, McGoldrick et al. (1999) consider the feeling of excitement that can be derived from the seasonal sale. Excitement may also emulate from the limited availability of a good or service, whilst risk features in 'game playing' i.e. waiting for the greatest monetary reduction before making a purchase. For those seeking to avoid the element of risk, purchases may be secured to avoid missing out, a premise on which many airlines ride high and demonstrate in their marketing.

The self-image of products and the psychological significance of buying certain products and services is an important factor to be considered within this section. Citing the work of Warde (1994 cited in King and Dennis, 2003) King and Dennis consider that the pressure and risk involved in the purchase of products, has led retailers to offer goods return policies. Helping to gain a competitive advantage, the opportunity to return or exchange goods, allows the consumer to defer purchase until they have experience of the product. As a result, customers are now very aware that they can return their purchase if they are not happy with it. For airlines the matter is slightly more complicated, given that it is a service is being purchased. However consumers can frequently amend or cancel bookings, albeit with a surcharge levy, after purchase. In some cases, particularly with flights purchased with restrictions at a low cost, changes cannot be made and the passenger must either purchase another ticket and/or make use of the flight without change.

Given the early stages of Internet development when the paper was written, King and Dennis suggest that there will be a growth in the number of returns made online, given legislation (namely the Distance Selling Directive and The Consumer Protection Regulations) introduced in the mid 1990s to protect consumers purchasing goods online. In consequence the authors call for research to be undertaken in this area of study. In retrospect, this has been a trend that has occurred at an extraordinary pace given the large number of sales that are today made online. Whilst airlines accept changes to bookings, they are often restrictive and frequently at high emotional and monetary expense to the consumer.

Adding to research concerning new technologies and the implications for producers of goods and services, Lee and Kacen (2008) consider the work of Hoyer and MacInnis (1997 cited in Lee and Kacen, 2008) who contemplate the techniques that traditional retailers use such as store design, product displays and package design to increase the number of impulse purchases. In turn they suggest that technological developments encompassing television shopping channels, mobile phones and the Internet have increased the consumers opportunity to purchase and impulse buy. In March 2011, ABTA predicted that use of mobile phone applications and service would have the greatest influence on trends during the year (Mintel, 2011) and its vision was supported by data provided the following month by Google who confirmed that browsing online travel websites using a mobile now makes up 20% of all such queries, up from 6% in 2010 (Mintel, 2011).

4.7 Determinants of information search

Hyde (2000 cited in Woodside et al, 2000) considers the work of Engel et al. 1995) who suggest consumer decision-making can be conceptualised in five steps: recognition of a need; search for information; evaluation of alternatives; choice and; post-purchase. The process highlights the instrumental stages of information search in a simple manner.

Contemplating decision making in travel, Crotts (2000) suggests that whilst socio-demographic variables such as age, income and education influence pre-purchase information on non-durables, it is not the case when purchasing tourism products and services. Recognising that the decision process is not uniform and will vary from trip to trip, he suggests that trip specific variables including the size of the evoked set of alternatives, the time available for pre-trip planning, distance travelled by the consumer and the frequency of repeat visitation are more valuable indicators when considered travel related decisions. The notion is also supported by Cosenza and Davis (1981 cited in Hyde, 2000) who whilst identifying similar factors add the date of the trip, whether to take the children, how much money to spend, destination point(s), choice of transportation, choice of accommodation, and choice of attraction and activities to the list of factors to consider.

Suzuki (2007) recognises that little research has been conducted with regard to modelling the choice processes of travellers in respect of their choice of airport and airline. Despite the complexity, Suzuki (2007) suggests it is important to model the two choices together as the traveller will simultaneously make such decisions prior to every trip. In the study, Suzuki, discusses a two-step model developed by Pels et al. (2001 cited in Suzuki, 2007) as an initial attempt to jointly model airport and airline choices. The model is restrictive in that it presumes travellers makes a decision based upon every available alternative, which is perhaps unlikely and even more so, that it will happen every time a decision is made.

In an attempt to build upon the two-step model, Suzuki conducted a questionnaire-based study at one US airport. Whilst the study confirmed the two-step decision model helps develop greater understanding of the choice alternatives from the passenger’s perspective, it was limited in that it presumed passengers were homogenous in respect of the minimum standards they would tolerate. The study also considered only one airport location. It does nevertheless highlight a need for further research in this area.

4.8. Impulsive purchase

It would appear that a general understanding and need to develop a generic term in reference to impulse and spontaneous buyer behaviour is required. The use of different definitions makes for difficulty in comparisons across studies and for comprehension of the subject. What follows is a review of key work within the realm of impulse purchasing drawing upon the concepts of spontaneous and planned purchasing, unplanned purchasing and compulsive purchasing.

Rook and Hoch (1985) consider impulse buying to be rife amongst the population and across product categories, yet there is suggestion that greater levels of impulse purchasing occur in supermarkets and discount stores than in department and specialty stores (Cobb and Hoyer, 1986). Whilst many authors have discussed impulse buying as unplanned, Rook and Hoyer (1985) consider that the ethos of such behaviour can be misconstrued to include any purchase that is not written on an individuals shopping list.

To this end, work by Leeds (1994) and a model proposed by Hyde (2000) for decision making and vacation itinerary, suggests just that, that behaviours observed by independent travellers are analogous to those of a retail shopping trip, whereby an individual frequently sets out with a list of items to buy, but at the end of their trip their behaviour will have displayed a number of unplanned purchases and possibly a number of impulse purchases.

On similar lines, Wood (2005) considers that the purchase of a good or service for motives of novelty, excitement, fashion, status, escape from routine, entertainment or other 'hedonic' motivations, must count as a significant type of unplanned purchase, to avoid the categorization of all purchases as 'impulsive'.

With these affirmations in mind the following definitions of impulse and unplanned buying are considered. In Stern's (1962) early work impulse buying is defined without reference to unplanned behaviour, under four broad classifications: pure impulse buying (purchase is based upon pure impulse), reminder impulse buying (customer sees a product and is reminded that they need it), suggestion impulse buying (when a product is seen for the first time, but a need can be seen for it) and planned impulse buying (when the intention to buy is present but dependent upon the use of coupons or discount vouchers). Although presented in a crude manner, the categories identified here frequently reappear in later definitions.

Rook and Hoch (1985) differentiate between impulsive and non-impulsive behaviour through five distinct categories. They include: a sudden and spontaneous desire to act; psychological disequilibrium; psychological conflict and struggle; a reduction in the consumer's cognitive evaluation of product attributes; and impulsive consumption without regard for the consequences.

Building further upon some of these ideas, but in a more simplistic manner, Lee and Kacen (2008:266) offer a contemporary definition suggesting that impulse buying is defined as 'an unplanned purchase' that was not anticipated or planned before the shopper entered the store. They suggest that the major difference between an impulse and planned purchase is the amount of prior research that is undertaken and the time spent on the decision making process. These findings are also in accordance with research conducted by Schiffman et al. (2008) and earlier research by Cobb and Hoyer (1986). In consequence, it is suggested that the decision process of an impulse purchase will thus be based upon the information available at the time of purchase or pre-existing knowledge.

In contrast Solomon (2007) considers spontaneous shopping to be an umbrella term used to define the two different processes of unplanned behaviour and impulse buying. ‘Unplanned behaviour’ he suggests refers to a situation in which a shopper is in an unfamiliar environment and / or under time pressure. Frequently, just seeing an item will also remind the individual that they need it. Whilst ‘impulse buying’ Solomon suggests, refers to a shopper experiencing an urge to suddenly buy something that they cannot resist, the desire to buy an item or service spontaneously is likely to occur when the shopper believes that acting on impulse is appropriate.

As a final point of consideration, McGoldrick et al. (1999) conducted interviews with shoppers to understand their behaviours in respect of shopping. Their findings concluded that seasonal sales increase spontaneous behaviour, that spontaneous behaviour leads to more mistakes being made as less research is conducted and there is an urgency to buy, so as to not miss out on the sale. An indirect link between individuals with lower incomes and seasonal sale purchases was also found. Yet whilst links can be made between different variables, as Wood (2005) considers, the measurement of impulse buying is identified as problematic as information is required on the measurement of plans and buying intentions.

The definitions considered here demonstrate a clear distinction between unplanned and impulsive behaviour. Unplanned behaviour constitutes an unconsidered purchase in an unfamiliar environment or with time restrictions placed upon the individual, whilst a lack of research on the part of the decision making process and desire to just buy something the individual cannot resist, are deemed key factors of impulsive purchases.

Interestingly, none of the definitions considered here makes reference to online purchasing. Whilst buyer behaviour online may inherently be similar to that of purchases made in-store, a lack of visual and verbal indicators online, may hold implications for decision-making. With increasing numbers of air tickets and travel related services sold and purchased via the Internet, there are numerous issues facing both the retailer and consumer.

4.8.1 Influential factors of impulsive purchase

A variety of factors and situations can influence an individual’s desire to behave impulsively. The early and frequently cited work of Stern (1962) considers that impulse buying is influenced by factors including economics, personality, time, location and culture. These factors were also found to be influential by Cobb and Hoyer (1986), Beatty and Ferell (1998) and Lee and Kacen (2008). Of note, Cobb and Hoyer’s research offered a more specific breakdown of the influential factors, differentiating between work and leisure time and levels of disposable income with reference to economics.

Elsewhere, Ainslee (1975, cited in Rook and Hoch, 1985) suggests that individuals succumb to impulses for three reasons including that they do not understand the consequences of their behaviour; whilst they know that the consequences are bad, they feel impelled to behave impulsively by some ‘lower’ principle, and whilst knowing the consequences too much weight is placed upon satisfying desires. Whereas previous examples cite mainly external influential factors, Ainslee adopts a personal approach as to how the individual can influence their own behaviour.

The theme is continued in the work of Crawford and Melewar (2003) who consider that consumer behaviour has a very real and direct influence over impulse behaviour. With reference to airport shopping, they suggest the airport environment and psychological effects of air travel complicate the buyer behaviour process and increase the propensity for consumers to purchase goods on impulse. The strategy employed by airport retailers increases revenues for both retailers and operators, whilst helping to relieve boredom and anxiety for waiting air passengers. Airline passengers are considered to be in a unique frame of mind when shopping in the airport, which can be extremely influential on behaviour.

Whilst the majority of airline ticket purchases are not made within the airport environment, research that considers the buyer behaviour of airline passengers may help to understand purchasing decisions made early on in the chain, i.e. at the stage of purchasing the airline ticket away from the airport environment.

The travel stress curve developed by Scholvinck (2000 cited in Crawford and Melewar, 2003) demonstrates how the passengers' mood changes post check-in and they revert to a relatively stress-free mood. Yet, with increased security checks now in place, one may question whether passenger stress levels do infact retract once having checked-in or indeed remain high until they have cleared security. Crawford and Melewar (2003) also refer to this period as the 'golden hour' when travellers are at their most relaxed.

To this end, research by Bowes (2002 cited in Crawford and Melewar, 2003) found that the stress reducing design of the airport retail environment of Brisbane airport, which includes large open areas and greenery, delivers lower levels of congestion to increase passengers' propensity to buy goods. The emotional state and amount of time that the passenger has are influential as to how much money they will spend. Reducing queue times will further increase the passengers' propensity to make a purchase. Bowes suggests that retailers should develop an 'impulse strategy' to target specific consumer groups.

For online air ticket sales, this research has numerous implications. One may suggest that the 'travel stress curve' could be manipulated to consider the pre-trip research and purchasing stage of tickets, an aspect that is not taken into account. It is likely that consumers would experience levels of stress when purchasing tickets online, which may be a consequence of flight availability, finding a ticket at a preferred price, technological concerns (Internet connection, airline website design) and the possibility of making a mistake during the booking process. Addressing issues of website navigation through a clean, bright design and clear instructions, potential customers may find the booking process a more relaxed and enjoyable experience, with lower levels of stress. These ideas are supported by the work of Beldona et al. (2005) who, in considering shopping motivations of buyers of travel products online, concluded that the increased time in which people spend online and have positive experiences, will increase the likelihood of them making a purchase.

The ‘Online Travel Sector Usability' report published by the user experience specialist Webcredible in 2010, evaluated 20 prominent UK travel agent and airline websites against 20 best practice usability guidelines. The guidelines set out by the independent organisation considered what they believe to be essential rules that online travel agents and airlines should adhere to. Ranging from the need to provide a clear, well designed booking process; to displaying the full price as early as possible, the report also suggested providing a contact support number and appropriate up-selling.

The results showed the BA website to be the most user-friendly, scoring 78% (out of 100%) followed by easyJet (77%), Virgin Atlantic (75%) and BMI (70%). Those holding up the rear positions included Jet2.com (60%), First Choice (56%), Thomsonfly (now Thomson Airways) (52%) and in last place, Thomas Cook (47%) (Webcredible, 2010). Of note, those that fared worst were LCCs and charter airlines.

Key points gleaned from the report were that whilst changes are being made, many airlines remain slow to adopt appropriate measures that will help to increase market share. A call to further support for comparison shoppers and ensuring pages are ‘share-friendly’ was made. In addition, a need to provide airport information (particularly in light of the recent weather related events), display clear progress bars and show contact numbers during the booking process were called for. In short, a need for consumers to find information quickly was highlighted to avoid lost custom.

Seeking to understand how and why people purchase air travel and developing, as Crawford and Melewar suggest, an impulse strategy to target consumers, may help to predict sales of promotional fares and also help to manage costs.

4.8.2 The role of the retailer and consumer in impulse purchasing

Noting that the practice of impulse buying has become increasingly common within contemporary society, the focus of this discussion now turns to a consideration of the motivations and behavioural human elements that elicit a need for products and services.

Vohs and Faber (2007) consider that consumers who are identified as impulse buyers can and do control their impulses at times. Previous research suggested that the tendency to purchase items on impulse is a trait that consistent across all product categories (Beatty and Ferrell, 1998). However Stern (1962) contends that behaviour may vary depending upon the type of product and circumstances in which the product is bought. Thus a consumer may demonstrate different purchasing behaviour at different times, even if buying the same product.

Stern (1962) furthers his discussion to suggest nine types of product that lend themselves to impulse purchasing, namely: low price, marginal need for the item, mass distribution, self service, mass advertising, prominent store display, short product life, small size or lightweight, and ease of storage. Fad products or limited edition items are illusive to Stern's product categorization, but could form a tenth category. To this end, 1p air tickets (inclusive of taxes and charges) that are offered by the likes of Ryanair demonstrate a suitable product fit. Perhaps with no previous desire / intention to purchase a flight, the extremely low price may instigate an impulsive purchase. Such purchase behaviour is however in contrast to previous research that suggests high levels of commitment and involvement are involved when purchasing goods and services that are not routine (Swarbrooke and Horner, 2005). Additionally, such airline marketing tactics could reduce (increase) airline loyalty given the pricing and yield management techniques employed (Foxall, 2005).

Applying Stern's model to aviation, airline tickets may be classified as low price (particularly for LCCs), of marginal need (if the trip is not necessary), have a short product life, be mass distributed and mass advertised.

More recently, research by Jones et al. (2003) demonstrated support for Stern's argument suggesting that whilst the tendency to purchase on impulse is considered a personality trait, impulse buying tendencies can and do vary across product categories. A strong correlation between a general buying tendency and a product-specific buying tendency was found, demonstrating that when the buyer has an involvement with the product, they are increasingly likely to purchase on impulse.

With this in mind the work of Klein (1998) suggests that products can be segmented into two product categories based upon the information searches that consumers elicit before purchase. *Experience* products – which are often more costly and cannot allow by their very nature for a detailed information search to be carried out prior to purchase; and *search* products for which full information can be collected. Interestingly, carrying out research into a specific product or service prior to purchase is not a factor associated with impulse buying. Klein categorises travel packages and services as experience products, thus suggesting that if any prior research was carried out, i.e. the flight was not purchased on impulse, the level to which any information retrieved might be useful is limited, as the product is dominated by attributes that cannot be known until purchase.

The implications of culture for impulse purchasing decisions are considered elsewhere, thus the role of emotional behaviour in impulse purchase is developed here, arguably an extension that is embedded in the cultural make-up of an individual. To purchase on impulse can take place as Rook and Gardner argue (1993 cited in Silvera et al; 2008), in both positive and negative mood states. The hedonistic manner in which a purchase is made can elicit feelings of pleasure and excitement, but as DeMoss (1990) postulates, impulse purchasing can often be a function in which a purchase is made to reward oneself through the purchase of a 'self-gift'. The desire to get away from it all and escape on holiday may be attributed to improving a negative emotional state through impulse purchase. This is however not to suggest that all last-minute purchases of air tickets are made by individuals in negative mind-sets. To this end, comprehension of decision-making influences is important.

Silvera et al. (2008) consider the subjective wellbeing of an individual and the way in which decision-making can be influenced by social influences and personal self-esteem. In reference to subjective wellbeing it is suggested that impulse buying tendencies tend to be negatively associated with subjective wellbeing – which fits well with research provided by DeMoss. Whilst low self-esteem in an individual can highlight an increased receptiveness to external influences (Cox and Bauer, 1964 cited in Silvera et al. 2008), the social influence of others (be it friends, family, work colleagues or society as a whole) is also deemed to hold implications for the study of impulse purchase behaviour. As Silvera et al. consider, whilst advice and acceptance from others is not a component associated with impulse purchase – given its very nature of being a spontaneous action – the desire and need to conform which is so often sought by individuals, can affect the purchase decision an individual makes.

Self-regulation may also be considered here, an area of research that has been undertaken by Faber and Vohs (2007, citing the work of Baumeister et al. 1994), falling perhaps into a realm that negates impulse purchase. The underlying premise of self-regulation they suggest is based upon three key issues: the establishment of a goal or standards, monitoring one's distance from their current status to a desired end point and the operations that move the individual to the desired state. The issue of impulse buying is thus in some situations, a very important issue that can translate into over indulgence.

For airlines the over-indulgence by consumers to take a number of holidays each year and to travel for VFR, other leisure and business purposes, can be linked to the issue of self-regulation. From the consumer's perspective, such air travel needs in a rational sense, to be considered in light of time and cost budgets requiring self-regulation – a lack of which will frequently lead to impulse purchasing.

From a retailing perspective however, such buying intent is welcomed favourably, with any spend accounting for an increase in sales and potentially profits for the organisation. Yet, one may question the role of the retailer in respect of their corporate social responsibility and the implications of their marketing and promotional techniques with regard to the financial wellbeing of the consumer. In this light, the question may be raised as to whether the retailer should find ways in which to monitor purchasing decisions if they implicate high spend. Or is it the responsibility of the consumer to decide how to spend their money and to be accountable for the consequences of their choices and the purchasing decisions they make.

4.8.3 Negative implications and regret in impulse purchase

Crawford and Melewar (2003) highlight the dark side of impulse buying and suggest that a growth in personal debt has spurred an impetuous amount of literature on the subject.

Solomon (2007) considers the negative implications of shopping and refers to consumer addiction as a physiological or psychological dependency on products or services. He also refers to ‘compulsive consumption’ as repetitive shopping, often excessively, as an anecdote to tension, anxiety or depression. The research suggests that in some cases like drug addiction, consumers have little or no control over their consumption. On similar lines, Ridgway et al. (2006) discussed compulsive purchasing and recognised many of the same ‘triggers’, but adding the influence of cultural issues such as gender and childhood experiences to the equation. Earlier work by Faber and Christenson (1996), considers that compulsive purchasing can serve as mood manipulator for people experiencing negative feelings. Whilst this example is considered as an extreme of compulsive behaviour, it is included within here to highlight the extent to which compulsive consumption and purchasing are interlinked. Its relationship to acting as a mood enhancer will be revisited.

From an alternative viewpoint, Ridgway et al. (2006) consider that whilst traditional theory recognises compulsive buyer behaviour as a dysfunctional or abnormal behaviour, for a small percentage of the population, compulsive behaviour is related to their urge to buy that ends in large amounts of debt. In this case, Ridgway et al. consider this group of the population to be termed 'excessive buyers'.

Where air travel is used as a 'pick me up' to facilitate 'getting away from it all' and to travel for relaxation and recuperation, many consumers would find themselves as part of this group. Using the categorization proposed by Ridgway et al. (2006), that compulsion includes excessive purchasing; excessive expenditure (whatever that may be) could also seek to include travel for holidays, a luxury commodity.

Wood (2005) considers that consumer impulse buying is largely documented within the media through discussion of avoidance. Interestingly, the distinction between the treatment of 'unplanned buying' and 'point-of purchase' decision-making is recognised, whereby 'in-store' buyer decisions are considered as universal, expected and encouraged; whilst negativity surroundings impulse buying, which is represented as 'failure self-control' and buyer regret.

Research by Spears (2006) also considers regret and regret minimization in what she terms a 'moseying around' situation (a description taken from a questionnaire response from a consumer who was placed in 'harms way' of making a purchase). Spears (2006) draws upon the work of Hetts et al. (2000) to consider that people are generally risk adverse and will act to minimize regret where possible. With planned purchases, regret can be minimized to a large extent through research, yet as Rook (1987 cited in Spears, 2006) contemplates, for impulse purchasing, risk is involved in missing the opportunity to live through immediate gratification. After purchasing on impulse, the consumer may experience regret from their actions (Dittmar & Drury, 2000; Kahneman & Tversky, 1982; Rook, 1987 all cited in Spears, 2006). The implications for purchasing air travel for leisure may bring similar feelings of over indulgence and excessive spending.

Regret theory concerns the comparison of actual outcomes with what could have occurred if another alternative had been chosen (Loomes & Sugden, 1982; Sugden, 1985 cited in Spears, 2006). It is suggested that regret may still be experienced even if the chosen item is better than the alternative option. The feeling of regret can happen at two separate intervals (Spears, 2006), before the purchase is made (feeling that a mistake in the purchase will be made, perhaps the choice of airline) and afterwards (after the choice is made – the consumer reads a poor review of the airline). What Spears' model does not consider is that consumers may make a purchase to minimize their regret, so as not to miss an opportunity and experience immediate gratification.

Regret or 'behavioural forces' are also considered by the OFT into the affects of drip pricing (synonymously used by many LCCs). The report considers that when drip pricing is used, a consumer will initially see a low price and at that point make the decision to buy the good/service, making a shift in their reference point as they already imagine owning the good/service. But once the additional charges are realised it is considered more difficult to give up the good/service 'in the basket' despite the increased cost. The research concluded that despite a cost increase, many consumers will still continue with the purchase but feel cheated and annoyed as the pay-off of the purchase was reduced (OFT, 2010). Whilst such pricing tactics are undeniably effective in generating 'first shop' sales, the implications for repeat visitation are far reaching and can lead to consumers to shopping elsewhere due to loss aversion.

The use of online 'screen scraping' facilities may be one way in which consumers seek to minimise risk when purchasing air tickets. Websites such as Skyscanner act as comparison sites to compare the cost of all available flights so that the consumer can choose the most attractive option. However the arguably 'risk aversion strategy' of ensuring the cheapest fare, backfired for a number of consumers that booked Ryanair flights through similar websites. In 2008 Ryanair customers were told that the airline would not accept any passengers that had purchased tickets from any outlet other than the Ryanair website. The airline claimed that 'screen scrapers' infringed copyright law and the terms and conditions of its website (Oliver, 2008). The airline has since gone onto lose one such battle against the online Spanish travel agency, eDreams (Cowan, 2010).

Spears (2006) suggests that in order to minimize risk and make the purchase safer, consumers should consider talking through their plans with others and extending the research time prior to purchase – a point supported by Lee and Kacen (2008). Thus one may conclude that risk minimization can be achieved through gathering information and conducting research prior to taking up a promotional offer in a planned purchase situation. Considering impulse purchasing, Spears suggests forgoing any regret linked to missed promotional opportunities and for the consumer to rejoice and experience excitement in what they have purchased.

4.9 Online Purchase

Whilst there is a wealth of literature concerning buyer behaviour and impulse purchasing behaviour, there remains to date, relatively little academic research within the subject area of online buyer behaviour and impulse purchasing in air travel. The lack of research is perhaps linked to emergence of online shopping as a recent phenomenon and a relatively new way for individuals to purchase flights and ancillary products.

Of interest, the work that has been produced focuses largely upon Asia and the US, with the growth in Internet usage noted as a prime motivator for study (Adelaar et al. 2003; Bei et al. 2004; Kolsaker et al. 2004 and Teo and Yu, 2005). Vohs and Faber (2007) note that the developments that have taken place within the technological arena and in particular - the Internet, have increased the rate and frequency at which consumers purchase on impulse, raising concerns over the amount of money that is spent on such goods. To this end, the early work produced by Stern (1962), suggests that from both the consumer and retailing perspective, as the practice of buying becomes easier, it is suggested that so too does the tendency to purchase on impulse.

4.9.1 Online Shoppers

In 2001, when the Internet use was arguably still in its early stages of mainstream use, Stores (2001, cited in Sorce et al. 2005) suggested that users of the Internet in general, were from a diverse and broad population. Having witnessed further years of Internet growth and use, Farag et al. (2007) suggest that empirical evidence continues to demonstrate that male Internet users are from more highly educated backgrounds and higher economic groups are frequently more inclined to buy online than women, and users from less well-educated backgrounds and lower-income groups.

Much recently, data collected by Mintel (2011a) builds upon the work of Stores and Farag et al. suggesting those most likely to use the Internet today to book a holiday are young adults (aged 16-24 years and 25-34 years), those in the ABC1 socio-economic groups, Londoners, individuals that choose independent holidays and high earners. In contrast those least likely to book online are individuals in socio-economic groups C2, D and E, households with low incomes and older adults (aged 65+ years).

Interestingly, the research by Mintel suggests that demographics including gender and the presence of children in the household have little or no impact with regard to booking holidays online.

With reference to the American and Korean markets, Park and Jun (2003) suggest that as a result of technological and communication improvements, there is a trend towards a globalisation of cultures using the Internet. Yet, whilst they recognised a growth in the number of Internet users, they suggested that only a relatively small group of the population were at that time using the Internet to purchase products.

Elsewhere Taneja (2002) considers the cultural aspects of emerging technology, suggesting that it is not only important to develop an awareness of cultural differences where new technology is concerned, but for airline's to also understand the causes of differences in cultures and how consumer needs and expectations can be best met. The point is reinforced in a discussion offered by Kotler et al (2009), who consider that a website's congruity, that is whether the website is adapted to specific cultures, can be particularly important in countries that are high on national identity.

The emergence of new technologies and trends in purchasing airline tickets was recognised in a recent report by SITA (2011), who suggest that 91% of airlines prepare to invest in passenger mobile technologies throughout 2011. An increased number of airline tickets will also continue to be sold directly via airline websites, with an expected 58% of tickets to be sold directly by 2014. Direct sales for ancillary services are also expected to remain. Importantly though, is the increased sales expected to be generated through mobile phones, with 69% of airlines selling or planning to sell tickets via social media networks by 2014.

A report by Greenlight (2010) explored use of the Internet by individuals in the UK looking to purchase flights and found that the majority of consumers start with the search engine Google. Based upon searches made using Google in December 2010, the report found that generic keyword search terms for flights and searches for long haul travel were most popular accounting for 34% searches respectively. Of note, using a keyword breakdown, 'cheap flights' accounted for 21% of all flight-related searches.

The report also considered the most visible websites in the sector and found cheapflights.co.uk, skyscanner.net and travelsupermarket.com to hold the top three positions. Interestingly all three are comparison sites. By airline, Ryanair, Flybe and Jet2.com were the best performing direct providers of flights in a natural search (i.e. by airline), whilst British Airways, Monarch and easyJet ranked in 10th, 12th and 15th place respectively. The dominance of LCCs within the most visible searches by airline is interesting, emphasising the focus upon short-haul travel and also a desire to locate cheap flights. Links to perception are again relevant here, with what Dodds et al (1991) and Ateljevic (2000) consider to be instrumental in the decision process. Whilst LCCs may not be the cheapest available option, the perception held by the consumer that they will offer the cheapest fares, will drive the consumer to visit the website.

Searches for flights within the UK and Ireland accounted for 141,000 all searches in December 2010, whilst ‘flights to Dublin’ accounted for 10% of all domestic flight searches. On short haul routes, ‘flights to Cyprus’ was a key search term and on long haul routes, ‘flights to Australia’ accounted for 6% of all searches.

The study also looked at paid search results for the top 120 search terms and found travelzoo.com, flybmi.com and ebookers held the largest share at 48%, 44% and 33% respectively. Interestingly, for paid searches by destination, flybmi.com was the most visible website achieving 60% visibility for domestic flights, whilst easyJet held 62% visibility for short haul flights. The Flight Centre attained 70% visibility on long haul flight searches.

The report also explored the popularity of airlines and flight retailers on social media websites including Facebook and Twitter and found BA to be not only the most popular brand by followers, but also the most interactive brand during the research period (Greenlight, 2010). Other brands including Travelzoo, cheapflights.com and flybmi.com also promoted special offers, last minute deals and competitions on their social media accounts. The importance of engaging in popular social media was considered key to maintaining market share and increasing awareness and sales.

4.9.2 Shopping motivations

Babin et al (1994 cited in Sorce, 2005) consider that there are two dominant shopping motives – shopping for pleasure (hedonistic) and shopping with a goal in mind (utilitarian). It is suggested that the hedonic shopper will frequently seek a product specific experience, be from a individualist culture and young (Dholakia and Uusitalo, 2002), choosing more risky options than consumers from collectivist cultures and/or older consumers (Weber and Hsee, 1998). Whilst the definition is basic, it is useful as it differentiates pleasure purchases from necessities, indicating that there may be greater freedom in choice and decision-making in hedonic purchasing.

Korganokar and Wolin (1999) offer a more specific explanation of shopping motivations, suggesting a seven-point motivational framework for online shopping. They cite: social escapism, transaction security and privacy, information, interactive control, socialisation, non-transactional privacy, and economic motivation as key factors. Whilst within the scope of this discussion due attention cannot be given to the implications of this framework for online shopping, suffice to say, its application to purchasing airline tickets online are numerous.

Where an air ticket is purchased for leisure purposes the motivation may in many ways evoke a level of social escapism in the planning of a holiday and the desire to 'get away from it all'. The level of interactive control that the website allows the consumer will also be of importance. Allowing the consumer to navigate and explore a website and interact with the website stimuli i.e. to see the different features of an aircraft and the ability to choose own meals and customise and take control of different aspects of the flight booking - will influence the individual's motivation (Adelaar et al. 2003; Law and Huang, 2003).

Where socialisation is concerned in respect of social interaction, participation in online forums can encourage discussion and arguably the motivation to purchase air travel products and services online. Whilst the consumer is unable to interact and gain face-to-face social stimuli that would otherwise be experienced in a traditional retail setting, the Internet can provide alternative and arguably equal levels of socialisation through discussion groups and potentially increase motivation and the propensity to buy, in a similar way as to purchasing a flight in a travel agency (Christou and Kassianidis, 2002). As demonstrated earlier, social interaction and pleasure derived from the traditional retail setting cannot be matched by online stores for certain population groups, particularly of the collectivist nature (Kolsaker et al. 2004).
Contemplating reasons for purchases being made online, Porter (2001, cited in Bei et al. 2004) suggests low transaction costs; ease of accessing information on price and product information; the convenient purchase of ancillary products and the ability to pool purchases in volume. Contrasting

online purchasing with purchases made in a ‘brick and mortar store’, Jeffrey and Hodge (2007) propose that purchasing a number of products in one transaction is deemed to be less painful for the consumer in terms of parting with money, than if the purchases are made separately. The study found that consumers are more likely to indulge in an impulse purchase as their spend on other purchases increases.

The motivations and behaviour of consumers in respect of online purchasing (or propensity to purchase) is an issue of central importance to online retailers. As Teo and Yu (2005) consider, the characteristics of an individual can play an important role in their ability to engage with the Internet and ultimately their inclination to purchase goods online. Whilst the culture and mood of an individual, as previously discussed, is thought to hold implications for purchase behaviour, the age of an online buyer is also suggested to influence the information research that consumers undertake.

Distinguishing between consumers as young and old, Bei et al. (2004) suggest that the two groups use the Internet in different ways. Although not directly linked to impulse purchasing, perhaps buyer behaviour in a more general sense, it is suggested that younger consumers use a variety of Internet based sources when searching for information from retailers (except for online information from retailers), whilst older consumers rely upon online retailers or manufacturers’ information. In addition Williamson (1981) suggests that the frequency of which technology (in this case the Internet) is used, will influence the consumers willingness to purchase online. It is the increased access and availability of information that is available that Taneja (2002) cites as an important force in the changing expectations and power of customers.

As a final point, Dacko (2004) highlights the need for increased segmentation by last-minute travel providers on the basis that the last-minute travel and tourism market is not homogenous. Dacko’s research considers the many different customer groups that choose to purchase travel related products last minute, citing air travel as a key example of a product bought in this manner. The research suggests that companies offering products and services on a last-minute basis would do well to understand the motivations and intentional and un-intentional purchase decisions of consumers, in an attempt to disentangle the pricing strategies they employ.

4.9.3 Online shopping and risk

Perceived risk has for a long time been identified as being negatively correlated to self-esteem and risk taking, whilst at the same time being positively related to anxiety (Schaninger, 1976). The growth in Internet use and more specifically online shopping has thus forced shoppers to overcome the anxieties with which they are faced. Bhatnagar et al (2000) argue that as perceived risk increases, online purchasing will decrease. The counter argument though that as Internet use increases, so will the consumers propensity to purchase goods and services online is also proposed. The willingness to spend online is linked to a decrease in consumer worries of risk and uncertainty (Citrin et al. 2000).

As Weber and Milliman (1997) suggest, risk perception can change radically overtime. Uncertainty of the Internet environment and lack of communication with a salesperson to confirm details or ask questions, was also documented as a catalyst of concern for new and novice users of the Internet (Javenpaa et al. 2000, cited in Bramall et al. 2004). Yet, the use of real-time chat and online helpdesks employed by some retailers has gone some way towards bridging the gap between online sales and in-store sales. It does however appear to be the case that since these comments were made, changes have indeed taken place with recent data published by Mintel (2011b) suggesting that 62% of consumers are today confident in the security of online transactions.

Risk may be segmented into two categories and can be extended to include purchases made online and in-store: product risk and financial risk (Bhatnagar et al, 2000). Product risk is concerned with the complexity of the product and that it may be difficult to use. The inability to try out the product before purchase or handle it could place an element of risk/doubt in the consumers mind (Holak and Lehman, 1990 and Burnham et al. 2003 both cited in Bramall et al. 2004). This is perhaps a facet indicative of the airline product, in that it cannot be experienced beforehand.

Where financial risk is concerned, the matter can arguably be viewed in two ways. First, the price of the product may be seen as an inherent component of financial risk. The more expensive the product that is being bought online, the greater financial risk concerned. If a consumer is purchasing a CD (compact disc) online, the financial risks of it not being the right copy or it being lost in the post are not as great as those when purchasing a high value product/service. In this respect an airline ticket may be classed as high-risk, which stands in contrast to the work of Jun et al. (2007) who classify the purchase as low-risk. Airline tickets are usually deemed to be high-value products and there is the risk that if personal details and/or the destination are incorrectly detailed; the consumer will have to pay an additional (frequently high charge) to rectify the mistake. The level of risk may be minimised if the air ticket is purchased in a travel agent or via a call centre agent as the booking is taken out of the consumer's hands to some extent.

Additionally, financial risk may be considered in respect of cloning personal details during the transaction, which are then used fraudulently by criminals. The issue of security has already been briefly mentioned and is considered in detail by Bramall et al. (2004) who highlight the need for trust to be developed between the online retailer and consumer. Yoon (2002) considers that whilst trust takes time to build, it can be destroyed very quickly. As with a traditional retail environment, branding and reputation can be used by online consumers as an indication of a firm's trustworthiness. Equally, the associations a retailer makes with third party assurance companies can help to reassure consumers when purchasing online, particularly by displaying a visible assurance seal on the website (Chen and Dhillon, 2003). Airlines that display the Air Travel Organisers Licensing (ATOL) sign demonstrate to the consumer that the agent is trustworthy and the consumer will be protected if the airline fails.

4.9.4 Online v. in-store research

The introduction of Internet based sales was an invaluable and timely innovation for both the consumer and the airline industry alike, having been hailed as inherent to the success of the low-cost revolution in air travel (Yu, 2008). Throughout the period 2006-10, data suggests that seven in ten people had access to the Internet and broadband in the UK, with the figure at eight in ten for 15-44 year olds and those in socio-economic group AB (Mintel, 2011). Despite the figures demonstrating high Internet usage, many consumers still hold reservations and fears towards online shopping largely attributable to security concerns (Network Security, 2000; Chu, 2001; Soopramanien et al. 2007). Data suggests that three in ten people worry about security when purchasing holidays online (Mintel, 2011). Research has however suggested that education focused upon online security and seal assurance services on websites are key in tackling this concern (Kim et al. 2008).

The Internet has thus required airlines and consumers alike, to alter their traditional sales and purchasing habits. The online shopping arena offers by its very nature, a shopping experience very different to that within a physical retail environment. At the end of the twentieth century, Underhill (1999) recognised the trend amongst buyers to visit ‘real world stores’ and then look online to see if they could find the good/service cheaper, a behaviour also documented in later research and still in practice today (Athiyaman, 2002; Beldona et al. 2005; Biswas et al. 2006).

Research by Mintel (2011) reinforces the point, suggesting that today’s consumer has learnt the lessons of frugality and has become wise to the ways of seeking out a bargain, with half of UK consumers using online reviews, comparison sites and discount vouchers/codes.

In an attempt to differentiate between ‘cybershopping’ and the physical retail environment, Underhill suggested that shopping online offers a limitless selection of goods (if the stock is available); convenience (to shop at any time and anywhere); speed (ability to manoeuvre through the ‘store’ at your own pace) and information (limitless product information can be retrieved and saved online). The limitations of shopping online were also pointed out, namely: touch, trial or any other sensory stimuli, immediate gratification and social interaction.

In the decade that has elapsed since these comments were made, technology has developed at a pace that sees these observations as largely obsolete. Airline websites now offer sensory stimuli through audiovisuals, music and photographic stills and the growth of online chat rooms and discussion boards has facilitated the growth of social forums for consumers to discuss their experiences of airline services.

Whilst immediate gratification is not normally associated with purchasing a flight (as it is booked in advance), it is however acknowledged that gratification may come with having simply made the booking. In this regard, a consumer may stand indifferent as to whether the flight is bought online or in a travel shop.

The Internet is well documented to have contributed to the simplification of the research process and purchasing of travel products. Yet, where the travel decision-making process was once deemed a relatively simple task, it is now considered a complex process, requiring a number of decisions to be made (Fesenmaier and Jeng, 2000 cited in Jun et al. 2007). Recognising the complexity of the research and purchase process, a recent report by the OFT recognised that experience does generally benefit the consumer who will learn from their experiences of researching and shopping online (OFT, 2010).

Research undertaken by consumers online varies depending upon the individual's approach to travel. Jun et al (2007) maintain airline tickets are low risk travel products that consumers feel comfortable purchasing online, yet other research has suggested otherwise. As McCleary and Whitney (2001) consider, if a consumer is anxious or nervous about the travel experience they are planning, it is usual for them to seek reassurance by overcompensating with the levels of research they conduct. Elsewhere, a study commissioned by Gartner Research (2002, cited in Kolsaker et al. 2004) found consumers in

Hong Kong to be less likely to buy airline tickets online. They suggest that the reason for such a low adoption rate may not be due to a lack of trust in online retail (noting high levels of personal computer (PC) ownership in the country), but due to the existence of ‘better’ local traditional travel agencies. Further, the population is also considered to enjoy the shopping process and social interaction that it brings.

Whilst it is acknowledged that the study by Gartner Research is now dated and perceptions and behaviour may have long changed, the ‘cultural distinction’ that is suggested with a preference for in-store shopping for social interaction is interesting and will be considered further.

More recently, Kotler et al (2009) considered data from a market research survey that collected information on digital consumers from 23 countries, based upon 30 consumer-packaged goods. The study found that perceived piracy and security and website customisation had greater effect in individualistic countries than in collectivistic countries. It was also put forward the notion that in certain cultures the consumer’s personal values will be influential as to their digital shopping behaviour.

A recent survey of 25,000 adults in the UK by TGI concluded that for both overseas and domestic holidays, 48% used the Internet when planning their holiday. Whilst 28% spoke to friends and family, 23% had previously visited the destination and relied upon previous experience (in both cases a high percentage of research was conducted using these two information sources for domestic trips). Just 15% visited a high street travel agent (with use greatest for overseas holidays) and 12% made use of the traditional brochure. A further 10% used the services of a tour operator or travel company (Mintel, 2011).

Where administering the booking was concerned the TGI survey found that for both domestic and overseas holidays taken in the last 12 months, 41% of respondents made their own travel and accommodation arrangements by booking their accommodation directly, whilst a further 20% made their own travel/accommodation arrangements and booked their flight directly with the airline. Eighteen percent used a high street travel agent to book a package holiday and 13% booked their package holiday with a tour operator. Further, just 9% of the sample booked their flight with a travel agent and just 4% with a tour operator (Mintel, 2011).

4.9.5 The online retailer

Whilst much of this discussion relates to the demand-side behavioural and motivational implications of purchasing, it is important to recognise the role of the supplier / online retailer in the communication of services and products to generate buying intent. The matter is increasingly pertinent with growing numbers of high-street companies realising the benefits that multi-channel retailing can offer.

As a starting point, the work of Madhavaram and Laverie (2004) demonstrates that ‘exposure to stimulus’ immediately prior to making an impulse purchase goes beyond that of the stimuli within physical proximity to the product, taking into account a range of stimulus related to the product. The concept can however be translated from the physical ‘bricks and mortar’ environment to which the authors refer and extend to include purchases bought online.

An analytical model proposed by Madhavaram and Russell (1974, cited in Adelaar et al. 2003) to measure environmental psychology within the built environment, was later adapted and developed by Adelaar et al. (2003) to encompass emotional and behavioural responses within the online retail setting. Inline with the findings offered by Jeffrey and Hodge (2007), the research found individuals to be receptive to online visual and text stimulus in the same way as they are within a ‘bricks and mortar’ setting. Further, Adelaar et al. (2003) concluded that consumers who are exposed to moving images will have more positive emotions than if they are just been exposed to plain text.

For online retailers this is of importance. The application of video technology is already in use by holiday companies such as First Choice and Thomas Cook by way of promoting destinations and hotels, whilst airlines such as Ryanair make use of interactive maps to demonstrate route networks. Elsewhere Emirates use videos to demonstrate their first class offerings. The further development of video media by airlines in particular may be of use in helping to up-sell services online.

Considering changes to website design and the layout of the Internet site, Teo and Yu (2005) consider the work of Weitz (1988) who suggests that changes can cause challenges for consumers when searching for products. For impulse purchasers, difficulties in navigating the website may cause a potential customer to disregard their purchase intention and buy their air ticket elsewhere. Conversely, consumers may welcome a change to a website's design which may infact be a key reason for eliciting an impulse purchase in the first place. A consumer may be drawn to a website for its new and updated design, with the intention of taking up the offer of a discount or promotion.

Jones et al. (2008) highlight the need for organisations to develop a personal relationship with consumers to ensure that they become highly involved in the purchasing process. Allowing the consumer to access a variety of complimentary products and services via the main website would engage the consumer heavily in the purchase process. The majority of airlines today advertise auxiliary products and services on their website through sales agreements with trusted retailers, allowing the consumer to build a package around their flight option with the reassurance of booking with a trusted affiliate.

In a similar vein, Dacko (2004), Jolley (2006) and Jeffrey and Hodge (2007) consider the use of email alerts as a successful direct marketing tool to help retain profitable customers, by targeting individuals that have previously signed up to a website / mailing list. The use of email alerts is a method adopted by many airlines and in particular online travel retailers such as lastminute.com and Octopus Travel. However, whilst this marketing approach helps to target previous and current customers as opposed to new clientele, it does not necessarily mean that a consumer will remain loyal to the brand, but instead use the element of price to differentiate between brands (Eadington, 2004).

As a final point of consideration, Teo and Yu (2005) recognise the importance of online relationship development and consumer confidence in brands. They cite reasons for not engaging with online retail to include security fears, service/web related problems and a lack of consumer confidence in Internet providers. After-sales service is also deemed extremely important and may be key to securing an online purchase (Jarvenpaa et al. 2000). Similarly, the cost to the consumer of contacting the retailer (airline) by telephone and the ease at which contact can be made, are also deemed to be influential. Dodds et al (1991) concluded that a favourable brand name could have a positive influence on a consumer’s perception of an organisation and thus increase their willingness to purchase.

4.9.6 Websites, design and layout

It is suggested there are four main functions of a business website: to promote corporate identity and be part of the company’s image building; provide information on the product/service and where it can be purchased; it can be scaled down to be a online version of a ‘built’ store; and it can be an online version of the complete store (Underhill, 1999).

Underhill (1999) also considers that there are four main reasons consumers visit websites: one is to ‘grab and go’ - goods/services can be purchased quickly; to browse products; to gather information and read reviews and finally, to contact the company. Whilst these remain the basic functions of online websites, technological developments have facilitated the services that retailers provide, with websites now able to offer live chat and online help functions and virtual experiences to almost ‘test’ the product/service before purchase.

With the majority of LCC sales made via the Internet to help maintain low costs (Kung et al. 2002), technological innovations made in website design, have empowered the consumer allowing them to 'design their own product'. Many LCCs now offer a range of additional services beyond the airline seat allowing the consumer to assemble a finished service suited to their individual needs. As Dekel et al. (2007: 253) discuss, the do-it-yourself (DIY) concept once implied that a customer assembled a 'product' designed by a company, but the term 'mass customisation-based marketing' reverses the concept; allowing the consumer to select and configure the product parts. Furthermore, with the consumer able to tailor the product, research has shown links to increased brand loyalty (Dekel et al. 2007). Whilst the example relates to products in a broader sense, the same is true of the service industry.

Where website design is concerned, Underhill (1999) suggests that website navigation should be facilitated by clear design and instructions, with inclusion of pictures and sound to make the site fun. The design of websites has however been identified as a key issue for consumers when shopping online for air travel. As the OFT highlighted, particular concerns have been raised as to the ease of accessing costs related to the flight, whilst the Greenlight report (2010) considered in section 4.9.1 also considered the implications of websites in marketing the airline product.

Whilst the physical store environment can influence consumer behaviour through the use of signage and reduction tags, the lack of 'physicality' makes the process slightly different for Internet based sales. Nevertheless airlines including easyJet and Ryanair employ 'in-your-face' sales advertisements using bright colours and large print to advertise costs, to arguably advertise in a very successful manner.

Zeithmal et al (2000 cited in Zeithmal et al., 2002) provided the first formal definition of website quality, what they term e-service quality (e-SQ). e-SQ is defined as 'the extent to which a Web site facilitates efficient and effective shopping, purchasing, and delivery of products and services'. Elsewhere, Zeithmal et al. (2002) consider a criteria that has been established which consumers use to evaluate websites in general and the service quality that is delivered via the website. They cite information availability and content, ease of use or usability, privacy/security, graphic style, and fulfillment as the key evaluating criteria.

Reviewing each of the individual factors, Zeithmal et al (2002) propose a variation of the original SERVQUAL model, based upon their findings that found service quality on websites as multi-dimensional and to include ease of use, privacy/confidentiality, reliability and site design. e-SQ was also considered to be linked to the intent of an individual to purchase, and importantly see the purchase through (i.e. not abandon it).

The conceptual model proposed for understanding and improving e-SQ, is similar to the original SERVQUAL model in that it highlights gaps where organisations may fall short in meeting the customers expectations. Principally they are - on the organisation's side – the information gap (the discrepancy between the customer's requirements concerning the website and the management's beliefs about those requirements), the design gap (failure of the organisation to incorporate the customers requirements into the website), and the communication gap (lack of understanding from marketing personnel as to the website's features). On the customer's side the fulfillment gap represents the overall discrepancy between the customer's requirements and experience.

Such a model is of particular use in evaluating the service quality levels that customers derive when using airline or other retail websites to purchase airline tickets. The model is effective in helping to locate areas where organisations may fall short and/or where the consumer's requirements and experience do not meet with those of the organisation. What the model does not take into consideration however is the impact of socio-demographic variables pertaining to the customer's experience and how such factors will affect the individual's perception of the service-quality they derive from using the website.

4.9.7 Online and in-store shopping

Differing in respect of their consumer interface platforms, key relationships do exist between online and in-store purchasing. Farag et al. (2007) suggest that several relationships can be identified: online shopping acts as a substitution for in-store shopping; the Internet encourages the purchase of a good or service online which might not have otherwise been made; and the 'hybrid' relationship which is increasingly becoming apparent with the research of products being made either online or in-store and the purchase taking place through the alternative shopping channel (i.e. a consumer researches a product online and then purchases it in a normal shop or vice versa).

Online retailing may therefore be seen as a substitution or modificator for shopping in a built environment or what Madhavaram and Laverie (2004) term the 'bricks and mortar' setting.

The time savings derived through Internet shopping and its positive influence on online consumer behaviour is well documented (Alreck and Settle, 2002; Park and Jun, 2003; Kolsaker et al. (2004). However, as Christou and Kassianidis (2002) consider, consumers may not satisfy their personal needs by shopping online in the same way that they would by shopping in-store, an issue previously highlighted by Park and Jun (2003). Yet, whilst online shopping offers timesaving capabilities, for novice Internet users and those unfamiliar with online purchasing, the process can be time consuming and more fraught with uncertainty, anxiety and time than if the consumer had visited a traditional 'bricks and mortar' store.

The work of Farag et al. (2007) is interesting as it contemplates the time consumers give to shopping, recognising that the level of accessibility a consumer has, will negatively influence the time that they spend shopping online. That is, if a consumer lives within close proximity to a number of shops, they will be inclined to visit them to test out products and/or services. However, Ferrell (2005, cited in Farag et al. 2007) argues otherwise suggesting that in reality consumers will spend more time shopping in total, both inside and outside of the home, meaning that if a product is found in-store and the consumer is happy with it, they may go home and see if they can buy it cheaper online (or vice versa).

Although the purchase of air travel does not lend itself to consumers actually holding a product, the principle is the same, in that the consumer may research the cost of flights and services online and then visit a travel agency to see if they can get a better deal in-store (or again, reverse the process to visit the agency first and then turn to online retailers in search of a better deal).

It is likely that moving forward there will remain a market for both online and shopping in a physical store, given the diverse nature of the population. Whilst Mintel (2011) and SITA (2011) stress increasing numbers are researching and booking flights online, there is likely to always remain a proportion of the population that favour face-to-face human interaction when purchasing high-spend products and services.

4.9.8 Demand and pricing

As a final point, the issue of demand and pricing should be addressed. Amidst the current turbulent economic climate, many individuals and increasingly more organisations are seeking to control their spending, with flight cost featuring highly in the decision-making process. A report by TNS for Travel Weekly found that in a survey of 2,045 adults that the key factor determining an individual's choice of holiday in 2010 was overall price, cited by 52% of the sample (Taylor, 2010a).

Individual airline websites and 'screen scrapper' sites such as Sky Scanner and Expedia, allow the consumer to seek out the best fare and in doing so have control over their spending. Alba et al (1997) and Bakos (1998) consider that the Internet has brought transparency and allowed consumers to consider the price of a product/service in their decision making process, arguing that the Internet has increased the importance of price as a motivational decision making tool. Yet concern over 'drip pricing' on websites has continued to rear itself as a cause for concern, with many websites revealing part of the price revealed before extra charges are levied.

A report by the OFT (2010) found that shoppers are often caught out by drip pricing offers, with more than a quarter of shoppers purchasing in the first shop (site), when it would have been wise to consider searching for flights, with a sense of loss or missing out if the sale was abandoned once the true cost was realised. The greatest welfare loss and tendency to make mistakes was found in situations where drip pricing or time-limited offers are used.

Button (2010:79) recognises that whilst there are more trips for leisure than by air than ever before, there are fewer work trips in general. This is however arguable, given recent evidence provided by Ascend (2011), which recognised a growth in business travel. Nevertheless, Button suggests that the situation reflects a limit to the time people have available for travel, with travellers seeking a 'travel time budget' as technology and travel choices continue to evolve. Evidence suggests that average travel times have increased throughout the twentieth century, arguably as a result of rising income levels. Thus as individual's move from one income group to another (in either direction), so too does their travel-time budget. It is contended that transport purchases in an age of uncertainty are unlikely to be so simplistic, with a range of extraneous variables likely to influence travel decisions.

Where demand for air transport is concerned, Button (2010) notes that whilst a number of studies have examined demand elasticities, no single figure has emerged as 'representative'. Button does however recognise a distinction between fare elasticities of business and non-business air travel, with the latter generally being higher. The results conform to the notion that leisure travellers have more flexibility in their travel plans, whereas business travellers are frequently bound to travel at short notice and to certain time restrictions. Yet interestingly, Button (2010:85) suggests that part of the variation in price can be attributed to the fact that 'we expect personal travel to be more price elastic than business travel.' This point raises the question as to whether business travellers see the attribute of flight cost as different to that of a leisure passenger.

The phenomenon has long been around that higher priced tickets can generate higher revenues, but suffer from greater inelasticity. A study by Straszheim (1978 cited in Button, 2010) concluded that ‘First class fares can be raised and will increase revenue...The demand for standard economy service is about unity, and highest for peak period travel...The demand for discount and promotional fares is highly price elastic.’ Thus, the purpose of trip should be taken into account when considering transport demand. The demand elasticity of first and business class fares is also considered to be low reflecting the service requirements of the consumer groups (Button, 2010).

Further, demand elasticity estimates are also seen to be sensitive to the length of flight, with shorter routes generally exhibiting higher fare elasticities given the availability of other travel options. The frequency at which the journey is made is also influential. The findings of a study by Fowkes et al. (1991) further support the point. With air travellers questioned as to why they chose to travel by air over alternative modes, 95% stated the comparatively short journey time. The importance of this research despite having been undertaken some twenty years ago, reflects the value air travellers’ attribute to the speed/frequency of flights. A facet that remains prevalent today.

Button (2010) also raises some interesting points concerning users of different transport modes and payment. Drawing on the pioneering study by Harrison and Quarmby (1969 cited in Button, 2010), the research found that motorists are aware of 50-60% of their own costs (i.e. fuel, tyre wear, vehicle maintenance), but did not take into account environmental effects and congestion costs imposed on others. It is recognised that users of public transport are often more aware of their trip cost, given that they are usually required to purchase a ticket at the beginning of their journey. The move by airlines to allow air travellers the opportunity to offset their carbon footprint goes someway towards bridging this gap and giving travellers better understanding of the ‘true’ costs of their journey, with a particular emphasis upon the environmental costs (Gössling et al. 2007; MacKerron et al. 2009). Barnett (2009) suggests however that a carbon tax not only absolves air travellers from questioning the necessity of their flight, but also lets the carrier off the hook.

The simplified pricing system employed by LCCs initially presents the consumer with a fare that is frequently unrepresentative of the final cost paid. Starting with the basic ticket price, once taxes and charges, baggage fees, seat reservations and credit card charges are all added; the final price paid is often far more than the consumer envisaged. This issues relates to the aforementioned pricing technique 'drip pricing' considered by the OFT (2010). Whilst the airlines are clear in their approach that the customer can make their flight as cheap as they want, consumers are often not fully aware of the final cost until they disembark the aircraft given that when onboard all snacks and drinks are also chargeable.

The transparency of flight pricing has been the subject of much recent controversy to the extent that the CAA called for all airlines to display their prices clearly. Led by FSCs including BA, Virgin, and BMI, as of 1st June 2011 the following LCCs now display the final, inclusive price of flights on their website: easyJet Monarch Airlines, bmibaby, Flybe, Jet2.com and Ryanair (CAA, 2011).

On similar lines, airlines attracted further attention in March 2011 when a super complaint was filed and later upheld, by the consumer group Which? that highlighted the excessive credit card charges levied by some airlines. Highlighted in the super-complaint as key culprits, airlines who charge an in-proportionate cost for processing payments, were asked by the OFT to ensure that headline prices are meaningful and that any charges incurred in the payment process are factored into the headline price (OFT, 2011).

The frustration to passengers of additional charges is acknowledged through recent press it has generated i.e. possible charges for using the toilet and paying to check-in at the airport amongst others, yet from the perspective of the ‘low-cost’ airline, it is deemed as revenue generator and a means to inadvertently increase awareness of the airline at the same time. Arguably the costs to the passenger are avoidable and the airline is there ultimately to make a profit, but as consumers become increasingly savvy in their knowledge of air transport providers, the brand of an airline is perhaps less influential in pre-trip decision making and airline choice.

The time period under consideration can also lead consumers to make different purchasing decisions. That is, people may react differently to decisions in the short term or market period (where they may be locked into a pattern of behaviour that is difficult to change), than they would in the medium or long term. Immediate reactions to an increase in fares in the short run may be dramatic, i.e. passengers may stop using an airline, but such reactions are likely to be short-lived. In the market period, passengers may be unresponsive to change taking the view that any changes may not be permanent and continue their behaviour as normal. Whilst in the medium-long term passengers may begin to change their travel plans and switch to other modes, particularly on short haul domestic routes, with demand becoming more elastic. Such a pattern of behaviour would be expected in air travel, but with leisure passengers demonstrating greater propensity to change than business passengers, for whom air travel is frequently a necessity. The fall-out of increased oil prices and less disposable income is likely to induce greater change amongst leisure travellers than business travellers.

Income elasticity where air transport is concerned is clearly relatively high. Even where mileage is low (i.e. on a domestic flight), the absolute cost still remains high. The impact of a negative change in income may arguably produce a dramatic fall in demand but as Button (2010) notes, as people readjust their expenditure, long-term elasticity is likely to be much lower.

The demand for air transport is also likely to be influenced by the actions of competitors and alternative transport providers. Whilst the LCC was slow to take much traffic from the FSC when it entered the UK market, its impact was readily felt. Additionally, new airlines and routes are influential. For domestic trips and for those to mainland Europe in particular, the competition to airlines from alternative modes of transport including the train, car and coach remains high. Nevertheless as Savage (2009) notes, there has been a fall in rail passenger numbers in the UK for the first time in fifteen years, suggesting that the impact of rail may be faltering. Whilst Savage focuses upon the effects of the decline on the commuter market, he considers that price increases and service cuts that have recently been introduced, have added to the reduced numbers of travellers.

4.10 Chapter summary

Chapter 4 has highlighted that the inception of the LCC business model has undoubtedly changed not only the day-to-day workings of the aviation sector, but also our attitudes towards air travel and the way in which we engage, organise and plan journeys. Whilst the LCC has not single handily transformed the sector, alongside changes in lifestyle and leisure patterns, improvements in technology, and shifts in the global economy, its impact has been far reaching and notably restructured both leisure and business markets.

For leisure travellers, the LCC has opened up new destinations and bridged the gap between air travel as an underused and frequently inaccessible luxury to become an attainable reality for many. Whilst for business passengers, the deregulated marketplace has increased travel flexibility and emerged as a viable alternative to the FSC in an increasingly tough financial climate.

For airlines, the challenge to understand the complexity of attitude formation is far reaching and its manifestation into behaviour is too, inherently intricate. The influence of psychology and its role is thus as a central theme in understanding the decision-making and behaviour of individuals. The literature has identified a number of internal and external stimuli that may be influential to the choice process of airline passengers and will therefore be investigated further.

Whilst behavioural attributes, lifestyle and socio-demographic factors have been used to define tourists and categorise their behaviour, no such typology has readily emerged within aviation. Whilst it is acknowledged that influential factors such as trip purpose, destination, socio-demographics, culture, perception and emotion and travel motivation (amongst others) will impart influence upon airline choice, a framework that seeks to define and establish key characteristics of LCC, FSC and Charter airline users, would be beneficial to both airlines and tourism and aviation academics alike. An exploration of the choice processes and decision-making context, in which airline passengers have chosen a flight, would be insightful and inform the development of such a classification.

To this end, understanding of the actual research process that intentional air travellers undertake is of importance. The influence of socio-demographics and the implications for the information search and retrieval process are widely documented, yet there is little evidence of investigation within the realm of aviation. Conversely, the purchase of air travel in unplanned/impulse situations is also under-researched, yet with new sales techniques employed by airlines seeking to explore this market, its importance should not be under-estimated.

The shift towards online purchasing of air travel is evident within the literature, yet for many the process of shopping online has been shrouded in fear and concern over security and the lack of personal communication and advice that is offered in other retail environments. The implications of such concerns remain of utmost importance to retailers/airlines, who are increasingly selling online, thus greater understanding of how potential customers are engaging in online research (or not as the case may be), is of interest and importance in developing the market to meet the needs of consumers.

The key issues identified here to have emerged from the literature review will be used to inform the research methods and techniques employed in both the pilot study and main body of research that will be discussed from chapter 6 onwards. Further, the research themes will also inform the line of enquiry adopted, acting as a basis upon which the investigation will develop.

5. Research philosophy and research design

5.1 Introduction

Social research is influenced by a variety of factors, from theory that guides research or theory that emerges from it, to the epistemological and ontological considerations and values of the researcher, to the practical considerations and choice of research methods (Bryman, 2008). The research strategy and design are thus inextricably linked.

Section 5.2 of this chapter seeks to establish the fundamental concepts of the research strategy that is, the philosophical approach underpinning this study. To support the argument for the research philosophy adopted, justification for discounting alternative traditions based upon their ontological and epistemological assumptions will be presented. Section 5.3 considers cross-sectional design as the framework adopted for the collection and analysis of data.

5.2 Research philosophy

The assumptions made about the nature of social reality upon which a theory is based, that is its ontological assumptions, hold implications for data collection. Defining ontology, Blaikie (2000:8) suggests it refers to 'claims and assumptions...made about the nature of social reality, claims about what exists, what it looks like, what units make it up and how these units interact with each other. In short, ontological assumptions are concerned with what we believe constitutes social reality.'

In turn, methods and procedures that are deemed appropriate for the collection of data depend upon 'the assumptions that are made about how that social reality can really be known' (Blaikie, 2003:16). Simply 'how we know what we know' (Crotty, 2005:3). To this end, numerous epistemological positions exist, offering alternative philosophical interpretations of knowledge, which determine our view of the world (Mason, 2002), and what is interpreted as acceptable knowledge (Bryman, 1988).

The implications of the epistemological approach adopted are far reaching and are seen as central to the research methods employed. As Williams and May (1996: 136) note; '...the methods themselves may stand as a testimony to our views on how it is possible to obtain such knowledge in the first place.' Bryman (1988) is of a similar opinion, suggesting that the capabilities of quantitative and qualitative research approaches are not solely concerned with their technical constructs, but have far reaching connotations for philosophical underpinnings.

Here, quantitative and qualitative methods are viewed not as competing views of how the social world should be considered, with distinct epistemological assumptions, but rather as different ways of undertaking social research, which may be integrated, and chosen on the basis of their suitability to the research in hand.

To begin, the contrasting paradigms of positivism and interpretivism (or social constructionism) are considered, before attention is given to the research tradition that forms the basis of this study, critical realism.

Positivism assumes that 'social reality is external to the people involved' (Blaikie, 2003:17), whilst presupposing that it exists 'apart from the operation of any consciousness' (Crotty, 2005: 8). Yet as Guba (1985:80) recognises, there are 'almost as many versions of the positivist 'manifesto' as there are authors', suggesting that there are variations in the epistemological beliefs held by researchers.

Positivism holds that reality is nothing more than a context in which social activities occur and to this end, only data collected on aspects of reality are regarded as relevant to research. The approach advocates the application of methods used in natural sciences to social sciences and pertains that knowledge obtained from the social world is objective. Researchers that adopt this ontological approach believe that their views and beliefs do not influence the research process or information that is gathered. As Guba and Lincoln contend, as long as the researcher strictly adheres to 'prescribed procedures' they will be able to view any – natural or social – phenomena 'through a one way mirror' (Guba and Lincoln, 1998: 204). In line with the positivist approach, when a researcher recognises social phenomena 'they are simply discovering a meaning that has been lying there in wait for them all along' (Crotty, 2005: 8). The data that is extracted is thus deemed to be self-explanatory, not requiring any further explanation. Positivism deals with mainly quantitative procedures.

The research tradition of interpretivism or social constructionism as it is also known stands in contrast to that of positivism, considering that the study of the social phenomena is fundamentally different from natural phenomena (Blaikie, 2003a). As human beings are distinct and unpredictable, they have to be considered differently to subject matter within the natural sciences (Bryman, 2008). The clash in the epistemological positions reflects the emphasis upon *explaining* human behaviour in positivism and *understanding* human behaviour in interpretivism. It rejects the opinion that the social researcher can claim complete objectivity.

All knowledge is a social construction and comes from our engagement with 'realities' in the world. Whilst Crotty (2005:8-9) notes 'Meaning is not discovered, but constructed', Blaikie (2003a: 36) adds 'In short, the social world is already interpreted before the social scientist arrives'. It is thus not the role of the social researcher to create objective, theoretical underpinnings of the social world, but rather to 'grasp the subjective meaning of social action.' (Bryman, 2008:16). Interpretivism is linked with qualitative data collection.

Realism (in particular critical realism) purports a middle ground between the two aforementioned philosophical positions. Whilst it shares with positivism the belief that natural and social sciences can and should apply the same research methods, it also recognises there is an external reality which researchers should consider (Bryman, 2008). Critical realism has two underlying principles. First, that in contrast to the positivist stance that the researcher's understanding of reality *is* reality, it argues that the researchers understanding is simply a way of *knowing* that reality. Second, again counter to positivist assumptions, theory can be used to explain mechanisms that are not directly observable.

The world is structured, differentiated, stratified and changing (Danermark et al, 2002:5) and in this way, 'critical realism claims to be able to combine and reconcile ontological realism, epistemological relativism and judgemental rationality' (Archer et al. 1998 cited in Danermark et al. 2002:10). It proposes a stratified ontology (Sayer, 1999). Ontological realism is an intransitive realm that comprises of three domains: the real, the actual and the empirical. Where the *real* locates the mechanisms and considers the power and structures behind objects, the realm of the *actual* considers what happens when the power or structures are activated. In the *actual* domain, events will occur whether they are witnessed or not. The final domain is that of the *empirical* (experience) in which an actual event is experienced or witnessed by an individual directly or indirectly. In social sciences Bhaskar's ontological map is typically identified as empirical → actual → real and in progressing from one domain to the next, our level of understanding is deepened. The process of retroduction considers models are built through mechanisms and structures that generate empirical research through a process of description, explanation and redescription (Sayer, 1999).

At its core, Danermark et al. (2002:5) suggest that critical realism requires 'a switch from epistemology to ontology, and within ontology a switch from events to mechanisms.' They argue that the ontological question must be the starting point for a philosophy of reality, not the epistemological question of how knowledge is possible. This is a notion also supported by Bhaskar (2008). Further, metatheory should be a central feature of all social science study and not be introduced *ad hoc*, that is, there should always be a clear connection between the ontological and epistemological starting points and the practical research.

In contrast to positivism and empiricism, realism maintains that reality exists independently of our knowledge of it and the knowledge people have of their social world consequentially affects their behaviour. The relationship between the real world and the concept individual's form of it are the underlying focus of the research process. Whilst positivism misrepresents society by representing phenomena as independent individuals or atoms, the ontological underpinnings of critical realism accepts that social systems commonly involve dependency. In the context of individuals, their ability is largely dependent on their relation to others (Sayer, 1999). Thus, the hermeneutic approach adopted within social sciences is by its very nature not only influenced by scientific concepts, but also by the continual changes of the social phenomena being studied. As Danermark et al. (2002:33) contend, everyday knowledge must be included in the 'very way in which we conduct research and form concepts' as it constitutes 'the immediate mechanisms behind the activities making up the social phenomena.'

To this end, critical realism is deemed to clearly represent the philosophical approach adopted in this study. As was considered in the preceding literature review, the social world appears extremely influential affecting people's behaviour and consequentially their decision-making. It is also understood that the inter-dependency of social systems is likely to affect the behaviour of individuals, not solely scientific concepts.

Elsewhere, May (2001) demonstrating support for the critical realist approach, draws upon the work of Collier (1994) and Sayer (1999) to suggest that studying everyday social life at a superficial level, i.e. through conversation and observation, does not allow for a deeper and truer understanding of the mechanisms that make them possible in the first place. It is essential to understand the mechanisms that produce events. To this end, as Sayer (1999) contends, critical realism does not pertain to the conventional measures of cause, namely through gathering data on occurrences and regularity. Rather to unearth the structure of social research, the existence of casual mechanisms must be explored, further to understanding how they work, if they have been activated and under what conditions.

Understanding how and why individuals arrive at a decision as to which airline to fly with, thus requires the identification of mechanisms and their workings through deep discussion and analysis of air traveller's attitudes. It is not deemed sufficient to demonstrate such understanding through superficial research methods, thus it is the challenge of the researcher to explore with depth, the underlying structures and mechanisms of behaviour.

That there is an external world independent of human consciousness and at the same time a dimension that includes our socially determined knowledge about reality is a central premise of critical realism. Bhaskar (1998: 39) suggests that 'people do not create society. For it always pre-exists them and is a necessary condition for their activity. Rather, society must be regarded as an ensemble of structures, practices and conventions that individuals reproduce or transform, but which would not exist unless they did so. Society does not exist independently of human activity...But it is not the product of it.'

Critical realism also requires that researchers are aware that facts are theory-laden and there is an intrinsic and mutual relation between concept and knowledge. Sayer (1992:20) considers that '…the effects of language are not fixed like those of bricks and steel. New interpretations are always possible, they can never be foreclosed.' Thus, language can be interpreted in many ways. Sayer suggests that we need a language to express ourselves, yet the language already exists. We therefore take on the language of our society, which has already been interpreted and reinterpret it in different ways. To this end Danermark et al. (2002:32) consider that social sciences involve 'double hermeneutics', and it is the role of the social scientist to interpret 'other people's interpretations'. Yet this process is compounded by the fact that individuals may unintentionally influence social phenomena through the environment in which they interact, as education and new experiences can create change in behaviour (ibid.)

This dilemma requires the researcher to take appropriate care when dealing with the research findings and seek to ensure the results of the study reflect the very nature of the ‘usually complex and messy’ system in which social sciences operate (Sayer, 1999:19).

A realist concept of generality will be adopted in this study, whereby generalisations made will refer to transfactual conditions within the preconditions that have been set. Based on retroduction, the findings relate to the premise under study. Transfactual conditions can be more or less general and are expressed as abstract concepts, which identify something that is universal in the respect of ‘constituent’ (Danermark et al. 2002). The findings of the research will therefore only relate to the general population under study. Sayer (1999) considers that much depends upon modes of abstraction, thus attention must be given to the methods employed. The subsequent discussion of the research design that will direct this study will address this matter in detail.

As with other research traditions, critical realism is bound by a number of methodological assumptions (Danermark et al. 2002), yet unlike positivism and interpretivism, it is compatible with a range of research methods. It recognises that there is often a need to mix methods within the research process, rejecting a ‘cookbook approach’ (Sayer, 1999), but in doing so, the researcher must consider the ontological and epistemological dimensions. It is understood that theory should guide research and not be subordinate to specific methodological rules - in a similar way to positivism. Critical realism also pertains that research should not be categorised as quantitative or qualitative, but rather research can apply an intensive or extensive design (or both) (Sayer, 1992). It is the intention, as will be discussed in the subsequent chapters, that this study will employ both intensive and extensive design, but with an emphasis upon the latter approach.

The positivistic epistemology is thus rejected for its closed system approach that purports a prescriptive method of study, ignoring social reality that is internal and changeable. For all its shortcomings, it does however boast a number of established research methods within quantitative research including surveys, data analysis and questionnaires. As Gorard (2003) contends, all methods have their advantages and limitations, with each suitable for answering different types of research question.

The social constructionist (interpretivism) epistemology adopts a much more sympathetic approach for the study of social phenomena, with the choice to conduct social research and all decisions made thereafter, determined by the researchers own social being. The qualitative approach to research it maintains, supports the acceptance of the uniqueness and diversity of individuals.

The critical realist approach is however deemed to provide an epistemological approach that is most fitting to this research, combining both the subjectivist and objectivist approaches of positivism and interpretivism. With no favoured research method per se, critical realism is able to work in a ‘grounded theory mode of analysis that emphasizes serendipity and concept development’ (Miller, 2000:17). This unbiased and pragmatic epistemology is therefore deemed to be superior to other epistemological approaches.

5.3 Research design

The preceding section highlighted the broad orientation of this study, recognising the distinction between quantitative and qualitative research strategies, whilst embracing an epistemological approach that seeks to allow research to transcend the division. To develop a profound understanding of decision-making in air travel, it is the intention that three distinct, yet interrelated pieces of research will be undertaken to inform this study. A cross-sectional research design will form the overriding framework for the collection and analysis of data.

Cross-sectional design considers variation between variables, in this case, variation between air travellers. The research design collects data more or less simultaneously, in contrast to classical experimental design where data is collected over time, thus it is less time consuming and more cost effective.

The data that is collected is quantifiable allowing for possible relationships to be examined.

Marsh (1982) considers causality and recognises that whilst two variables may be correlated, the correlation does not establish a cause, nevertheless it does mean that a casual explanation is possible. If there is no correlation, there is not a casual relationship. de Vaus (2003) suggests that the analyst should propose a model (hypothesis) and then seek to establish how such models fit the data that is collected. Theory and models thus guide *a priori* reasoning based upon previous research and theoretical considerations in cross-sectional design, thus seeking to establish the cause.

Yet as de Vaus (2003) recognises, key threats to the internal validity of cross-sectional designs relate to problems in establishing a cause without a time dimension, as cross-sectional design can only measure differences rather than change, and problems at the level of meaning. Here, time is not considered an issue, as the research seeks to ascertain differences between individual decision-making at a single point in time, as opposed to following changes in individual decision-making over time. The problem in establishing meaning within the design is however more problematic.

The establishment of correlations between data may seek to explain variance in the phenomena, yet it does not provide sociological meaning and explanation. de Vaus (2003) considers various ways in which meaning may be brought to the analysis, suggesting that the researcher may draw upon sociological ideas in an *ad hoc* way from their stock of knowledge or for the researcher to offer explanation based upon the observations and draw commonalities between the findings. Further, the researcher may get the respondent to explain their behaviour, yet this approach too has its limitations. As Marsh (1982:107) notes 'actors...do have privileged access to their own experience but not to all the determinants of their own behaviour.'

Supporting the argument for using a combination of the aforementioned strategies, de Vaus suggests that with no single approach without its shortcomings, it is wise to engage a range of techniques. The methods employed here under the cross-sectional design structure for exploring meaning within the data findings will thus pursue a combination of the considered approaches.

Under the cross-sectional design, two research inquiries will be undertaken. The first, which will lead the research, explores air traveller decision-making at the point of consumption, drawing upon recent experiences of researching and booking a flight, whilst a second study explores general attitudes to air travel, whilst also inviting respondents to reflect upon their most recent flight experience. Whilst the emphasis of this thesis is upon low cost passengers, it is important to consider FSC and charter passengers in seeking to offer a balanced and informed discussion of air travel decision-making and behaviour.

The role of piloting and pre-testing questions is thus vital to explore the integral workings of the research instrument and to refine the research methods. Its importance is highlighted by Gillham (2008) who suggests that one of the most valuable things to come from the pilot is the opportunity for researchers to sensitise themselves with the type of answers that respondents may come up with and consider the questions employed and their suitability. Yet as Bryman (2008) contends, not only does piloting help to ensure questions operate well, but also that the overall research instrument performs.

The theoretical underpinnings of the study considered in Chapter 4, will drive the research process. With two concurrent studies, the piloting stage and research methods for both inquiries will be considered independently, before an analysis of each study is undertaken.

5.4 Summary

Chapter 5 set out the methodological underpinnings of this research, locating its foundations within the epistemological approach of critical realism. The doctrine offers an unbiased and pragmatic approach to research, located amidst the positions of positivism and interpretivism.

The epistemological considerations emerge in the cross-sectional research design that is proposed. The research design offers a framework for the collection and analysis of data, which fits with the aim and objectives of this research. To this end, the cross-sectional design allows for the collection of data concerned with variation between variables at a single moment in time, thus it is appropriate for exploring how air travellers engage in decision-making. It also allows the research to be placed in both the quantitative and qualitative research traditions, offering scope for the research methods adopted.

The following two chapters (6 and 7) will now seek to offer an overview and justification of the research methods that will be employed for data collection and analysis, based upon the pilot studies that have taken place to refine the research methods and processes.

6. BHX passenger interviews

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 6 provides an overview of the research design and research methods employed in the BHX passenger interviews. Sections 6.2, 6.3, 6.3.1 and 6.4 offer a succinct overview of the three preliminary research studies that were conducted as a prerequisite to the research undertaken at Birmingham Airport. The discussion seeks to offer a holistic overview of the refinement process from which the applied research methods emerged. Thus, decisions pertaining to the choice, justification and application of the research methods are not considered in a discrete section, rather the discussion is interspersed with theory, practicalities and argument.

Section 6.5 sets out the research design and research method to have emerged from the initial piloting stage, whilst section 6.6 considers sampling decisions. Section 6.7 offers justification of the analytical techniques employed in data analysis and section 6.7.1 identifies the non-parametric tests that the research employed, with the information summarised in section 6.7.2. Section 6.8 offers a summary of the chapter.

6.2 Preliminary research (BWCTO)

An initial pilot study was undertaken at the Birmingham Welcome Centre and Ticket Office (BWCTO) from 23rd - 25th February 2009, with access granted from Marketing Birmingham. The venue was chosen for its accessibility and high footfall of visitors to Birmingham. Ideally, data collection would have taken place at the point of purchase, as the respondent administered their booking, yet this option proved beyond the scope of this research. Whilst the validity of the research results would be raised with decision-making fresh in the individual’s mind, the approach required airline collaboration and access to internal booking systems, in addition to a high level of technical expertise. Caussade and Hess (2009) successfully employed a similar approach, yet the lead researcher was employed by the collaborative airline at the time of undertaking. An alternative option would have been to interview passengers at BHX, yet at this early stage of data collection the method was disregarded as the process to gain airport access was lengthy and required a paid escort to assist with data collection within the airport terminal.

Whilst the implications of conducting the pilot in an alternative research environment were recognised (Gillham, 2008), the consequences were perceived to be limited given the dynamics of the alternative location. Visitors to the BWCTO were considered similar to those at BHX given that the sample comprised of individuals participating in travel for purposes (largely) outside of their normal routine. Using a group not participating in the main study was useful from a practical viewpoint, highlighting idiosyncrasies and commonalities in responses (Bryman, 2008).

The BWCTO is located within the Bull Ring shopping centre in Birmingham city centre and accessed via a thoroughfare from Birmingham New Street station. The BWCTO provides a number of services and facilities falling under the remit of tourist services.

An intensive research approach was adopted to develop a general understanding of the pre-trip decision-making process (Sayer, 1992; 1999). In contrast to extensive research, intensive research is strong on causal explanation and interpreting meanings in context, in a qualitative nature. Semi-structured qualitative interviews were employed, allowing for specific issues to be addressed (as informed by theory), whilst allowing interviewees the opportunity to answer in their own way.

As Leon et al (2003) consider the fundamental principles of in-person (semi) structured interviews and self-completion surveys are essentially the same. The major difference lies with the fact that with the former approach an interviewer asks the interviewee questions and records the answers.

Whilst prone to criticism as the ‘crudest form of enquiry’ (Thorne et al, 1997:170) and a ‘soft, non scientific and inferior approach to studying social life’ (Guba and Lincoln, 1998; cited in Phillimore and Goodson, 2004:3-4), qualitative research remains a well-established method within social sciences. The approach was deemed appropriate at this stage, offering the researcher foresight into the thoughts and processes of travellers and their decision-making. As Denzin and Lincoln (2000:3) pertain 'Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. They turn the worked into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations…At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretative, naturalistic approach to the world'.

A sample size of *N* = 100 was considered large enough to gain potentially valuable results (Stevens, 1992 cited in Gorard, 2004). As Kumar (2005) maintains, the sample size in qualitative research is less important than within quantitative research, where the main focus is upon exploring or describing a situation. Kumar suggests that the qualitative researcher collects data until they have reached a point of saturation in discovering new information. Whilst crude, Kumar's justification reiterates the importance of quality over quantity in the process. A sample size of 100 interviews was deemed realistic and achievable within the timeframe.

Convenience sampling was employed in the first instance, to facilitate a high response rate, whilst being cost effective. The method was defined by the purposive choice of location, as respondents were approached whilst in the Welcome Centre and the sample was self-selected to the extent that participants were in the BWCTO at the time of interviewing (Ellis et al. 2010 and Silipigni Connaway and Powell, 2010). A screening question was asked at the start of the interview to ensure that only visitors to Birmingham participated, to avoid wasting time and collecting unusable data (Brace, 2008). Individuals eligible for interview were for both ethical and practical reasons, made aware of the research purpose before the interview commenced (Denscombe, 2007).

The intensive approach through a qualitative method sought to inform the researcher on the following concepts identified within the literature review as influential to travel decision-making: motivations for travel (trip purpose; rationale for choosing destination; alternative destinations considered and reason for discounting); transport choices (transport mode used; alternative modes considered and reason for discounting; willingness to pay (WTP) hypothetical questions); and socio-demographic information. A separate section was also included to glean further information from individuals that arrived by air. Questions focused upon when and where the air ticket was purchased; choice of airline and justification of choice; cost of air ticket and a breakdown of costs; the cost of travelling with luggage; and frequency of air travel.

To this end, interviews comprised of both factual and opinionated questions (Denscombe, 2007). Factual information (socio-demographic data, trip-specific data) revealed choices relevant to planning the journey (see Stern, 1962; Cobb and Hoyer, 1986; Kim et al. 2002; Lee and Kacen, 2008), whilst opinionated questions collected data on attitudes and travel preferences.

The semi-structured interview comprised twenty questions, with only questions deemed crucial to the study included (Denscombe, 2007) (Appendix 1). Easier questions (trip specific) were posed early on to encourage interview participation, with thought provoking questions making up the bulk of the interview and related largely to choice justification. Contrary to the work of Gillham (2000) and Leon et al (2003:100) who suggest that 'dull, mundane background questions', relating to socio-demographics should be asked first in an interview to build rapport, here such questions were asked towards the end. Interestingly the decision to tackle personal questions at the end of the interview was made so as to maintain participation throughout. With the intention of developing a rapport during the interview, it was hoped respondents would be more forthcoming with personal information by the end of the interview (Gorard, 2004).

It is acknowledged that a number of strategies for analysing qualitative data exist; yet grounded theory was used as an approach that offers systematic inductive guidelines for data analysis.

The growing disparity held by the originators of grounded theory (Glasser and Strauss) has seen the strategy evolve into two approaches, with the view adopted in this study that grounded theory refers to an approach leading to the generation of new concepts as opposed to a distinct research method. Henwood and Pidgeon (2006:344) suggest that '… we view grounded theory as exemplifying some of the core 'strategies' of qualitative inquiry that involve the creative interplay of theory and method during the integrated processes of social research.'

Charmaz (2006) sets out the guidelines of the approach, which seeks to build relationships between concepts, whilst Lofland and Lofland (1995) propose a number of considerations for the coding of qualitative data. The frameworks were used as praxis for this pilot study, recognising the analytical process of the development, refinement and interrelation of concepts.

The coding of data in qualitative research is unlike the process used in quantitative research which '...requires data to fit into *preconceived* standardized codes, the researcher's interpretations of data shape his or her emergent codes in grounded theory' (Charmaz, 2000:258). Coding in qualitative data is different as 'we are not merely counting. Rather, we are attaching codes as way of identifying and recording data, allowing the data to be thought about in new and different ways' (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996:29).

Line-by-line coding was employed to facilitate the refinement of concepts with focused coding subsequently used to group data into larger categories for sorting in a systematic way. As Oppenheim (1992) notes, open-ended questions are likely to produce as many responses as there are respondents, which can make the research findings difficult to analyse. Whilst much of the data recorded in interviews did not run to lengthy dialogue, the coding process was nevertheless time consuming, yet fruitful for the main study. The emphasis upon the constant comparative method of grounded theory was recognised and employed through comparisons amongst people, incidents (i.e. trip specific details) and with and between categories of data (Charmaz, 2000). Limitations of the approach were acknowledged. Whilst the interviews took place in a transient environment, which by default limited their duration, the transcription process nevertheless took several days to complete.

Richards (1994 cited in Charmaz, 2000) suggests qualitative researchers choose their evidence selectively, thereby limiting their analysis. Asserting the role of a ‘bricoleur’, they will ‘work and play with the stock’ to ‘get the job done’ (Weinstein and Weinstein, 1993:64). Whilst the extraction of data was an issue of concern, the analytical process adopted an objective stance to ensure the data was treated fairly and consistently. On similar lines Riessman (1993) and Coffey and Atkinson (1996) suggest that ‘fracturing data’ by creating codes and categories can limit understanding and lose some of the narrative flow. The issue was deemed to hold limited connotations for this research, as the coding process did not focus upon the elicitation of narrative. Whilst recognition was given to the possibility of data being taken out of context, the method was not disregarded for such reasons.

The approach adopted here lends itself to the objective reality that critical realism accepts, whilst seeking interpretative understanding from interviewee’s responses as is purported in interpretivism.

The one hundred interviews offered insight to the decision-making of travellers, yet the results were limited in so far as only eighteen respondents travelled by air. To this end, the research method employed was appropriate at this early stage for exploring general perceptions and decision-making, yet it was recognised that greater understanding of travel choices and decision-making processes could be gleaned from employing a combination of research methods and targeting air travellers directly.

The BWCTO study highlighted a number of key issues, namely that as household income levels rise, so too does the willingness of respondents to pay two-fold for the same journey. The majority of respondents travelling to Birmingham for leisure purposes (in the broadest sense) were largely unwilling to forgo their visit despite a price increase. In such a turbulent economic climate, this finding was unexpected. Background information provided by business travellers (i.e. company size) was not collected, yet would be insightful in seeking to explain travel choices.

In line with previous research, the pilot study reiterated that both younger and older populations (18-29 yrs and 60+ yrs) are less constrained by time pressures compared with those in middle adulthood. However, whilst time appeared unrestrictive, household income was a greater barrier to participation for those aged 18-29 years.

For those that travelled by air, the majority of respondents booked their flight online using airline websites. Few respondents compared the cost of alterative flights beforehand, but where research was undertaken, it was undertaken online. Whilst there was evidence to suggest older respondents booked further in advance of departure, the data did not suggest association between trip purpose and airline choice. All respondents were able to state their flight cost, yet many were unclear as to how the cost was compiled. However where luggage was charged, all interviewees were able to state the cost incurred. There was limited knowledge amongst interviewees as to what Air Passenger Duty (APD) is and its purpose.

From a technical perspective, Denscombe (2007) highlights the importance of wording in question construction, suggesting questions should be specific and concrete, without uncertainty. The ambiguity of failing to appropriately address this issue was recognised and a small number of questions will be refined as a result. Of particular importance is the decision to ask for personal income as opposed to household income to limit non-response in data collection.

The interviews failed to address who administered the travel booking and whether advice was sought before confirming the flight. Both issues recognised within the literature as influential factors inherent to the research process were omitted and should have featured as a fundamental aspect. The oversight highlighted the need to ensure attention is given to the inclusion of concepts within the research instrument.

Further exploration of air traveller attitudes and specifically individuals that have travelled with LCCs was also highlighted. Whilst the initial pilot was useful, further research would help to hone issues most relevant to air travellers, it also reiterated the need to undertake research with a targeted sample.

6.3 Preliminary research (Which? - Stage 1)

Seeking to develop understanding of air traveller decision making specifically, opportunity arose following the BWCTO study, to contact members of an independent UK consumer body. As an established and reputable organisation, Which? tackles consumer issues and offers unbiased expert advice on products and services. The organisation has upwards of 650,000 members both in the UK and overseas.

The Which? study was conducted in two stages (the second stage is outlined in 6.3.1) and employed both intensive and extensive research approaches. As with the BWCTO study, an intensive research approach of a qualitative nature was employed for similar reasons to those stipulated in section 6.2. To avoid readdressing the specifics here, it is sufficient to recognise that the method was adopted to seek understanding of casual explanation and interpretation of respondent's thoughts of LCCs (Sayer, 1992; 1999). The information borne from this approach was coded (using the same principles as before) and used to inform the extensive research stage, which employed a structured survey.

The extensive research approach is widely used in social sciences and demonstrates how extensive phenomena and patterns are within a sample (population). The approach was used here to develop taxonomic groups from which generalisations could be made. The approach was limited in so far as the findings were generalisable only to the population under study and to this end; critics argue there is limited explanatory power in the approach (Sayer, 1999). The use of the extensive approach at this stage was deemed beneficial in testing the survey as a potential research instrument to be employed at BHX and the suitability of closed questions.

A convenience sample informed both phases of the Which? study due to resource and cost limitations, yet it benefited from direction in that it specifically targeted individuals that had travelled with LCCs. Limitations of using a convenience sample were recognised in that respondents were self-selected and representative of a homogenous sample of the population (i.e. Which? members), yet it was understood responses would nevertheless offer insight into key issues facing LCC travellers.

An eight-week timeframe determined the initial sample size, with the first phase of the Which? study generating 150 responses (42 female, 96 male and 12 gender unknown). The first stage of the data collection process simply employed an open-ended question. Respondents were invited to correspond via email or letter (so as not to introduce further bias to the sample), to a 'Help Wanted' request published in the March 2009 edition of the Which? and Which? Holiday magazine and on the Which? website. The request read 'No-frills flights. Have you flown with a no-frills airline in the last 12 months? Did the service meet with your expectations?' (Of note, the term no-frills was used at the request of Which? Thus for the purpose of this discussion it is considered to mean the same as LCC).

The brief was vague at this stage so as to allow respondents to be forthcoming with their thoughts/opinions. The 12-month window, in which it was hoped respondents would draw experiences from, was deemed an appropriate timeframe for events to be recalled with clarity. Whilst it is understood the timeframe may be seen as a further limitation to inclusivity, it is believed events/experiences recalled outside of this period would be more susceptible to misinterpretation and recall. Tourangeau et al (2000) consider in great detail the implications of memory in responding to a survey interviews, suggesting that the longer the interval between the time of an event and the interview taking place, the less likely the person will remember it with clarity. As Neter and Waksberg (1964, cited in Tourangeau et al. 2000) recognise, longer reference periods not only increase the amount time that the individual has to recall information from, but also the total number of events they have to recall. They suggest that combined, a loss of accuracy will assume.

Responses were coded using qualitative principles and the key findings extracted to inform the design of a second research instrument that was more directional in seeking to collect specific information based upon the respondent's most recent journey with an LCC (discussed in section 7.4). An email / letter (determined by the initial method of correspondence) was sent to individuals thanking them their participation and informing them that contact would be made at a later date to request further participation.

Line-by-line coding was employed to refine the concepts that emerged in responses, with focused coding then used to group data into larger categories for sorting. The findings were dealt with at this stage in a simplistic manner and categorised simply to allow attributes critical to airline preference to be identified. The details that emerged were later used to develop the structured, self-completion survey.

The findings whilst basic were nevertheless insightful of the attributes respondents deemed important to informing airline choice. The attributes considered by respondents to hold negative connotations for airline choice included customer service, seat allocation, baggage policies, boarding processes and punctuality. Whilst in a positive light issues raised related to punctuality, service and price. Attributes that elicited indifferent responses concerned punctuality, price and boarding.

Whilst attributes ranked highly in one category, they also featured elsewhere within discussion. Notably price and punctuality were evident across all three classifications, eliciting a range of responses. Seat allocation also featured as both a negative issue and as an issue to which respondents felt indifferent, as too did the controversial issue of boarding. Whilst many respondents discussed boarding with contempt noting queues and 'scrums', many demonstrated unwillingness to pay for 'speedy boarding' dismissing it as an expensive and unnecessary cost.

As before, the dominance of easyJet and Ryanair was recognised. Yet, given that the issues discussed were drawn from an open-ended question that invited response from a largely UK-wide population, the dominance of the two airlines within the survey was deemed in itself, a significant finding.

The limitations of the self-selected nature of this pilot study are acknowledged in so far as the representativeness of the sample was concerned. Given that issues raised did not appear grounded to specific socio-demographic factors, the findings remain insightful. Without direction however, responses varied in length and depth of discussion, with fourteen respondents failing to provide any comments, simply indicating in their response that they would be happy to participate. A more refined explanation that explicitly requested information would have helped to reduce the number of invalid responses.

6.3.1 Preliminary research (Which - Stage 2)

The second stage of the preliminary Which? research is in effect a follow-up investigation to that discussed in section 6.3. Respondents were re-contacted and asked if they would like to participate in a follow-up study that focused upon their most recent low-cost flight. The sample size was thus determined by respondent's continued participation, with only responses received within the first four weeks of distribution included within the findings. The second stage of the Which? study generated 83 responses (53 male, 30 female). The follow-up response rate was considered acceptable-very good (Mangione, 1995), yet it was acknowledged that this figure might have been higher if an incentive had been employed.

The research instrument took the form of a structured, self-completion survey distributed by email/post (method justification as before) (Appendix 2). Given that respondents were located throughout the UK and overseas, telephone interviews emerged as the only other suitable method of distribution. The self-completion survey was deemed most appropriate for the following reasons.

The method was inexpensive and facilitated timely dissemination (especially where distributed by email), allowing for prompt responses. Interviewer effects and variability were also absent with the method, which offered respondents the convenience of completing the survey at a time that was appropriate and at a speed comfortable to them (de Vaus, 2002).

With the absence of an interviewer it was recognised that prompting and probing could not take place nor could clarification be sought and questions asked. The risk that surveys would be returned incomplete and generate a lower response rate were also understood. Yet clear, simple instructions and wording were used to minimise confusion and misinterpretation and follow-up emails/letters sent to respondents after two weeks sought to minimise a low completion rate.

The self-completed surveys also required coding, yet with a different approach to that previously employed. Coding in quantitative research allows for the categorisation of unstructured data and for numbers to be assigned to the data as tags for processing (Bryman, 2008). Some of the data was pre-coded into closed questions, using categories that emerged from the qualitative, first-phase of the Which? study (section 6.3). Yet the open questions required post coding. The quantitative data-coding framework proposed by Bryman and Cramer (2008) was employed to ensure categories did not overlap, that categories were complete and covered all possibilities and that uniform-coding procedures were employed. The data was coded and analysed using Microsoft Excel.

Limitations of the second-stage of the Which? study were recognised, with attention given to the representative scope of the sample. Nevertheless the findings were useful, exploring experiences and attitudes of LCCs and piloting the research instrument.

easyJet and Ryanair dominated the sample, reaffirming the role of the two carriers within the UK market. Focus upon the business sector within the study was limited and would have benefited from a more balanced representation of the two segments. The study also highlighted trade-offs in travel decision-making, particularly reasons for substituting airlines, airports and consideration of modal substitution on domestic routes.

The study also reaffirmed widely held beliefs of low-cost passengers, namely the impetus of leisure passengers to book flights well in advance of travel (Mason, 2001) and that leisure travellers are generally infrequent travellers (Davidson and Cope, 2003). Additionally it was found that UK travellers book independently - that is without seeking advice from a third party and most LCC flights are booked directly through airline websites.

Limited research took place before flights were booked. Just over half of respondents indicated that they conducted research beforehand. Where research was undertaken, airline websites and price comparison sites were most popular.

The findings suggested LCC passengers were generally happy with the levels of service they received, with understanding that you get what you pay for. The unwillingness of air travellers to purchase optional inflight extras including 3” extra legroom and a full meal service (excluding drinks) was also recognised. Further, the sensitivity of air travellers (particularly leisure travellers) to increased airfares as a result of an enforced carbon tax was demonstrated by willingness to forgo travel plans as costs increased.

The research method employed was effective in eliciting information, although an incentive may have helped to bolster the response rate further. Use of pre-assigned categories in closed questions that are all encompassing and do not overlap (see Bryman and Cramer, 2008) also emerged as an issue for the coding of trip-purpose data. The results highlighted a need for clear completion instructions to minimise errors in data collection. To this end, to ensure data is allocated consistently in future research, the argument for using interviews in place of self-administered surveys is made.

Where socio-demographic information is concerned, in hindsight it would have been of greater use to ask respondents the first part of their postcode as opposed to what 'town/city/district' they live in, by way of eliciting more specific information on residence. Further, a classification of age groupings similar to those used by the CAA would have allowed for comparative data analysis.

At this stage, use of Microsoft Excel to assist with the storage, organisation and quantification of data for analysis was plausible, yet it is thought a more sophisticated statistical package would offer greater scope for advanced analysis.

As a final point, the role of memory and its implication for data collection was recognised. Attention was given to the fact that respondents were required to recall information dating back over a twelve-month period, which may be susceptible to misinterpretation (Tourangeau et al. 2000). A survey instrument that seeks to recall data within a shorter timeframe would mitigate error.

6.4 Birmingham airport pilot study

The two preliminary research studies were not only insightful in so far as testing possible research instruments, but also for identifying specific attributes inherent to air travel choice and pre-trip decision making. The findings were used to inform the structured interview schedule for administration at BHX, which is the focus of section 6.4. With inherent differences recognised in the motivations and needs of business and leisure air travellers, two interview schedules were required to ensure data collection was tailored. Whilst a final copy of the interview schedules can be found in Appendix 3 and 4, a copy of the draft version is not included as changes made in response to the pilot study were assumed to be minimal.

The purpose of the BHX pilot was to test the final research instrument before data collection commenced. The structured interview schedules were piloted and at the same time, a sample of respondent's were asked to participate in an intensive, qualitative attitudinal pilot. The piloting of the attitudinal survey is considered in section 7.2. To this end, the BHX pilot employed an extensive, quantitative approach (Sayer, 1992; 1999).

The business passenger and leisure passenger interview schedules followed inherently the same format, with minor differences accounting for disparities between the two groups. The two schedules thus ensured that data collection explored fundamental differences in travel decision-making and purchasing behaviour. The structure was designed to collect data on the following six areas: flight details; booking administration and justification of modal choice; pre-trip research; flight cost and willingness to pay; travel behaviour; and socio-demographics.

The CAA permitted use of questions employed by the regulatory body in this research instrument to allow for comparisons with the CAA 2006 passenger survey conducted at BHX. The structure of the interview schedule also lent itself to that adopted by the CAA. The IPS and CAA also employ similar socio-demographic coding in their surveys, thus to facilitate the comparative scope of this research, similar socio-demographic categories were employed here. The Airport Cooperative Research Program (ACRP) guidebook for conducting airport surveys was also of use in formalising the research process and research instrument (TRB, 2009).

The research instrument comprised both closed and open-ended questions, with the former dominating as a result of the pre-coded questions that emerged from the earlier pilot studies (Salant and Dillman, 1994). Closed questions were deemed suitable here allowing for data to be collected and processed efficiently. Some open questions remained where the nature of the question elicited a response that was personal to the individual i.e. airline, reason for booking flight at a certain time and whether the ticket price represents value for money.

A number of ‘routing questions’ were also used to personalise the interview schedule, allowing respondents (where appropriate) to give more details and more precise information. Whilst Gillham (2000) highlights problems associated with use of routing questions, namely confusion on the part of the respondent, it is anticipated that such issues will not be a concern here given that the questioning is interviewer led.

As a final point Berdie et al (1986) suggest that interview schedule questions should not be printed on both sides of the page as it is cumbersome for in the interviewer, yet given cost and environmental considerations, the interview schedule was printed double-sided.

The BHX pilot was undertaken at BHX on Tuesday 15th June 2010 from 0600 to 1200. The interviews took place in Terminal 1 after discussion with the CAA and IPS to avoid concurrent research taking place. It is acknowledged that LCC passengers are under-represented (as the majority of flights depart from Terminal 2) and charter leisure passengers dominate responses.

As secured access could not be obtained unsupervised, an escort was paid to accompany the researcher, but also assist with data collection. Provisions were made prior to surveying for the escort to view the surveys and time was spent on the day discussing the method of dissemination and data collection.

The decision was taken early on to collect data airside, in the area beyond security and passport control, so as to encourage participation. Only departing passengers were interviewed, with differences between departing and arriving passengers not considered to be significant (CAA, Undated). Prior research and discussions with BHX Airport managers indicated that respondents were also more likely to participate in research at this stage, having dealt with the more ‘stressful’ elements of the airport environment landside. The point reiterated the ‘travel stress curve’ proposed by Scholvinck (2000, cited in Crawford and Melewar, 2003). Further, data was collected in the main departure lounge as opposed to ‘holding areas’ where passengers wait immediately prior to boarding the aircraft. Time limitations along with restricting the sample population emerged as key reasons for disregarding data collection within such areas.

The research approach employed was similar to that used by the CAA (2010d), with a systematic sampling approach employed (CAA, 2010). The departure lounge was divided into two virtual areas, with an interviewer assigned to each area. Preference was not shown to any passenger/group. Selecting a first passenger, the interviewer completed a survey and then counted every third passenger to participate. Where passengers declined to be interviewed or once a survey had been completed, the process was repeated. Interviews generally took between 5-7 minutes to complete.

Interview data was quantified and analysed using Microsoft Excel. The decision to use Excel again at this stage as opposed to a statistical package was made in the belief that emphasis was upon testing the practicalities of the research instrument, with the anticipation that a relatively small sample of data would be collected.

On the morning of the pilot a number of flights were delayed (particularly charter flights), which led to passengers spending longer than anticipated within the departure lounge. Over time the surveying process became stagnant with passenger turnover low. To avoid re-interviewing passengers, interviews were also conducted in the exclusive business lounge. Whilst surveying within the business lounge helped to increase participation of business passengers, interviewing within the restricted area was awkward given that passengers had paid to use the facility.

All respondents interviewed were asked if they would consider taking part in further air transport research and if so, how they would prefer to participate. The majority demonstrated a preference towards online surveys and email questionnaires over other methods.

Forty-seven interviews were conducted over the six hours, 38 passenger surveys and nine attitudinal surveys (see section 8.2). A concise discussion of the results is provided here.

The majority of business passengers travelled alone, whilst leisure passenger's predominately travelled as a couple. Time and productivity outweighed monetary costs for business travel, whilst price remained key for leisure passengers. Business travellers also booked with a shorter lead-time, on average bookings were made less than a month before travel. In contrast, the majority of leisure travellers booked six months ahead of departure.

Across the entire sample, very few respondents contemplated an alternative transport mode, with underlying reasons different for the groups. Business passengers were focused upon convenience of travel and limiting travel time, whilst destination choice proved the key determinant for leisure passengers, that is, access to the destination was realistically limited to air travel.

Whilst the majority of leisure passengers took responsibility for their own flight booking, business flights were largely organised by a business travel agent (BTA) or secretary. Where someone else administered the flight booking, more respondents offered advice than those that did not. Where research is concerned, leisure travel research was largely conducted online, with tour operator websites most popular, whilst business travellers combined airline websites and online agencies in their search.

Charter airlines were the choice carrier for many leisure travellers, whilst business passengers travelled with scheduled carriers. Safety appeared a key issue for many, with numerous respondents happy to see increased and tightened security procedures in place.

Business passengers were for the most part unwilling to pay for additional services including 3" extra legroom and a full meal service (excluding drinks). Two of the three business passengers that did indicate a willingness to pay, travelled long haul. The picture was somewhat different for leisure passengers with a complete divide in those willing to pay for both services and those not. Over three quarters of both business and leisure passengers felt their flight offered value for money.

The interviewing process highlighted a number of issues, primarily related to the refinement and dissemination of the survey instrument. On the business travel survey, a number of respondents discussed BTA's in Q13 and Q14, where passengers were asked to consider the research tools they had employed. Whilst high street travel agents featured as a pre-coded option, BTA's did not. To avoid problems in both data collection and analysis, it was important that the pre-coded option featured in the revised survey. The pilot was also useful in highlighting the inclusion of a number of other pre-coded options, to avoid responses being recorded as 'Other'.

General comments pertaining to questionnaire design and administration will now be addressed. Interviewers were required to record data at the top of the first page on each survey including details of carrier type (FSC, LCC or charter), gender and interview time. On the majority of completed surveys, these details were incomplete or blank, thus it was proposed that the questions be moved into the body of the survey or are left out. The name of the carrier is sufficient to define the carrier type, thus inclusion of both questions is unnecessary.

During data analysis, it was evident that the escort had misinterpreted Q8 (and its sub questions) on both surveys. The question concerned whether respondents would have preferred to travel from an alternative airport. Numerous surveys indicated that respondents would have preferred to travel from an alternative airport, but supplementary questions were left blank, thus the question was limited in so far as helping to understand respondent's choice. A similar problem was found when respondents were asked who booked their flight. Whilst the initial question indicated that the respondent had booked their own flight, sub-questions were completed that indicated that someone else other than the respondent had actually booked the flight. The problems highlighted the issue of using routing questions as discussed by Gillham (2000). Evidence of confusion was evident here, reiterating the need for familiarity with the research instrument prior to data collection.

The BHX pilot assisted in the refinement of the research instrument and practicalities of undertaking the study within the airport environment. The findings reiterated earlier research and key themes that emerged within the literature review, whilst a larger and directed sample, allowed for further insight and understanding of decision-making in air travel.

The sampling approach worked well, yet the data collection process appeared problematic in so far as attempting to collect data representative of the population. To this end, further attention must be given to the sampling procedure before data collection takes place. In hindsight, more advanced statistical analysis should have also been undertaken to test for correlations between data and the statistical significance of the findings. The pilot would have also provided opportunity for testing an advanced statistical package.

In addition, the pilot study illustrated that participation within the study was not influenced by use of an incentive. Interviewer presence and request for participation was key. An incentive may be of greater use in a self-completion survey. Respondents unwilling to participate in the research suggested they were too busy or just did not want to participate. Self-completion surveys were tested within the business lounge, although take-up was low. Interviewer-led surveys yielded higher completion rates and were also completed in a shorter timeframe.

6.5 Structured interview: Birmingham Airport

The preliminary research and piloting stage was central to the development of the cross-sectional research design employed at BHX. The research environment lent itself to data collection through an extensive research approach, with a quantitative structured interview.

The structured interview emerged as a sound research method, allowing large amounts of data to be collected within a relatively short timeframe. The approach also sought to reduce interviewer variability, an issue raised within the BHX pilot study discussed in section 6.4. The structured approach helped to ensure that any variation in responses was likely to be from interviewee variation as opposed to variation in the interview context (Bryman, 2008).

The final interview schedules can be seen in Appendix 3 and 4. Only minor adjustments were made following the final pilot at BHX, thus the final interview schedule followed the same format as that outlined in section 6.4. The interview schedules comprised largely of closed questions, except where respondent-specific data was required, i.e. in questions relating to destination, airline and explanation of decision-making. Justifications for the questions included within the structured interview were offered in section 6.4 and will therefore not be re-addressed here.

6.6 Sampling

The systematic sampling procedure employed in the BHX pilot emerged as a sound sampling method in contrast to other options considered (see section 7.4). As before, the departure lounge was divided into two virtual areas (with one interviewer allocated to each area) and every third (eligible) passenger approached for interview. All passengers aged 16+ were considered eligible. The interviewers used a standard format to introduce the research: stating their name, that they were undertaking research on behalf of the University of Westminster; a one-sentence description of the survey that stated the overall purpose of the study and a conservative estimate of how long the interview would take (Salant and Dillman, 1994). An information sheet detailing particulars of the research was also produced and given to interviewees. Care was taken during interviewing to ensure that the privacy and voluntary nature of the respondent was respected at all times.

Prior to interview, respondents were asked to identify their trip purpose to ensure the appropriate interview schedule was employed. The survey design was later stratified by carrier type and airline (amongst other factors) for data analysis. Interviewees were informed that their participation was confidential and that the research findings would be aggregated so that respondents could not be identified (Berdie et al, 1986).

Once the interview was complete the interviewer counted along a further three passengers and the process was repeated. Whilst there was not a system in place to detect repeat sampling, the systematic procedure was deemed culpable of avoiding repeat selection. It was also assumed that potential participants would advise the interviewer in such instance that they were approached twice for participation.

The nature of the airport environment posed further challenges for interviewers in so far as ensuring that the data was as far as possible, representative of the population. To this end, sampling occurred across both airport terminals, with all airlines except Ryanair and Flybe departing from Terminal One. Ryanair and Flybe operated within Terminal Two. As before, interviewing took place alongside CAA and IPS data collection and was therefore restricted to being undertaken on certain days and times. The interview timetable was designed to maximise the representativeness of the sample population within the confines of the research limitations.

The timetable for data collection at BHX can be seen in Table 10. The timetable was further restricted by escort assistance, which was only available between 0600-1800 hours. Interview time totaled 42 hours per interviewer, at a cost of £800 for escort assistance.

Day	Date	Interview Timetable
Wednesday	28/07/2010	0800 - 1400
Thursday	29/07/2010	1000 - 1600
Friday	30/07/2010	0600 - 1200
Saturday	11/09/2010	0800 - 1400
Sunday	19/09/2010	1200 - 1800
Monday	20/09/2010	0800 - 1400
Tuesday	21/09/2010	1000 - 1600

Table 10: BHX data collection timetable

Salant and Dillman (1994) suggest that sample size should take into consideration sampling error, the population, perceived level of homogeneity and the size of sub-groups. With a total throughput of 9.1 million passengers in 2009 (BIA, 2010) and a sampling error of ≤ ± 5 per cent at 95% confidence, it was calculated that 384 interviews were required. As Bryman (2008) contends, it is the absolute size of the sample that is important, not the relative size.

Whilst it was understood that an optimal sample size comprised 384 interviews, the process was largely determined by the financial limitations to data collection. As finances would only permit 42 hours airside access, emphasis was upon timely completion of interviews. The data collection timetable sought to elicit a sample representative of the population.

Table 11 details the 26 largest airlines operating from BHX, by total passengers (BIA, 2009). Data was weighted to calculate the required sample size to accurately reflect the distribution of all airport passengers at BHX. The target sample for each airline is shown in column 4 of Table 11, whilst the actual number of passengers interviewed is shown in column 5. Data in column 5 presented in red indicates a short fall in the sample, whilst data presented in black shows where the sample size was met or exceeded.

Column 1 Airlines (by total passengers)	Column 2 Airline	Column 3 Total Passengers (by Airline)	Column 4 Target Number of Respondents	Column 5 Total Respondents Interviewed
1	Ryanair	1,650,164	70	65
2	Flybe	1,268,187	53	213
3	Thomson Airways	1,091,257	46	47
4	Monarch Airlines	861,348	36	15
5	bmibaby	836,747	35	18
6	Thomas Cook	738,003	31	14
7	Emirates	436,761	18	18
8	Lufthansa	366,852	15	21
9	Aer Lingus	322,739	14	12
10	KLM	297,375	13	15
11	Air France	262,923	11	19
12	Swiss	130,239	5	5
13	Continental Airlines	100,410	4	2
14	PIA	99,493	4	0
15	Brussels Airlines	98,107	4	9
16	SAS	70,109	3	5
17	Turkmenistan Airlines	54,472	2	0
18	Onur Air	49,037	2	0
19	easyJet	48,585	2	0
20	Turkish Airlines	44,310	2	3
21	Air Malta	35,062	1	0
22	bmi regional	32,415	1	2
23	US Airways	27,516	1	0
24	Air Berlin	24,986	1	6
25	Eastern Airways	23,901	1	0
26	Cyprus Airways	22,254	1	1

Table 11: BHX stratified random sample (Source: Adapted from BIA Facts and Stats, 2009)

As a final point on sampling, interview schedules had to be printed, nametags organised and interviewers briefed on the interviewing process. In addition, interviewers were issued with clipboards, interview schedules and ‘income cards’ that detailed income categories as defined by the CAA. These cards were shown to interviewees to assist them in locating their personal income data within the pre-coded groups.

Interviewers required good logistical skills (knowledge of the airport, ability to maintain a record of completed interviews and passengers surveyed), good interpersonal skills – honest, friendly, direct, open; and ability to work independently. In the early stages of data collection, meetings were held between interviewers to address any issues that arose and were dealt with accordingly.

6.7 Analytical techniques

Whilst Excel was employed in the earlier stages of this research for storage, manipulation and testing of data, the decision was taken to employ PASW 18 (previously SPSS) for the coding and analysis of the main research findings. The implications of not pre-testing the statistical package for this research were acknowledged, yet the limitations of the data analysis that took place in pilot study 3 (discussed in section 6.4) highlighted the use of an advanced program to be employed. The researcher had previous experience of using the statistical program, thus knew it was appropriate for application here and would only require re-acquaintance with its functions.

Data entry employed both pre and post-coding, the codes for which emerged from the pilot studies. Where socio-demographic data was concerned, age and income groups used by the CAA were replicated to ensure that any data collected could be compared with earlier CAA findings. Similarly, the MRS Occupation Groupings: Job Dictionary, allowed for occupations to be graded by socio-economic group as used by the CAA, for further data comparisons.

The data was entered into PASW 18 and descriptive tests as well as a number of statistical tests were run. Descriptive statistics were run in the first instance to obtain an overview of the data, identify any missing data or errors and observe the range of data collected.

As a pre-cursor to identifying appropriate statistical tests, the data within the variables was initially checked for normal distribution. P-P plots (probability-probability plot) were used to check the distribution visually, with the values of skewness and kurtosis subsequently calculated.

The subjectivity and potential misinterpretation of the P-P Plot reinforced the use of skew and kurtosis values, as additional tests of normality. Debate surrounding the effectiveness of the tests within large samples was acknowledged (Joanes and Gill, 1998). Nevertheless combined, it was believed the results would offer a good indication as to the distribution of normality, from which the appropriate tests could be identified and run on the data. The values of skewness and kurtosis were computed using PASW18.

A number of methods for interpreting the value of skewness and kurtosis have been proposed (Lehman, 1991 cited in Pett, 1997; De Vaus, 2002; Dancey and Reidy, 2004), yet the interpretation proposed by De Vaus (2002) was used here. Where the skewness statistic was twice as large as the standard error of skewness, the distribution was considered skewed. This method of analysis appeared more robust than the other analytical approaches hence its application.

With the normality of distribution tested, the appropriate inferential statistical tests were identified to explore whether the relationships between variables were genuine and did not occur by chance. The inferential statistical procedures are located within two domains: parametric or non-parametric. Parametric tests require that four basic assumptions are met: that the data is normally distributed, that there is a homogeneity of variance amongst the samples, that data is at least at the interval level and that the data is independent (Field, 2009). Conversely, non-parametric tests (also referred to as distribution-free tests) make fewer assumptions about the data and have for this reason been susceptible to wide criticism (Hunter and May, 1993; Allen and Bennett, 2010). Non-parametric tests are characterised by data that is either categorical or ordinal and works on the principle of ranked data that is, data that is scored and then ranked. The analysis is carried out on the ranked data, allowing data that break parametric assumptions to be tested.

Here, neither of the statistical procedures is considered superior to the other, rather the tests both explore whether relationships exist between variables and the significance of the relationship, albeit in different ways based upon their underlying assumptions. All of the tests (unless otherwise stated) are two-tailed test, that is, they test non-directional hypothesis, as they do not suggest the direction of the hypothesis.

The non-parametric tests employed in the analysis of the BHX data are considered in section 6.7.1, whilst section 6.7.2 presents a summary table identifying the key variables that were tested and the statistical techniques used to explore relationships between variables.

Field's 2009 text was again used as a primer, setting out the procedure adopted for calculating the inferential statistic in PASW 18. It is considered satisfactory to offer justification for the tests employed here and refer the reader to the aforementioned text for a step-by-step guide as to how the tests were conducted.

6.7.1 Non-parametric tests

Given that the BHX data presented here did not lend itself to the use of parametric testing in the data analysis stage, the emphasis of this discussion is upon the use of non-parametric tests. A brief overview of the two non-parametric tests employed in the BHX data analysis is now considered.

Kruskal-Wallis Test

Working on the principal of using ranked data, the Kruskal-Wallis (K-W) test was employed where the independent variable was at least categorical (with more than two levels) and the dependent variable was at least ordinal. To this end, the K-W test shares many of the same assumptions of the Mann-Whitney *U* test (discussed in section 7.5), but just extends them to more than two independent groups.

The data was initially ranked in order of magnitude (in ascending order), ignoring which group the data belonged to before putting the data back into its original group and summing the ranks for each group.

The test accepted or rejected the research hypothesis at the significant alpha of 0.05, two-tailed. Two-tailed tests were employed throughout, as a test of non-directional hypotheses (Field, 2009).

Pearson's Chi square test

Pearson's chi square test was used to test the relationship between two categorical variables and determine whether the variables were independent or related. The test compared observed frequencies against the frequencies that might have been expected by chance. The test allowed for hypothesized frequencies to be unequal that is, the variables compared did not have to be identical in size (in all cases the passengers were unequally distributed across categories).

The chi-square test has two basic assumptions that were met (albeit sometimes through data manipulation): that the data was independent and the expected frequencies were greater than 5, although given the test was being run on a large sample, up to 20% of the expected frequencies could be under 5 (Field, 2009).

Where the significance value was small (i.e. Sig. was <. 05), the hypothesis was rejected. The variables were found to be independent and were in some way related. The critical values for determining the value of chi square distribution may be found in Field (2009:808). The opposite was true where Sig. was >. 05.

6.7.2 Variables tested and statistical techniques employed

As a reference guide, table 12 (shown overleaf) highlights the variables that were tested as part of the BHX data analysis and the statistical tests that were employed to identify the existence / non-existence of relationships between the variables.

Statistical test employed	Variables tested
Pearson's chi square test of contingencies	Passenger age & propensity of passenger to book their own flight
	Passenger age & choice of research methods
	Passenger gender & choice of research methods
	Passenger socio economic status & choice of research methods
	Passenger income & carrier type
Kruskal-Wallis test	Total items of checked luggage & airline type
	Passenger gender & willingness to pay for extra legroom
	Passenger gender & willingness to pay for a full meal service (excluding drinks)

Table 12: Reference summary table of statistical tests employed to explore relationships between variables in BHX data analysis

6.8 Summary

Chapter 6 sought to offer an overview of the instrumental stages of the development and refinement of the BHX structured interviews. The early stages of piloting applied largely intensive, qualitative research methods to seek understanding of general travel experiences and decision-making in air travel. The findings were coded and used to inform the extensive, quantitative approach that was the structured survey to collect data on passenger decision-making at BHX.

The research design was considered as a pre-cursor to a justification and synopsis of the sampling methods and procedure employed. As a final point the analytical techniques and computer program used to analyse the data were discussed with explanation for the chosen tests that were employed to test for relationships between the variables and significance of the findings. This information was then summarised in a quick reference table.

Chapter 7 will build further upon this discussion and consider the research methods used in the online attitudinal survey.

7. Online attitudinal survey

7.1 Introduction

Chapter 7 explores the pilot stage and research methods employed in the design and dissemination of the online attitudinal survey. Section 7.2 considers the piloting of the research instrument, whilst section 7.3 outlines the research method that was used to explore attitudes to air travel based upon a recent flight. The sampling decisions are addressed in section 7.4 and section 7.5 and its sub-sections 7.5.1, 7.5.2 and 7.5.3 consider the analytical techniques used in data analysis. Section 7.6 presents a summary table identifying the key variables that were tested and the statistical techniques used to explore relationships between variables. Finally a summary of the chapter is offered in section 7.7.

7.2 Online attitudinal survey pilot study

The pilot for the attitudinal survey was undertaken at BHX concurrently to the testing of the BHX structured interview schedule (see section 6.4). The attitudinal survey sought to explore attitudes to air travel. To contextualise the research, respondents were asked to rate their last flight across a variety of service areas. In addition, general attitudes to air travel were explored and given the timely occurrence of the ash cloud; respondents were invited to consider the perceived (actual) impact of the 'event' on their travel attitudes and behaviour.

As a pre cursor to the development of the research instrument, an intensive qualitative pilot study was undertaken to elicit words (adjectives or nouns), phrases and thoughts from air travellers that could be used in the development of a semantic differential scale, to measure air traveller attitudes. The online attitudinal survey pilot adopted a similar research design and method to that employed in the early stages of developing the structured interview schedule for use at BHX. For this reason the theoretical underpinnings of the approach are not considered here, rather the reader is referred to section 6.2.

A semi-structured approach offered scope to tailor interviews and move away from a prescriptive schedule. The method also allowed interviewees leeway in their responses. Despite the flexibility of the approach, the semi-structured method sought to ensure all questions were addressed. With two interviewers undertaking the fieldwork, the approach allowed for a modicum of comparability in interview style (Bryman, 2008).

The interview guide (as opposed to a schedule) detailed 13 concepts to prompt discussion and elicit words/phrases that interviewee's attached meaning to when thoughts turned to air travel, specific aspects of the industry and its service. The concepts emerged from the findings of the second pilot study conducted in collaboration with Which? (section 6.3 and 6.3.1).

The concepts included: air travel, FSCs, LCCs, the ash cloud, boarding the aircraft, food and drink, comfort and air travel, airline and airport security. Interviewees were not required to give socio-demographic information as part of this research.

The online attitudinal survey pilot study was undertaken at BHX on Tuesday 15th June 2010 from 0600 to 1200 within Terminal 1. As the research was undertaken at the same time as pilot study 3, the same justifications for the choice of location hold true. Interviewers were required to host attitudinal interviews alongside piloting the structured passenger interview schedule. A target sample size was not stipulated. The importance of eliciting/testing adjectives on a similar population to that taking part in the main experiment was also recognised (Osgood et al. 1957).

Nine interviews were held with leisure passengers during the six-hour shift. For each concept, respondents were required simply to list/discuss the words, thoughts and phrases that came to mind. The results are presented here in no particular order. Words and phrases used by respondents are shown in *italics*. The first concept considered is air travel.

Responses generally focused upon the practical aspects of air travel, with only one person thinking of a *holiday*. Many interviewees focused upon *getting to the airport* and sitting *around waiting for a long time*, *waiting* for a *long journey* and *long flight*. One interviewee also contemplated *safety*.

When thinking about the trip they were about to take, respondents considered the actual *holiday* and *time off work*, *relaxation* and *getting away* somewhere *exotic. Past experience* and *price* also featured, as too did *where travel companions wanted to go.*

Respondents were also asked to identify what came to mind when they thought about the services offered by FSCs and LCCs. Examples of airlines operating from the UK were offered to represent airlines synonymous with the two business models.

FSCs conjured up thoughts of *comfort*, *reliability*, *legroom*, *luxurious*, *strikes*, *large aircraft*, as *expensive* and not imposing *excessive charges*. Two respondents suggested they were *not interested* in what the airline had to offer, they *just wanted to get to the destination* and saw *flying as a means to an end...it is not important which airline we fly with*.

Thoughts of LCCs elicited a spectrum of feelings. Two respondents considered they *would not use LCCs again* and that they were *not helpful* (based on *past experience*). However, many responses cited characteristics of the business model: *you get what you pay for*, *charge for check-in*, *buy sandwiches and snacks on the plane*, *basic and no allocated seating (first come, first served)* and there is *less space* so it is *more cramped*. One passenger did however take an alternative view of LCCs suggesting *they are easier to travel with*...they orchestrate *better planning as they work on 'bare bones'.* Additionally, *they fight for market share and so have to have better customer service.*

The ash cloud did not directly affect any of the interviewees. However, safety was highlighted as a concern by some who *agreed with the CAA,* that *flying* *through ash cloud* is *dangerous*, *safety comes first*, *can't fly*. Others considered the potential impact on their own travel plans. Interviewees suggested *I panicked it could affect travel today*, *no flights = frustration*, *nuisance*, *cancelled flights*, *insurance costs* and hoping *it does not affect us - lose money, delays, have to pay for accommodation, safety (feel uneasy)*.

With these thoughts in mind, respondents were asked whether they thought that their attitude to air travel had or was likely to change as a result of the ash cloud. With no direct experience of the ash cloud, seven of the nine interviewees considered it would not change their attitude. However, one respondent noted that they had actually *packed more clothes than they needed* in their suitcase just *in case they got stuck abroad* and another recognised the *possibility that their attitude could change*, *particularly in the short term if the ash cloud continues to be an issue*.

Six interviewees said they would not change their travel behaviour as a result of the ash cloud with recognition that *it's a chance you take* and *it's not something we can control...part of travel*. Two of the remaining three respondents noted that *if the volcano were ready to erupt* [they] *would not travel* and *if the ash cloud erupted we would change the holiday*. One interviewee suggested that *perhaps where travel insurance is concerned* they would change their travel behaviour.

With the emergence of insurance policies protecting against ash cloud disruption, respondents were asked if they would consider purchasing such insurance. Despite a mixed response, the results suggested a general err of caution towards booking flights. Only two of the nine interviewees said they would not purchase such insurance. One interviewee said *no, think* [my] *current insurance would cover me* whilst the other respondent stated *no, it is a once in a lifetime problem*. Elsewhere another interviewee said they were *already covered, but if not would consider purchasing* a similar policy. The remaining five respondents indicated a willingness to purchase additional cover, but for two, cost was an issue - it *depends on cost and if cheap enough, yes*. For others the timing of an eruption in relation to the holiday would be influential: *yes, if ash cloud's became frequent*; *yes, if booked in advance - knowing volcano eruption could be an issue, would take out insurance* and *think so, especially if disruption occurred close to departure*.

Without direction in interviews, boarding emerged as two entities: the actual boarding process and being onboard the aeroplane. For those who interpreted boarding as literally boarding the aircraft, responses suggested interviewees *want it to be painless*, although it can be *inefficient*, *queues*, *cattle market*, *annoyance of people arriving late to aircraft, despite being called by rows - everyone goes up to board*, *cramped and claustrophobic* and *passport checks*. For those whose attention was focused upon being onboard the aircraft, emphasis was placed upon seating. *Got to get on and just sit on a seat*, *some people recline their seat on top of you*, need to *find a seat if its not reserved* and *get to seats*. Only one interviewee thought *going on holiday at last!*

Comments related to food and drink on-board the aircraft yielded largely negative responses. *Passable*, *nothing*, *expensive*, *small portions*, *could come around more often on long haul*, *rubbish*, *not interested on long flight*, *usually just have a drink*, *crap/not good and most of the time would not pay, but this time it was included in total cost*. Only one passenger had a positive comment, stating *I like it, its different*.

Interviewees were generally satisfied with the airline and airport security and safety checks. Comments included: *tighter the better*, *good*, *safety - can do as much searching as they like*, *got better*, *more security staff*, *very efficient*, *thorough*, *very good*, *don't mind being searched as it is keeping everyone safe*, *improved* and *they do more now which is better*. Two interviewees suggested an *invasion of privacy and a fact of life - have to put up with it for safety*. One respondent took an alternative viewpoint, suggesting that the *media influence* and *the destination can be influential*.

Asked if they would be willing to take part in future research on a similar subject, two thirds of the sample indicated they would be happy to participate.

Two respondents respectively favoured an online survey and email correspondence, whilst one cited preference for a telephone interview and another welcomed either online or email communication. Whilst insightful, the work of Cicourel (1982, cited in Bryman, 2008) and Thurstone (1967) demonstrates that an individual's response may be at odds with their actual behaviour that is, they may say one thing, yet do another.

It emerged at the end of the data collection process that the escort had not undertaken any semi-structured interviews as a prerequisite to the attitudinal survey. A lack of confidence in interviewees was cited for not undertaking the research. The issue highlighted a bias in the sampling approach and an unsubstantiated belief held by the escort that passengers were unwilling or unable to participate. The need for appropriate staff training prior to data collection was recognised.

The data that emerged from this intensive, qualitative approach was useful in highlighting key words/phrases identifiable and used by the layman, in reference to air travel. However, the attitudinal pilot study did not elicit socio-demographic data, which in hindsight would have aided data analysis. Whilst any findings would have been limited given the small sample, the data may nevertheless have identified further scope for research. In addition, the sample comprised solely of leisure travellers, thus the findings were limited to this group. Interviews with business passengers may have offered an alternative perspective.

In retrospect, citing BA as an airline representative of a FSC may have led respondents to consider the well-documented industrial action facing the carrier at the time of interview. To this end, it is unclear whether respondents would have considered the strike otherwise.

Data pertaining to the impact of the ash cloud and its influence upon attitudes and behaviour is also likely to have been different if interviewees had been affected. The results indicated that the timely issue of the event made it a prevalent concern.

7.3 Semantic differential scale

Common or arguably ubiquitous to attitude measurement (Dawes, 1972), a semantic differential scale was employed as an appropriate tool to measure attitudes to air travel; with the success of the method rooted in the descriptive terms used in the semantic scale. Interestingly, Thurstone (1967) suggested that an attitude scale is used only in situations in which respondents are expected to tell the truth about their convictions. The point in using the scale however in any other situation appears futile.

Further and importantly, Thurstone recognises that an attitude scale can only measure the attitude that is expressed, with the understanding that the individual completing the semantic differential may be consciously hiding their true attitude or have succumbed to social pressure to make them believe what they express is correct. Whilst consideration was given to the fact that respondents may potentially withhold their true feelings, care was taken to reassure respondents that any information they provided would not be used for any other purposes and if desired, the response could be submitted as anonymous.

The criteria under which the semantic differential scale can be measured as proposed by Osgood et al (1957) was considered when constructing the scale. Namely, that the scale should be objective and derive verifiable and reproducible data, that is should be reliable and valid (in that the responses should mirror those obtained from another independent index), sensitive (reflecting distinctions in meaning), comparable with other phenomena and efficient in collecting data.

Argument exists pertaining to the use of a seven-step scale to account for sophisticated judgement and full use of the scale points (Stagner and Osgood, 1946 and Warr and Knapper, 1968 cited in Lemon, 1973), nevertheless, a five-step scale was employed to account for variability in emotion, education and the age of respondents. To this end, expansive dissemination of the research instrument necessitated a scale suitable for use by a cross-section of the population.

The intensive, qualitative pilot (section 7.2) facilitated the identification of words/terms associated with 'air travel' in its widest sense, with *good judgement* employed by the researcher and use of Roget's Thesaurus (2000) to identify further adjectives for use in the semantic differential scale (Osgood et al, 1957:77). Thought was given to use of concepts that would derive *considerable individual differences* in data and would have a unitary, clear meaning familiar to all subjects (Osgood, et al. 1957:78).

The development of the scale took into account *factorial composition*, thus a balanced scale was used to align the choices. The scales were designed to take into consideration: Evaluation (human judgement in relation to the attitudinal concept), Potency (power) and Activity (quickness, agitation, warmth) (EPA) factors. Whilst the three dimensions are proven to account for most of the co-variation in ratings, appearing in the same order of magnitude (Osgood et al, 1957), not all factors are evident within the semantic space. Of note, Dawes (1972) considered that a number of studies found the EPA factors to be the most important factors of semantic connotation, that is, if it is understood how an individual reacts to these three factors, it is relatively easy to predict how they will rate on a wide range of scales. The key to success in semantic differential is said to lie in the selection of descriptive polar terms.

A Form II differential was employed (Osgood et al, 1957), thus each concept was presented on a new page of the online survey, with concepts listed successively. The method ensured the differential form was constant (ensuring consistency), easy to produce and sympathetic to scoring the scales. It was not deemed necessary to alternate the polarity direction of the adjective pairs to relieve fatigue given the length of the survey (Lemon, 1973).

Importantly, Osgood et al. (1957:76) suggest there is no general/standardised semantic differential test and that 'the technique of measurement' should be adapted to meet the needs of the research in hand. Within this in mind, the semantic scale sought to measure attitudes on the following concepts: booking the flight*, flight cost*, air travel safety and security, boarding process and seating, service standards, food and drink, reliability and convenience*, advertising and branding*, LCCs, FSCs and the ash cloud (NB - Concepts with an asterisk denote themes not included in the original interview guide). Concepts emerged from discussion as key issues pertinent to air traveller attitudes.

In addition, closed-questions were used to minimise poor/low quality responses and collect trip specific data. To limit participant frustration, closed questions and scales were not marked as compulsory. The potential loss of data was acknowledged, but accepted to encourage completion. Subsequent to each semantic scale, respondents were invited to add qualitative comment to elaborate on their attitudes.

Whilst socio-demographic data was requested, it too was not mandatory. An email address was only required where the respondent opted into the prize draw. Amazon vouchers to the value of £100 were used as an incentive for participation. One prize winner was drawn at the end of the research period. Uncertainty amongst potential survey respondents as to how their data might be used was recognised (Gillham, 2000) and a disclaimer included alongside notification of the prize draw, to guarantee that personal data would not be used for any other purpose.

The attitudinal survey was developed using the free online survey software tool, SurveyGizmo. The software was chosen as the only free tool to allow for a semantic scale to be constructed and distributed online. Responses were automatically returned and collated for analysis on the SurveyGizmo website. The online survey comprised of three sections: general trip specific information, the semantic scale and socio-demographic data. The survey can be located online at: http://edu.surveygizmo.com/s3/363403/Air-Travel-Attitudinal-Survey and a hard copy may also be found in Appendix 5.

7.4 Sampling

Extraneous to the sampling issues highlighted in the pilot, the decision was taken to disseminate the attitudinal survey online, primarily to eliminate the monetary costs of undertaking the research at BHX. The online approach also offered respondents flexibility in completing the survey and anonymity (if desired).

To facilitate the distribution of the online survey, it was disseminated via established channels using an academic distribution list, social networking site and personal email. To this end, the sample was self-selected and based upon participants having recently taken a flight. Recognition is given to the fact that sampling bias may have been compromised at some level.

An email was sent via the aforementioned channels to potential respondents. The email indicated envisaged participation time (5-10 minutes) and asked respondents to draw upon their most recent flight as an example. Details on the incentivised prize draw were also provided.

Whilst the email introduction offered an overview of the general nature of the task, instructions were also provided detailing how to mark the scale and the attitude respondents should adopt when completing the task (i.e. speed and first impressions). The semantic scales were tested externally on experimenters prior to dissemination to ensure the dimensionality of the scale system was appropriate and any necessary changes made (Osgood et al, 1957).

The online survey yielded 307 completed responses. Recognition was given to the work of Berdie et al (1986) who considered the profile of research participants. Suggesting that non-respondents are likely to be the least educated members of the sample and those most knowledgeable about the subject will account for respondents most likely to respond. To this end, the implications of disseminating the attitudinal survey via the chosen distribution channels were recognised. Nevertheless, the scope and size of the potential audience provided opportunity to capture a global audience. As Berdie et al. (1986) pertain; there is evidence to suggest that response rates can differ from respondents based upon age, race, marital status and overall socio-economic status. Encompassing a broad audience base increased the potential to collect data from a diverse population.

7.5 Analytical Techniques

PASW 18 was used for data analysis, providing descriptive findings in the first instance and use of statistical tests to further explore the results. The nature of the online attitudinal data dictated the use of the use of both parametric and non-parametric tests, namely the Independent t-test and the Mann-Whitney *U* test. Both are now discussed here. Additionally, correlation analysis was used to explore relationships between variables and is also discussed in reference to its importance and applicability to this research.

As before, it is considered sufficient to refer the reader to Field (2009) for a detailed guide as to how the tests were conducted and simply offer justification for the use of tests in this section.

7.5.1 Parametric test: Independent t-test

The independent t-test was used to test for statistically significant differences between two independent sample means where the data was normally distributed. The test statistic is a ratio between the measure of the between-groups variance and the within-groups variance. The greater the variance found, the larger the t statistic (Dancey and Reidy, 2004).

The independent t-test required the mean for each participant to be calculated. The difference between the sample means of the collected data was compared with the sample means that would be expected if there were no effect. The standard error was used as a gauge of the variability between the mean values. Where a large standard error indicated that large differences in sample means existed, the null hypothesis was rejected, as the difference between the samples represented a genuine difference. The opposite was true where small differences were found.

The t-value obtained from PASW 18 was compared against the maximum value of t that could be expected by chance. Where the value obtained from the test exceeded the critical value of t (see Field, 2009 for t-distribution values), confidence was gained that the value reflected an effect of the independent variable. Examples of where the independent t-test was used to analyse the statistical differences between two variables include investigating the differences between male and female respondents as to their preference towards a particular carrier type and to explore differences in the services offered by two particular airlines e.g. Ryanair and easyJet.

7.5.2 Non-parametric test: Mann-Whitney *U* Test

The Mann-Whitney *U* test is the non-parametric equivalent of the *t*-test and was used to compare two independent samples of ordinal (ranked) data, where the data was not normally distributed. The test was used to measure the relationship between two sample groups from the data that have the same distribution (Coakes et al. 2006). The test required the data be ranked in order of magnitude (in ascending order), and the means of all the ranked scores in each group calculated before the test was run. The test accepted or rejected the research hypothesis at the significant alpha of 0.05, two-tailed. Two-tailed tests were employed throughout, as a test of non-directional hypotheses (Field, 2009).

7.5.3 Correlation Analysis

As a quantitative research tool, correlation analysis was used to explore the results of the online attitudinal survey data to establish the relationship that exists between two variables. In its simplest form, a correlation (or relationship) between two variables can manifest in three ways, namely as being positively related, not related at all or negatively related (Field, 2009).

An examination of the correlation between variables was deemed an important exploration of the online attitudinal survey findings. Primarily, correlation analysis was undertaken to highlight where relationships do and do not exist, in both the tangible and intangible attributes identified within the survey. The research findings are considered invaluable in seeking to understand how attributes that are (for the purposes of this research) considered as intrinsic to many of the decisions air travellers make, used to facilitate the decision making process in which individuals engage when choosing which carrier type and airline to fly with.

As arguably the most common test statistic used to measure the strength of the linear association between variables, Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) was employed in testing for correlations in the analysis of the online attitudinal survey findings. The method of data analysis deals with interval data, thus it presented itself the most appropriate method to employ. As before, the data was prepared using PASW 18 and Field's (2009) text was used as a support manual to guide the data manipulation and testing process.

Szwarc (2005) considers the interpretation of the results once the test has been run. Noting that a value of +1 demonstrates a perfect positive correlation, a value of -1 indicates a perfect negative correlation, whilst a value of 0 suggests that no relationship exists. This simplistic analytical approach was adopted to explore the correlation between variables.

Elsewhere, Williams (2003) recognises the importance of testing for the significance of the correlation. To this end, the data was run using a two-tailed test, as a test of non-directional hypotheses. As Williams (2003:146) states 'statistical significance can tell us nothing about substantive significance, but a correlation (provided it is statistically significant) can tell us how strongly something is associated.' In short, Williams sets out the importance of both statistics in testing for correlation between variables.

The findings of the correlation analysis undertaken with the online attitudinal survey data can be found in chapter 9.

7.6 Variables tested and statistical techniques employed

As a reference guide, table 13 highlights the variables that were tested as part of the online attitudinal survey data analysis and the statistical tests that were employed to identify the existence / non-existence of relationships between variables. Of note, correlation analysis using Pearson's correlation coefficient (*r*) was undertaken on all variables, not only on those cited below. The test is excluded from the table below so as to limit the variables presented, but key findings to have emerged from the correlation analysis are presented in chapter 9.

Statistical test employed	Variables tested
Independent *t*-test	Comfort level & carrier type
	Comfort level & airline
	Satisfaction with food and drink (filling/insufficient) & carrier type
	Satisfaction with food and drink (tasty/bland) & carrier type
	Passenger attitude towards advertising and branding (outstanding/terrible) & carrier type
	Passenger attitude towards advertising and branding (outstanding/terrible) & airline
	Passenger attitude towards advertising and branding (modest/pretentious) & carrier type
	Passenger attitude towards advertising and branding (tasteful/tacky) & airline
	Passenger attitude towards advertising and branding (tasteful/tacky) & carrier type
	Passenger attitude towards LCCs (like/dislike) & gender
	Passenger control over the ash cloud (in control/not in control) & gender
Mann-Whitney *U* Test	Passenger trust in advertising and branding & carrier type

Table 13: Reference summary table of statistical tests employed to explore relationships between variables in online attitudinal data analysis

7.7 Summary

Chapter 7 sought to offer an overview of the preliminary research undertaken ahead of the development of an online attitudinal survey. The preliminary qualitative research undertaken at BHX allowed for key attitudes to be recognised and for themes to emerge that could be pursued further in the main body of research. The use of qualitative interviewing was most effective in collecting data at this stage and in assisting formulation on the semantic differential scale. Nevertheless it is unfortunate that a larger sample was not interviewed at BHX to refine the instrument further.

Use of the free Survey Gizmo facility to develop the online survey as a research instrument was sound it its ability to facilitate a large response rate, whilst keeping administration costs low. The decision to employ a semantic differential scale as a measurement of attitude was justified and considered as the most appropriate and robust technique. Descriptive analysis and statistical tests were also chosen to assist data analysis as proven and established analytical techniques. The statistical tests used to explore relationships between variables were also presented in a quick reference summary table.

The following chapter presents the results of the BHX structured interviews, whilst chapter 9 will explore the findings to have emerged from the online attitudinal survey. The results of both studies will be brought together and considered in chapter 10.

8. Birmingham Airport structured interview findings

8.1 Introduction

The following three chapters present the findings of the fieldwork for this study. Chapter 8 considers the results of the BHX structured interviews that took place with departing passengers immediately prior to travel. The findings explore the underlying influences that drive the travel decision-making process of airline passengers. The results are discussed in section 8.2 and its sub-sections, whilst section 8.3 offers a summary of the chapter. Of note, where respondents took a connecting flight, their response is based upon the first sector of their journey from BHX.

Chapter 9 will consider the results of the online attitudinal survey, with data collected on travel attitudes based upon previous experience. The findings seek to explore the influence of different components of the air travel experience and their interrelationships upon attitude formation.

In chapter 10 the results of both studies will be analysed and linked back to the literature and data presented in chapters 2, 3 and 4. The influential factors pertaining to airline choice, airport, destination and service elements will be presented and recommendations made for airlines as to how best to cater for the diverse needs of the airline passenger and in particular, the low-cost air traveller.

8.2 Research findings

8.2.1 Socio-demographics

Four hundred and ninety passengers were interviewed at BHX, 114 business passengers and 376 leisure passengers. Gender representation within the sample was relatively balanced with 251 male (114 business passengers and 137 leisure passengers) and 239 female respondents (20 business passengers and 219 leisure passengers). The average age of passengers at BHX was 45-54 years and 54% of the sample is married, whilst the average income group of all passengers is £28,750-£34,499. For business passengers the figure was much higher at £46,000-£57,499, but lower for leisure passengers at £17,250-£22,999. Just slightly fewer leisure passengers than those making up the aforementioned group, had an income of '£23,000-£28,749. The findings are reflective of the wider population at BHX (BIA, 2009).

Just over three quarters of the sample predominately lived within the UK in the 12 months prior to interview and 40% of the sample resided in a two-person household. Socio-economic data was limited to just three quarters of interviewees, yet of this sub-sample, 39% of respondents were located in socio-economic group C1 and 35% in group B.

Fifty-seven percent of the business passenger segment is located in socio-economic group B. Of this total, 64% travelled with FSCs. Elsewhere, only 69% of leisure passengers provided occupation details from which socio-economic data could be gleaned. Thirty-four percent of respondents in this group are located within socio-economic group C1 and 77% of the total respondents travelled with LCCs.

8.2.2 Group size

Fifty percent of the sample travelled alone and a further 34% travelled as a couple. Of the group that travelled alone, sixty percent did so for leisure purposes. Unsurprisingly 88% of the business passenger segment travelled alone.

Respondents that booked with FSCs (excluding just a handful of Lufthansa, SAS and Air France passengers) travelled alone or as a couple. Whilst LCCs and Charter airlines also attracted independent travellers and couples, a much larger concentration of groups with 3+ passengers was evident amongst this user group.

8.2.3 Airline choice

Income data provided by 77% of the sample illustrates use of LCCs, FSCs and charter airlines across all income groups. Pearson's chi square test of contingencies does however confirm that passenger income is related to choice of airline. The chi-square test was statistically significant where χ^2 (6, N = 378) = 39.25, p <.05. The findings suggest that individuals in lower income groups are significantly more likely to travel with LCCs and charter airlines than their high earning counterparts (on short haul routes), who are most likely to travel with FSCs. Destination choice and flight availability / schedule could however be influential. In addition, it could be that passengers travelling on routes such as BHD and BRU may have a higher than average personal income, thus also influencing the research findings.

The box plot graph below demonstrates the spread of passengers (by income) and airline. BMI (BD), bmibaby (WW), Brussels Airlines (SN) and Swiss Air (LX) carried the highest earning passengers, whilst Flybe (BE), Ryanair (FR) and SAS (SK) demonstrated the greatest variance in passenger income.

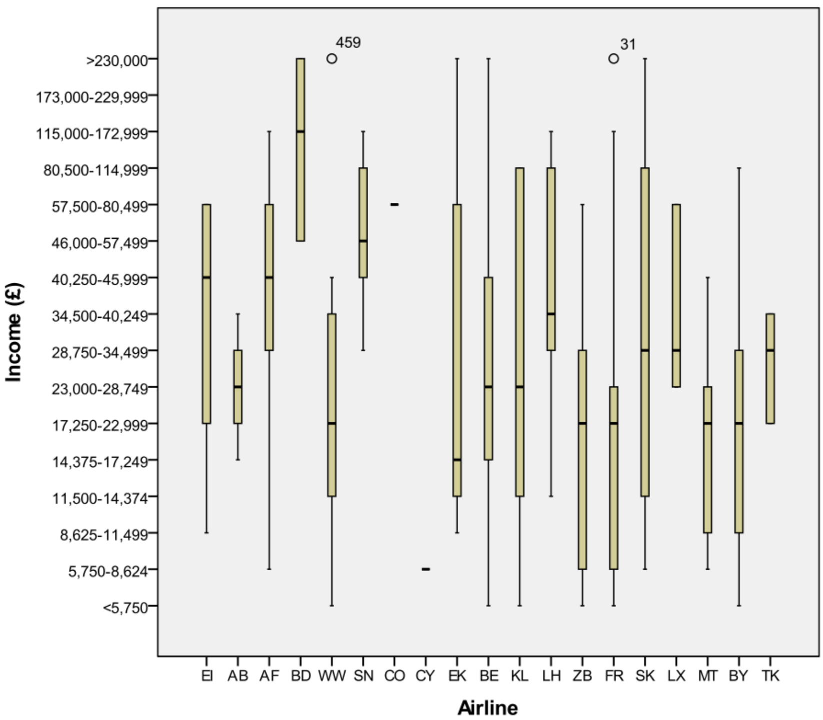

Figure 3: Box plot demonstrating spread of BHX passengers (by income) and airline (NB – the middle bar represents the median value)

Pearson's chi square test of contingencies was also used to explore the significance of passenger age on airline choice. The chi-square test was statistically significant, χ^2 (14, N = 490) = 49.63, p <.05, demonstrating that age is influential in airline choice.

Use of LCC services was greatest across all age groups, yet the dominance of LCC passengers within the sample is likely to have been influential. Respondents aged 35-64 years made the greatest use of FSC operators, whilst respondents aged 55+ accounted for the greatest proportion of the sample that used charter carriers. The need to travel with FSCs on long haul flights is recognised.

By trip purpose, 20% of Flybe passengers travelled for business whilst a further 12% travelled with Lufthansa. A further 11% travelled with Air France and 8% with Brussels Airlines. Only one business passenger travelled with a charter airline, whilst all other respondents used LCC and FSC services. The extent to which airline choice and trip purpose are interlinked is unknown, with connotations between the two likely to be influential. Route and flight availability could too have been influential.

Eighty percent of passengers that travelled with Flybe did so for leisure purposes, accounting for 46% of the sub-sample. Elsewhere, 17% of leisure passengers travelled with Ryanair, 13% with Thomson Airways and 4% with bmibaby. Of interest, no business passengers travelled with Thomson Airways, Thomas Cook or Cyprus Airlines. Further, no leisure passengers travelled with either Brussels Airlines or BMI. The high number of business and leisure passengers seen to have flown with Flybe is considered a consequence of over-sampling that took place within Terminal 2.

EDI, DUB and Belfast City (BHD) emerged as the most popular destinations (by respondent visits) for passengers within the sample. All passengers on the BHX-EDI and BHX-BHD travelled with Flybe, the only operator on both routes. Of note, bmibaby do operate a service to BFS. The over representation of Flybe passengers in the sample is likely to be influential here.

The most popular routes for business passengers were (as before) EDI, BHD, DUB, but additionally Brussels (BRU) and GLA. In addition to the EDI and BHD routes, Flybe dominated the GLA route (the only airline operating from BHX on this route). Interestingly, 88% of those travelling to DUB on business travelled with Aer Lingus over Ryanair, a route where both airlines go head-to-head as the only carriers operating on the route. All business passengers that travelled to BRU did so with Brussels Airline, who has a monopoly on the route from BHX.

Ninety-one percent of the business segment travelled short haul against just 9% on long haul routes. The long-haul flights were equally split by direct and indirect flights. Paris Charles de Gaulle (CDG), Dubai (DXB) and Frankfurt (FRA) were used as transfer airports for connecting flights.

The most popular carriers for indirect flights were Emirates and Air France. Whilst all indirect flights operated by Emirates were to destinations outside of the EU, all Air France indirect flights remained inside the EU. Perhaps unsurprisingly, 94% of the sample that booked an indirect flight, completed the first-sector with a FSC, the remaining passengers used charter airlines.

8.2.4 Preferred airport

Twenty-one percent of the sample indicated that BHX was not their first choice departure airport, of which a quarter comprised of business passengers. East Midlands Airport (EMA) was the most popular alternative airport overall, followed by Bristol Airport (BRS) and Cardiff International Airport (CWL). Close proximity to home emerged as they key reason for preferring an alterative airport, but flight availability and/or destination choice made BHX the most viable choice. Direct flight availability, proximity of BHX to temporary accommodation and convenience also emerged as key factors in the decision to fly from BHX.

8.2.5 Alternative modes of transport

Fifteen percent of the sample that travelled domestically considered using an alternative mode of transport. Consideration of substitute modes was most prevalent on the EDI, GLA and BHD routes for both business and leisure passengers. Yet Jersey Airport (JER) and Hamburg Airport (HAM) also emerged as routes on which leisure passengers considered alternative modes.

On both the EDI and BHD routes, leisure passengers considered alternative modes more so than business passengers. On the EDI route the train and car were the most popular alternatives, whilst on the BHD route, given its limited access from BHX, a range of transport modes were considered. Interestingly business passengers included only public transport options in their choice set for travel to BHD. On the GLA route, business passengers were more likely to consider alternatives with the train and car most popular.

The key reason cited by both business and leisure passengers for ultimately choosing to fly from BHX, as opposed to using an alternative mode of transport was the close proximity of the airport to home. Additionally, BHX was the closest/only airport to serve the destination and the flight was the quickest modal alternative.

8.2.6 Luggage

Twenty-eight percent of the sample did not check in any hold luggage, whilst 38% checked in just one item. Trip length and destination may have been influential here, yet the structured interviews failed to explore trip duration.

Where business passengers are concerned, a slightly higher percentage did not check in a bag (48%), compared to those that checked in just one piece (46%). A positive correlation is evident between group size and the total number of items checked in. Elsewhere 22% of leisure passengers checked-in hold luggage. Of this total, 40% checked in one item and a further 30% checked in two items.

A Kruskal-Wallis test revealed a statistically significant difference in the total items of luggage checked-in per person across the three different airline 'types' (LCCs, n = 302; FSCs n = 112 and Charter n = 76), χ^2 (2, n = 490) = 87.76, p = .000. The total number of bags checked-in is significantly affected by the airline, H (2) = 87.76, p <.05. The mean rank values support the findings that Charter passengers check-in the most items of luggage (mean rank = 378.28) and LCC passengers check-in the least (mean rank = 217.65).

Fifty-three percent of leisure passengers that travelled with bmibaby and 44% of Ryanair passengers did not check-in hold luggage. Given that both airlines charge for doing so, the results are not surprising. A similar pattern was evident amongst Air France and Aer Lingus passengers, with both airlines FSCs. Whilst Air France permit one hold bag up to 23kgs free of charge, Aer Lingus charge for bags up to 20kgs as standard. The majority of business passengers that travelled with Flybe did not check in any hold luggage. Destination, trip purpose and length of stay are likely to have been influential factors determining the total number of hold-bags checked-in. Further, given that FSCs charge by pieces of luggage as opposed to by weight as with many LCCs, this too could be influential to the results.

The total cost of the flight also appeared influential as to the number of bags checked-in by passengers. Where passengers paid less than £80 for their flight, they were more likely not to check-in an item of luggage. Above the £80 threshold, passengers were more likely to check in an item luggage than not. Those most likely to check-in hold luggage paid £100-£200 for their flight, closely followed by passengers that paid £200-£300. Just 9% of the sample could not recall or did not know, the cost of their flight.

Few respondents that booked their flight as part of a package did not check-in hold luggage. Of interest, the respondents that did not check in hold-luggage paid the least for their package holiday, between £200-£400 respectively.

Where long-haul travel is concerned, two business passengers (travelling to DXB and FRA-Beijing (PEK) and one leisure passenger (DXB-Madras International (MAA) did not check-in hold luggage.

8.2.7 Pre-trip research

Forty-three percent of respondents (solely) used airline websites to undertake pre-trip research before administering their flight booking. A much smaller, although significant proportion of the sample (9%) undertook research using only online agency websites and a further 7% sought advice from a high street travel agent. Just over a quarter of business passengers enlisted the help of a business travel agent.

Only 6% of the sample did not know or were unable to recall what research took place before their flight was booked. Of this group eighteen respondents travelled for leisure and eleven for business. Without exception, none of the business passengers administered their own flight booking and all but one leisure passenger did.

Approximately half of those aged 16-24 years, 25-34 years and 65-74 years consulted an airline website to undertake research before booking a flight. Elsewhere, 20% of respondents aged 75+ and 16% of those aged 65-74 years sought advice from a high street travel. In contrast, less than 2% of 16-24 year olds and 25-34 year olds used the services of a high street travel.

A chi square test of contingencies was run to test whether passenger age is independent of the choice of research methods employed by potential air travellers prior to booking a flight. Where χ^2 (9, N = 489) = 36.66, p <.05, the result was statistically significant, indicating that passenger age and pre-trip research methods are related. The findings support the notion that online research dominates throughout all age groups, yet as passenger age increases so too does the propensity to also/or alternatively use, traditional research methods (i.e. high street travel agent, brochures and call centre).

Only 16% of the sample explored more than one avenue in their research, i.e. used more than one source of information. Just 2% of the sample did not undertake any research before booking their flight and were aged 16-44 years and 55-64 years. Respondents aged 55+ years made the greatest use of more 'traditional' research methods including holiday brochures, postal mailings and advertisements to plan their trip.

Socio-economic status was also found to influence the research methods employed by individuals when searching for a flight. A Pearson's chi-square test proved statistically significant, where χ^2 (6, N = 363) = 26.36, p < .05. The null hypothesis was rejected, confirming socio-economic status does influence the research methods used by respondents when searching for a flight.

Whilst respondents in socio-economic group A did use websites in their research, use of telephone call centres and business travel agents were well documented. Traditional research methods proved to be widely used within this group. Reasons for employing such methods could be attributable to respondents being more highly educated and in consequence holding professional positions that arguably do not provide them with the available time to undertake such research or they may feel their time can be better utilised on other tasks. Respondents in socio-economic groups B and C1 used a greater variety of research tools in planning their trip, with a dominance of online sources. Airline websites proved the most popular information source across all socio-economic groups.

Women were more likely to search online for information prior to booking their flight, whilst men were more likely to employ traditional methods of research, such as (business) travel agencies and company travel departments. Male respondents were also less able to recall or were unaware of pre-trip research that had been undertaken. Collaborative use of tour operator websites and high street travel agents was common amongst female respondents, but not amongst their male counterparts. The research findings were indicative of the different approaches used by both sexes in locating a flight. A chi-square test proved statistically significant, χ^2 (3, N = 490) = 18.20, p <.05, confirming that differences exist in the choice and use of research methods by potential male and female airline passengers.

Thirty-six percent of business passengers administered their own flight booking using just one research tool to cost flights and locate availability. Of this group sixty-eight percent used airline websites, and a further 12% used online agencies such as Expedia and Opodo. Fifteen percent of business passengers that booked their own flight used a combination of websites to undertake pre-trip research, all travelled short haul.

Sixteen percent of business passengers that did not administer their own flight booking were unsure of the research that had taken place. Forty-one percent of those that outsourced their flight booking said pre-trip research was undertaken by a BTA and 19% suggested airline websites had been used. A further 16% disclosed that research was conducted through an in-house company travel department.

Forty-two percent of leisure passengers that travelled long haul used only one research tool in their pre-trip research. The high street travel agent proved most popular, followed by airline websites. All passengers that travelled long haul were aware of the research that had taken place prior to booking.

Forty-nine percent of short-haul leisure passengers solely used airline websites in their pre-trip research, whilst online agencies were used by 9% and a further 8% used the services of a high street travel agent. Ten percent of short haul leisure passengers were not sure or could not remember what research had taken place. Male respondents aged 16-24 years were well represented. The respondents were from the UK, Eire, France, Germany and Guernsey. The sample size may be influential and not representative of the wider population for each country. Just 3% of short haul leisure passengers did not undertake any research before booking their flight.

Use of online agencies was most prevalent amongst leisure passengers aged 45-54 years and those aged 55-74 years made most use of the high street travel agent. Of note, nine men and one woman all aged 65-74 years used the services of a high street travel agent.

8.2.8 Booking administration

Fifty-five percent of leisure passengers booked their own flight. Respondents aged 45 years or younger were largely responsible for administering their own flight booking. An equal split was evident amongst the 45-54 years group as to the number of respondents that booked their own flight and those that did not. Respondents aged 55-64 years were also more likely to book their own flight, whilst respondents aged 65+ years were most likely to outsource their booking. Under the age of 65 years, women were more likely than not to have booked their own flight, whilst the same is true only for men under the age of 35 years.

Pearson's chi square test of contingencies was used to evaluate the significance of passenger age on the propensity of passengers' booking their own flight. The chi-square test was statistically significant, χ^2 (3, N = 489) = 13.95, p <.05. The null hypothesis is rejected and confidence is gained in the fact that age does affect individuals' decision as to whether or not to book their own flight.

Where passengers did not book their own flight, responsibility was spread amongst a number of different groups. Relatives (other than a partner/spouse) predominantly took responsibility for managing flight bookings for respondent's aged 16-24, 25-34 years and 75+ years. Secretaries administered 43% of the total bookings made for respondents aged 35-54 years. Just over 20% of respondents aged 55-64 years and 24% of respondents aged 65-74 years booked their flight as part of a package. A similar number of respondents within this group booked their flight separately through a travel agent.

By passenger segment, 48% of leisure passengers that did not administer their own booking, did not offer any advice to the individual that took responsibility. Where this was the case, the majority of bookings were made through a relative other than a spouse or partner. Where advice was offered, 58% of leisure passengers that booked with a travel agent stated their preferred choice of destination. In the following order dates, accommodation and cost featured as other specified details.

Sixty-two percent of flights booked for leisure purposes were administered using an airline website, whilst 17% of bookings were made with a high street travel agent. Table 12 presents a breakdown of the outlets used by leisure passengers to purchase their air ticket.

	Frequency	Percent
Airline's website	233	62
Online agency	22	6
Tour operator	21	5
High street travel agent	65	17
Telephone	30	8
Don't know	4	1
Airline ticket desk at airport	1	1
Total	376	100

Table 12: Retail outlets used for the purchase of leisure travel air tickets by BHX passengers

Elsewhere, 64% of business passengers did not administer their own flight booking. Of this total 30% outsourced the task to a secretary and 29% to a BTA. All other flight bookings made for business passengers were handled by a colleague, the company (including the Military) or a client.

The business passenger sample was drawn from six countries – the UK, Eire, France, Germany, the Netherlands and USA. Whilst UK business travellers dominated the sample, they also proportionally offered the most advice (when the booking was outsourced) to the individual that assumed responsibility for organising the flight. Flight time emerged as a key attribute in flight choice. Elsewhere, business passengers from Eire, Germany and the Netherlands stipulated dates, price and airline. Neither of the business passengers from France offered advice, whilst just one of the two US business passengers stated their preferred time, date and airline. Notably this passenger had undertaken their own pre-trip research before passing their findings to a BTA.

The majority of male business passengers aged 25-64 years did not administer their own flight booking, whilst the same is true only of female business travellers aged 16-34 years. Comparatively, just 3% more male business passengers booked their own flight compared to their female counterparts.

There is no relationship evident in the choice of airline and the business passenger having booked and paid for their own flight. Where the flight was paid for by a client or with EU funding, business passengers travelled with FSCs. All respondents travelling on business with the military, travelled on the same flight operated by an LCC (Air Berlin).

Forty-five percent of flights booked by or for business passengers were purchased from an airline website, whilst a third were bought through a BTA. Table 14 below illustrates the retail outlets used for the purchase of flights for business travel.

	Frequency	Percent
Airline's website	51	45
Online agencies	7	6
Business travel agent	38	33
Telephone	1	1
Company travel dept.	14	12
Don't know	3	3
Total	114	100

Table 14: Retail outlets used for the purchase of business travel air tickets by BHX passengers

Only 30% of business passengers indicated that a company travel policy had restricted their choice of flight or airline. Interestingly, amongst those that were unrestricted, 38% opted for travel with a LCC. Amongst those whose travel plans were constrained, 14% were required to fly economy and 7% were limited by a financial budget. Other limitations included having to travel with a specific airline, travel to the destination and back within the day (therefore limiting overnight expenses) and for others, combinations of the aforementioned factors were cited.

Seventy percent of business passengers that travelled long haul were restricted in their travel choices by a company travel policy, against only 15% of passengers that travelled short haul. In both cases, where restrictions were in place, the majority of passengers were limited to travel in economy class. For business passengers travelling short haul, price was also a key stipulation.

Business passengers that demonstrated frequent travel by air were asked if they (or their business) had considered reducing their propensity to travel by air and instead considered alternative measures i.e. teleconferencing or business relocation. Fifty-three percent of the sample indicated that they either did not travel frequently by air or had not considered reducing their air travel. Of the remaining respondents 12% suggested that reducing their travel by air was not an option, whilst a further 23% made use of teleconferencing, but at times found it essential to meet with clients. The remaining 12% suggested that other modes were also used in place of air travel and discussions were in-hand as to shifting the reliance away from air travel.

8.2.9 Flight cost

Employers paid for just over two thirds of flights taken for business, whilst the business passenger personally financed a further 12%. A much smaller proportion of flights were paid for by the Armed Forces (4%) and clients and EU funding respectively, financed 3% of the business travel.

The modal price bracket paid for 30% of flights taken for business (not booked as a package) was £100-£200. A further 17% of flights cost £200-£300. For just 4% of business passengers, the cost of their flight and accommodation was combined; meaning the flight cost was inclusive to that of the total package. Where the total package amounted to £300-£400 for two business passengers, £500-£600 for another, a further two respondents were unaware of the total package cost. All five passengers travelled short haul.

Where leisure passengers booked a flight only option, 31% paid £100-£200 per person and a further 8% paid £200-£300. Ten percent of leisure passengers were unaware of their flight cost.

Twenty-six percent of leisure passengers booked their flight as part of a package, thus the modal cost was higher than where the flight was purchased separately. Fifteen percent of leisure passengers that booked their flight and accommodation as a package paid £800-£900, whilst 13% paid £500-£600 and a further 13% paid £700-£800. Twenty percent paid £1,000+ per person for flights and accommodation.

8.2.10 Booking lead-time

Unsurprisingly, 71% of business passengers booked their flight within a month of travel, with 30% of the bookings made within the 1-2 weeks immediately prior to departure. Just 8% booked more than two months in advance. In contrast 34% of leisure passengers booked within a month of travel. When combined with the 24% of leisure passengers that booked within 1-2 months of departure, the results demonstrate that over half of the leisure segment (58%) booked within two months of departure.

With reference to the booking lead-time for business travel in relation to passenger gender, 45% of business travel booked for female passengers was confirmed more than one month in advance of travel, against just 26% of bookings made for male passengers. All flights arranged for female passengers were organised more than five days in advance of departure, whilst male business passengers continued to book flights up until and on, the day of departure. Four male respondents booked their flight on the day of travel.

The principal reason cited by 16% of the total sample for booking their flight when they did was ‘to get the best price’. Of note, only 2% of respondents within this group were business travellers and the majority of bookings were made within 1-2 months of departure. ‘Having the dates available and/or having planned to make the trip’ was the reason cited by a further 16%. Within this group, leisure passengers represented just 2% of the total. Flexibility therefore assumes precedence over cost for the majority of business passengers. Time set aside ‘to visit friends and family’ was offered as justification by 13% of the leisure segment, demonstrating the importance of the VFR market.

8.2.11 Willingness to pay

Respondents were asked to consider their WTP to pay for both 3” extra legroom and a full meal service (excluding drinks) on the flight they were waiting to board. Where WTP for 3” extra legroom is concerned, 73% of the sample were unwilling to pay for the extra leg space on their impending flight. Just 3% received extra legroom inclusive to the cost of their flight and 8% were willing to pay in excess of £20 (one way). Amongst the 25-34, 65-74 and 75+ age groups, women appeared more willing to pay for extra legroom then men, a Kruskal-Wallis test indicated that the results were not statistically significant. Where H (1) = 3.33, p >.05, the confidence level for significance was 0.67 to 0.81. The boundary crosses .05 and so it is concluded that there is not a significant difference in the willingness to pay for 3” extra legroom by gender.

Respondents travelling with KLM, Air France, Flybe and Ryanair were most reluctant to pay for 3” extra legroom. For all passengers, the length of the flight could be significant in decision-making.

Three quarters of both business and leisure passengers were unwilling to pay for extra legroom. Within the business passenger group, male respondents indicated a greater WTP, with 11% willing to pay more than £20+ and 6% between £10-£14. Only business passengers with an income over £17,250 were willing to pay for the extra space and only 10% of those willing to pay travelled long haul. Amongst leisure passengers, the greatest propensity of respondents willing to pay was evident in the middle-income bracket, largely between £17,250-£34,499. The lower representation of high-earners within this group could be influential.

Table 16 presents the total number of business passengers and leisure passengers (by sector length) willing to pay for 3" extra legroom.

WTP for 3" extra legroom	Short haul		Long haul		
	Business	**Leisure**	**Business**	**Leisure**	**Total**
Nothing	80	248	5	23	356
N/A (inc. in cost)	0	7	1	6	14
£1-£4	2	9	0	0	11
£5-£9	4	18	0	2	24
£10-£14	7	23	0	4	34
£15-£19	2	7	0	2	11
£20+	9	21	4	6	40
Total	104	333	10	43	490

Table 16: WTP demonstrated by BHX business and leisure passengers (by sector length) for 3" legroom

The WTP for 3" extra legroom by both leisure passengers (left graph) and business passengers (right graph), segmented by age can be seen in figure 15. The results clearly demonstrate that the majority of business and leisure passengers across all age groups were unwilling to pay for extra legroom. For leisure passengers there is a WTP £20+ for extra legroom across all age groups, whilst the same is true only of business passengers aged 25-64 years.

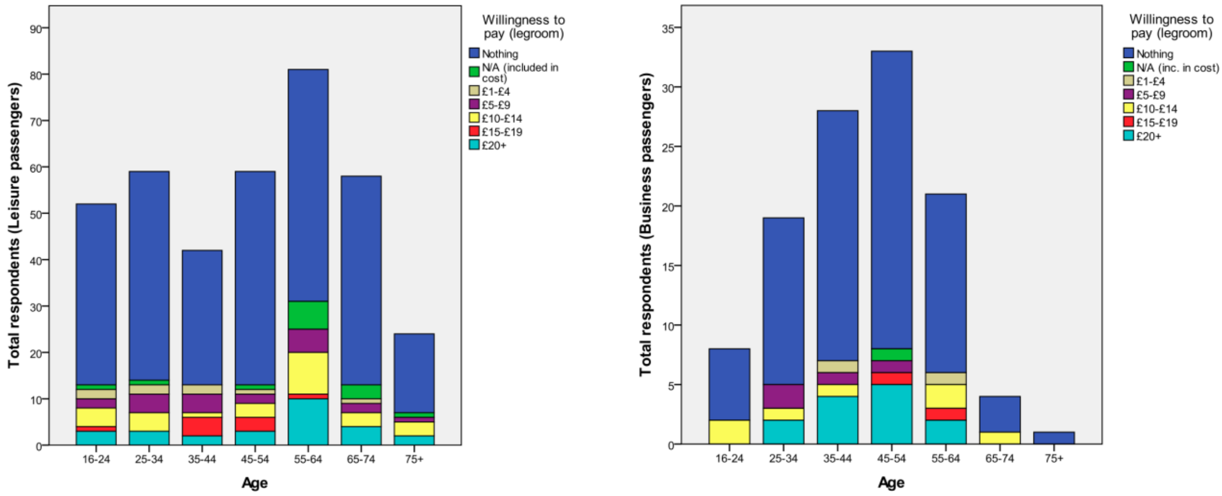

Figure 4: WTP demonstrated by BHX leisure and business passengers (by sector length) for 3" extra legroom

With regard to WTP for a full meal service (not considering drinks), 77% of the overall sample were unwilling to pay for an onboard meal, whilst 15% received a meal in the cost of their flight. A further 4% were willing to pay £5-£9. A Kruskal-Wallis test was run to explore the statistical significance of the findings. Where H (1) = .689, p >.05, the confidence level for significance is .388 to .413. The boundary crosses .05 and so it is concluded that the Kruskal-Wallis test is not significant. There is not a significant difference in the willingness of male and female respondents to pay a full meal service.

Respondents that travelled with BMI, Flybe, Aer Lingus and Ryanair were least likely to purchase food on board the aircraft. The small sample size of passengers that travelled with BMI could be influential here. Elsewhere, for all passengers travelling with Continental, Emirates and Cyprus Airways the cost of the meal service was inclusive to the flight cost. Sector length may have been influential in the decision to purchase food.

There was a (slightly) greater reluctance amongst business passengers than leisure passengers to pay for a full meal service, with 87% of business passengers travelling short haul unwilling to pay for a meal, against 83% of leisure passengers. On long haul flights, all business passengers indicated that a meal was included in the total cost of their flight, yet this was not the case for leisure passengers. Of the 23% of leisure passengers that did not have the cost of a meal included in their flight, 16% were unwilling to pay for a meal, whilst 5% were willing to pay £5-£9 and just 2% were willing to pay £10-£14. Table 17 presents a breakdown of willingness to pay by trip purpose and sector length.

WTP for full meal service		Short haul		Long haul		
		Business	**Leisure**	**Business**	**Leisure**	**Total**
	Nothing	90	277	0	7	374
	N/A (inc. in cost)	6	24	10	33	73
	£1-£4	0	5	0	0	5
	£5-£9	3	14	0	2	19
	£10-£14	5	9	0	1	15
	£15-£19	0	3	0	0	3
	£20+	0	1	0	0	1
	Total	104	333	10	43	490

Table 17: WTP demonstrated by BHX business and leisure passengers (by sector length) for a full meal service (excluding drinks)

Seventy-nine percent of business passengers were not prepared to pay for a meal and of this group, none of the respondents earned over £80,500. Elsewhere, 76% of leisure passengers were unwilling to pay for a meal. Despite the small representation of high-income earners that travelled for leisure, aside from a few outliers, respondents with a personal income of £17,250 - £45,999 demonstrated the greatest propensity to pay for a meal.
Three domestic business passengers were willing to pay for a meal and five short haul business travellers. Of the leisure passengers willing to pay, 96% travelled short haul - four passengers travelled domestically and 28 travelled within Europe.

WTP for a full meal service (excluding drinks) for both leisure passengers (left graph) and business passengers (right graph) can be seen in Figure 5. None of the leisure passengers aged 75+ years (that did not have a meal inclusive to the cost of their flight) were willing to pay for the onboard meal. Respondents aged 16-34 years and 65-74 years were also unwilling to pay more than £15 for a meal, whilst respondents aged 45-54 years and 55-64 years were unwilling to pay £20+.

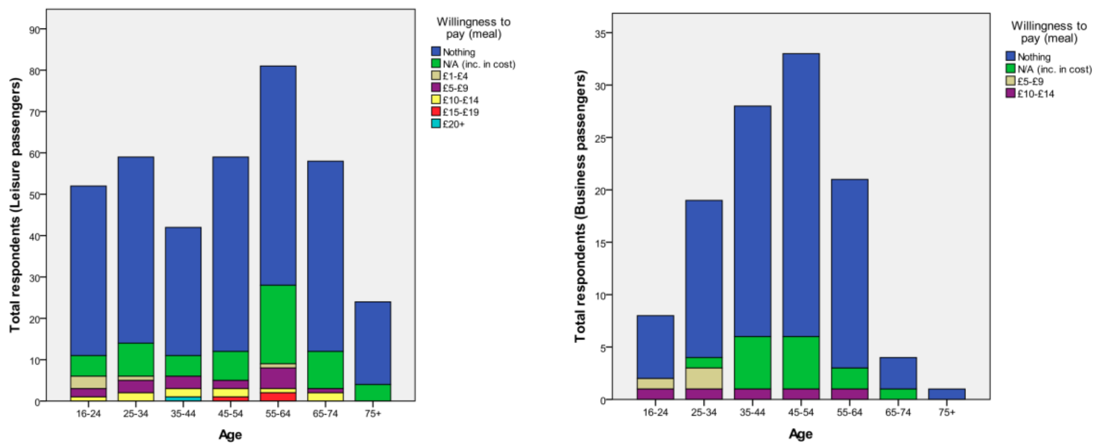

Figure 5: WTP demonstrated by BHX leisure and business passengers (by sector length) for a full meal service (excluding drinks)

As a final point, 64% of passengers travelling for business were not willing to pay for either 3” extra legroom or a full meal service. For leisure passengers, the figure was much higher at 79%.

8.2.12 Trip frequency

Unsurprisingly leisure passengers travelled less frequently than business passengers during the 12 months prior to interview, with 79% having taken just 0-4 return flights to any destination in contrast to just 17% of business passengers. Elsewhere, a further 13% of leisure passengers stated they had taken 5-9 return flights and 4%, 10-14 flights. Where business passengers are concerned, 23% took 5-9 return flights and a further 17%, 10-14 flights. Thirteen percent of business passengers took 45+ flights during the same period.

When asked how many times the passenger had flown to the destination they were travelling to on the day of interview, 94% of leisure passengers had taken 0-4 return flights within the preceding 12 months to the same destination in contrast to 70% of business passengers. Five percent of business passengers had travelled to the same destination more than 45 times in the last year.

8.3 Chapter summary

Chapter 8 has presented the results of the structured interviews that were undertaken at BHX. In doing so, the chapter has provided a succinct overview of the research findings drawing upon the sample as a whole, before exploring the data pertaining specifically to the business and leisure markets. The focus has remained upon the decision-making process of airline passengers as a pre cursor to exploring travel attitudes in the subsequent chapter. The results of the BHX research will be linked back to the literature discussed in chapters 2, 3 and 4 along with the results of the online attitudinal survey in chapter 10.

The findings discussed here recognise key differences in the characteristics and travel behaviour of business and leisure airline passengers and also amongst passengers of different carrier types and airlines, particularly where the research and booking administration of flights is concerned. Socio-demographic factors also emerged as significant in decision-making and flight choice. Similarities were also evident however between different groups, particularly where willingness to pay for extra legroom and a meal service were concerned. On this point, neither business nor leisure passengers or passengers travelling with any particular airline per se, were outwardly wiling to pay for either service.

Table 18 overleaf presents a summary of the key variables (identified in section 6.7.2) that were tested to explore relationships within the BHX data and the main research findings. The significance of each test is shown alongside an indicative example of the percentage share of respondent answers.

Variables	Significance of test	Percentage share of respondents (Indicative survey findings)
Passenger age & propensity of passenger to book their own flight	Significant	Just 11% of passengers aged 65+ years booked their own flight compared to 36% of those aged <34 years
Passenger age & choice of research methods	Significant	36% of passengers aged 65+ years undertook their pre-trip research using a high street travel agent, compared with just 2% of passengers aged <34 years
Passenger gender & choice of research methods	Significant	26% of male passengers undertook their travel research using traditional methods only compared to 22% of female passengers
Passenger socio economic status & choice of research methods	Significant	Combined 52% of passengers in socio-economic group A/B made use solely of traditional research methods compared with just 10% of the bottom socio-economic groups D/E
Passenger income & carrier type	Significant	80% of passengers in the lowest annual income bracket (<£5.750) travelled with a LCC, compared with 50% of passengers in the top income bracket (>£230,000) travelled with LCC (NB - route choice/flight availability could be influential here)
Total items of checked luggage & airline type	Significant	77% of passengers travelling with a LCC did not check in hold luggage, compared with just 22% of FSC passengers and 1% of charter passengers
Passenger gender & willingness to pay for extra legroom	Not significant	70% of male passengers were unwilling to pay for 3” extra legroom compared with 76% of female passengers
Passenger gender & willingness to pay for a full meal service (excluding drinks)	Not significant	70% of male passengers were unwilling to pay for a full meal service (excluding drinks) compared with 76% of female passengers

Table 18: Summary table presenting the significance of the statistical tests employed to explore relationships between variables in the BHX data analysis and percentage shares of respondent answers)

Chapter 9 will now address the research findings of the attitudinal survey.

9. Online attitudinal survey findings

9.1 Introduction

Chapter 9 considers the results of the online attitudinal survey that sought to explore air travel attitudes based upon previous travel experience. A five-point semantic scale was employed to measure attitudes in the online attitudinal survey. The results were analysed taking into consideration each scalar point, yet to aid analysis and explanation of the results, the following discussion considers points 1 and 2 on the semantic scale to encompass positive attitudes, point 3 to include attitudes that are neither positive nor negative and points 4 and 5 to demonstrate a negative attitude. What follows seeks to build a socio-demographic profile of the sample before offering a detailed overview of the research findings.

Section 9.2 begins by offering a concise discussion pertaining to the socio-demographic profile of respondents, whilst section 9.3 sets out details of the most recent flight taken by respondents. Here, aspects of the booking process are briefly considered, as too are the key airlines and airports used by respondents, in addition to the destinations visited and purpose of the trips that were made.

Section 9.4 sets out the research findings. Each subsequent section through to 9.14 deals with a different aspect of the flight, considering respondent's attitudes to various air travel components. Correlations evident in the data are highlighted, alongside the results of both parametric and non-parametric tests that were run on the data (where appropriate) to test the significance of the research findings. Identified as the four most popular airlines cited within the online survey, the results for BA, easyJet, Ryanair and Thomson Airways are considered in greater detail, offering closer inspection of differences/similarities evident between carrier types. Additional comments offered by respondents are also interspersed throughout the discussion to add depth to the results that are provided. Section 9.15 provides a summary of the chapter.

9.2 Socio-demographics

Three hundred and seven respondents took part in the online attitudinal survey, 138 males and 167 females (the gender of two respondents is unknown). The average age of respondents is 25-34 years, whilst a further 24% are aged 35-44 years and 14% aged 45-54 years. Forty-one percent of the sample is married, 32% are single and 19% cohabitating.

Eighty-four percent of the sample have (mainly) lived in the UK for the last 12 months, whilst all other respondents are spread across 20 other counties, with the largest proportion living in Australia (nine respondents), USA (six respondents) and New Zealand (five respondents). Forty-one percent of the sample lives with just one other person and a further 20% live in a three-person household.

Whilst just 5% of the sample did not state their current occupation, 20% hold a teaching post within a higher education (HE) institution. The dominance of respondents that teach within HE is deemed attributable to the distribution of the online survey via an academic mailing list. The average personal net income for the sample is £28,750-£34,499.

9.3 Most recent journey

Three UK-based airlines emerged as the most popular carriers used by respondents on their last journey by air. Fifteen percent of the sample travelled with easyJet, 13% with Ryanair and 11% with British Airways. Of the remaining respondents (segmented by carrier type), 37% travelled with FSCs (of this total 44% travelled short haul and 56% long haul), 12% travelled with LCCs (all respondents travelled short haul) and 12% with charter airlines (92% travelled short haul and 8% long haul). There were just four invalid responses.

Seventy-five percent of the sample travelled for leisure and 25% travelled for business. Twenty-percent of respondents departed from LHR making it the most popular departure airport in the UK and a further 11% of respondents travelled from LGW and 10% from MAN. Respondents travelled to a total of 57 countries and 142 different destinations. The data is based upon cities or countries visited, as not all respondents stated their arrival airport. Popular destinations included Spain (inc. Balearics and Canary Islands) visited by 16% of respondents, the UK (13% of respondents) and the USA, visited by 9% of the sample.

At the time of completing the survey, 33% of respondents booked their flight within the last month and 14% booked more than six months ago. Three percent could not recall how long ago their flight was booked. Sixty-one percent of the sample personally administered their flight booking. Across all age groups for both male and female respondents, except those aged 16-24 years and 65+ years, the majority of respondents booked their own flight.

Forty-five percent of the sample purchased their air ticket direct from an airline website, whilst 11% booked with an online agency and 3% of bookings were made with an online tour operator. Just one respondent of those that booked their own flight could not recall how the booking was made. Of the 39% that did not book their own flight, three quarters did not know where the air ticket was purchased.

9.4 Booking administration

Eighty-six percent of respondents were confident in administering their booking, whilst only 6% were nervous. Of the 6% that indicated they were nervous, 90% were female and the majority aged 25-34 years. One respondent noted *'I was nervous because I don't like Ryanair. I don't like their policies or their service...However at the time there was no other viable option. I was also nervous because of the lack of customer service and the risk of cancellation...As it happened, the experience was completely smooth without any problems at all.'* Whilst another respondent with special needs suggested *'As a wheelchair user I am not given enough information on the web to make a booking of which I am confident and invariably have to supplement the 'normal' channel with others, like phone or email.'*

Most respondents were levelheaded in their approach to booking a flight, with 47% of respondents indicating that they were neither cautious nor impulsive. There was evidence to suggest that less concern was needed when booking business flights *'...really run of the mill. There's less stress when you know the company card will pay for any mistakes or a flight at a better time. Still easyJet / Ryanair flights are becoming fairly casual things to book.'* Just 9% considered they had been impulsive, three quarters of whom were female, whilst the remainder of the sample adopted a cautious approach. Further comments included '*I once booked flights in the wrong direction, so have always been cautious since then*' whist another suggested they felt they *'...had to review the choices I had made several times and was concerned about the small print.'*

Just over 87% of respondents felt informed when they booked their flight (i.e. possessed the appropriate knowledge), a finding consistent across all age groups. One respondent stated *'I spent a bit of time comparing the airline's own website with Expedia and the latter was slightly cheaper for the same flights so I booked with them.'* Only 1% (two respondents) of the respondents that administered their own flight booking indicated that they did not feel informed at the time of booking. Both were female and aged 25-34 years and 45-54 years respectively. Reasons for feeling uninformed may have included a lack of knowledge about the airline/schedule, departing/arrival airport and how to navigate the website. Twelve percent of the sample felt neither informed nor uninformed.

Eighty-six percent of respondents indicated they were thorough in their approach to booking their flight. Whilst just 2% felt they had been careless - two male respondents aged 25-34 years and 35-44 years respectively, and one female aged 25-34 years. Male respondents were marginally more thorough in their approach to booking their flight. Sixty-four percent of the sample felt their flight booking had been administered quickly and 26% were neither quick nor slow. A respondent that felt they had administered the booking quickly suggested *'I have all of the information stored on my Flybe account, so booking is very quick and easy'* whilst another noted '*it takes* *much longer than they say'*. Only 10% of the sample felt they were slow their approach, with an almost equal split between male and female respondents aged 25-44 years and 55-64 years respectively.

Finally and perhaps reflective of the way we now live (with a lot of time spent using the Internet), 89% of respondents felt they were experienced when booking their flight, a response evident amongst both genders and across all age groups. Only 1% felt inexperienced - one male aged 55-64 years and one female, aged 25-34 years. One comment did allude to the implications of inexperience when booking a flight *'very easy to be confused if not an experienced user'.* Elsewhere comments related to the layout of the website facilitating use *'[the] site is very easy to use' and 'some airlines have much easier websites than others'.*

The variables rated on the 'Booking the flight' scale are highly correlated. The level of information held by respondents when booking the flight is central to how confident or nervous they felt when administering the booking. Respondents that were well informed with regard to administering their booking online were confident in their ability to manage the booking process (r = .949). Further, confidence is also highly correlated to experience, thus the more experience respondents have in booking flights online, the more confident they were in their approach (r = .949). Of note, whilst the correlation coefficient for Ryanair passengers was high, it was slightly lower than average at r = .861. The negative press that has for sometime surrounded Ryanair in respect of the transparency of its website (see OFT, 2009 and 2010), could be one possible explanation for this finding.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, there is a strong correlation in the thoroughness with which the booking process was undertaken and the level of knowledge respondents possessed (r = .966). easyJet passengers demonstrated that of all the airline passengers interviewed, they place greatest emphasis upon attention to detail and knowledge, r = .977. That is the greater the level of knowledge the passenger possess, the more attention to detail they pay when booking a flight. Respondents who were thorough in administering their booking online felt more informed and had greater confidence in their ability to manage the process. The level of knowledge possessed by the respondent (i.e. how informed or uninformed they were) is central to the respondent's attitude towards booking flights online.

9.5 Flight cost

Just 73% of respondents were aware of the cost of their flight. Notably, sixty-one percent of the sample personally booked their flight. Forty-four percent thought the cost of their flight was cheap whilst 33% thought it was neither cheap nor expensive. Male respondents were just 10% more likely to consider their flight as cheap compared to their female counterparts. A respondent that considered their flight cheap noted it was *'very cheap, a bit too cheap'*, whilst another considered '*shouldn't be so cheap compared to the train!'*

Elsewhere, 23% of the sample thought the price they paid for their flight was expensive. One respondent indicated that the time of booking could have been influential to the cost '*booking late cost me lots',* whilst another considered the destination as an influence *'it was quite expensive due to destination, there was less choice of flights compared to other destinations'*. Others simply noted the cost was '*too expensive'* and *'too expensive for the value I got'*.

The majority of respondents that travelled with easyJet and who were aware of the cost of their flight, considered the cost as cheap, with the same true of respondents that travelled with Ryanair. Elsewhere, the majority of those that travelled with BA considered the cost of their flight to be neither cheap nor expensive. Interestingly one respondent noted '*BA is very transparent and the price, which appears underneath the various flights, reflects accurately what you'll pay in the end. Ryanair still tend to mislead with their advertised prices...In fairness Ryanair have made some improvements...but they still employ cunning tactics'.* Elsewhere it was suggested that *'Ryanair apparently attempt to inflate the price of flights by adding fees that you have to opt out of rather than select if required.'*

By carrier type (i.e. respondents that travelled with a LCC, FSC and Charter airlines), the majority of respondents that travelled with LCCs thought the flight cost was cheap, whilst those that travelled with FSCs and Charter airlines were of the opinion that their flight was neither cheap nor expensive.

Fifty-five percent of respondents' felt that the pricing policy employed by the airline they travelled with was truthful. Of interest, 58% of this group travelled with a FSC. Thirty percent thought the cost of their flight was neither truthful nor misleading and just 15% thought the price had been misleading.

Of the fifteen percent of respondents that considered the flight price to have been misleading, the gender split was relatively equal and 41% travelled with Ryanair, 19% with Jet2.com and 13% with easyJet. Just 9% respondent mentioned BA, another Cyprus Airlines and another respondent Lufthansa as FSCs that were considered to have misled customers in respect of flight cost. All other airlines comprised a mix of LCCs and charters.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the cost of the air ticket was important to 75% of the sample. Just 3% suggested that the cost was unimportant - two men and five women. Five of the respondents that perceived cost as unimportant travelled for leisure and two for business and three travelled with FSCs and four with LCCs.

There is no clear relationship between the importance placed upon the cost of the flight and personal income. Respondents that indicated the cost of their most recent flight as unimportant, had personal incomes that ranged from £8,625-£11,499 and £80,500-£114,999.

The importance placed upon the cost of the flight is also relatively even amongst those that travelled for business purposes as it is for those that travelled for leisure. Comparatively, 77% of leisure passengers against 69% of business passengers considered the cost of the flight as important, whilst a further 20% of leisure passengers compared to 27% of business passengers deemed the cost as neither important nor unimportant. Elsewhere, 3% of leisure passengers felt the cost was unimportant to them against 4% of business passengers.

Reflecting the mixed attitudes held by respondents whose flight was paid for a third party, the following comments are of interest. One respondent noted the 'fare cost was reimbursed by my union, therefore timings more important than price' whilst another suggested 'a third party paid for it and therefore cost was not a huge issue.' Yet one respondent did say *'it might have been on the company credit card, but I do search for the lowest price. Just habit I guess. I'll always think a rip off price is a rip off price, regardless of whether it comes out of my pocket or work's.*'

The variables considered under the heading of 'Flight Cost' demonstrate weak correlations. There is a weak correlation between the cost of the flight and whether the respondent deems the cost to be truthful or misleading (r = .140). That is, if a consumer perceives a flight to be cheap it does not necessarily ensue that they will consider the cost as misleading. However, when the coefficient correlations are considered by individual airline, respondents that travelled with easyJet (r = .579), Ryanair (r = .533) and BA (r = .505) signify greater attention to the trust/cost relationship. For Thomson Airways (r = .227), the coefficient was just slightly higher than the average. The higher than average findings could be attributable to the fact that the emphasis may have been on the cost of the holiday as a whole, as opposed to the flight specifically.

Further, the relationship between cost (cheap/expensive) and the importance of the cost to the respondent was weak (r = .170). Indeed, when considered by individual airline, whilst the coefficient value rose slightly above average, the level of significance remains low amongst respondents that travelled with all four carriers.

Interestingly, there is a very strong relationship between the flight cost being deemed truthful/misleading and important / unimportant for passengers that travelled with Thomson Airways (r = .827). This value stands in contrast to the average value of r = .181, to which the other three airlines discussed here are closely correlated. The high value placed upon trust in respect of price could be particularly significant for respondents that travelled with Thomson Airways, as all were travelling for leisure and would have mostly likely paid for the flight themselves. Additionally, the low trip frequency assumed by charter passengers could also be influential, in that as a group, leisure charter passengers are likely to take relatively few trips by air throughout the year.

9.6 Air travel safety and security

Eighty-two percent of the sample considered the air travel safety and security as good (112 respondents travelled with LCCs, 126 with FSCs and 30 with charter airlines, 3 further respondents could not recall the airline they travelled with). Respondents that held a positive attitude noted ‘airport and safety good etc.’ and ‘security good at Lodz’. Conversely, just 5% of respondents believed the measures in place were bad; with one respondent noting *‘LAX is especially bad for security and baggage handling’.*

Passengers with special needs appear to hold mixed attitudes. *‘I always find airport safety and security good and with BA I always have a member of the crew give me my own, individual flight briefing...Ryanair normally give me a far more condensed version of the safety briefing and on two pervious occasions it has not been done at all...One thing that I don’t like is that external firms in the UK, who now provide the assistance to disabled passengers through the airports, think it is appropriate to put all passengers in wheelchairs. One gentleman at Heathrow Terminal 5 even told me that this was for reasons of airport security and my own personal safety, which I found to be offensive and humiliating’*. Elsewhere another respondent noted *‘airport security is very haphazard when it comes to checking out wheelchair users – they are often unsure how to approach it and it various enormously.*’

The percentage breakdown of attitudes held by all respondents with regard to thoroughness of air travel safety and security procedures was similar to the results discussed above. Eighty-three percent of respondents indicated they thought the air travel safety and security measures were thorough (94 respondents travelled with LCCs, 124 with FSCs and 29 with charters). One respondent noted *'extremely thorough in Boston'*. Elsewhere just 6% thought a slapdash approach was employed (12 respondents travelled with LCCs, 5 with FSCs and 2 with charters).

Fifty-one percent of respondents scored the intensity of the safety and security procedures that were undertaken by the airport and airline as non-intrusive. One respondent noted '*security was visible at Manchester, but not intrusive or intimidating. JFK was much more visible and intimidating, however JFK was much more efficient.*' A further 28% neither agreed nor disagreed that the procedures were non-intrusive or intrusive and 21% considered the air travel safety and security procedures as intrusive. Of interest one respondent suggested *'intrusive is a good thing!!'* Comparatively, male respondents found the safety and security measures more intrusive than female passengers.

Where efficiency is concerned, 68% ranked the efficiency of the air travel safety and security procedures as efficient, whilst 22% were impartial. One respondent noted *'no queues at all!!!'* Twelve percent of the sample felt the safety and security procedures were inefficient. Comments suggested *'very long and slow moving queues', 'arriving at Birmingham large queues through customs', 'bring on the full body scanners – it is so annoying taking belts and shoes off!'* and a further respondent added *'there was a long queue but it moved quite quickly and we expected to wait as it was peak holiday season.'*

Of interest a number of comments were made with regard to the current 100ml liquid ban. '*Hate the ridiculous plastic bags for the toiletries', 'we forgot to take out liquids out of our hand luggage and this wasn't noticed', 'having to pay for a clear liquid bag for liquids was galling! Profiteering off the security regulations – Birmingham airport, never again!', '100ml ban is neither here nor there'.* One final respondent on a connecting flight noted *'...before going back through security again...I had to dispose of 2 water bottles instead of just 1. I* *can't understand why they can't have a facility for people who have come straight from another flight...'*

The correlation coefficients of variables under the realm of 'Safety and Security' are overall relatively weak. There is however a strong relationship between thoroughness of the security procedures employed within air travel and how good or bad the respondent perceived the safety and security process (r = .607). Respondents that travelled with Thomson Airways attributed greater importance to how thorough the procedures were and whether they were perceived to be good/bad (r = .831). For Thomson Airways passengers, the more thorough the process, the better the process is considered. Frequency of travel could be influential to the finding. Further, respondents that travelled with Thomson Airways also signified a strong relationship between the efficiency of safety and security procedures and whether they were thorough or slapdash, r = .873. The overall value for all respondents was r = .448.

The degree to which the safety/security process was deemed intrusive demonstrates a very weak correlation as to how good or bad it is perceived to be (r = .278) and even less so as to how thorough it was (r = .151). A greater level of importance was placed upon this latter relationship however by respondents that travelled with Thomson Airways (r = .590).

The results pertaining to air travel safety and security demonstrate an underlying concern and complexity as to how safety and security issues were perceived by Thomson Airways passengers.

9.7 Boarding and seating

Sixty-seven percent of respondents rated the boarding and seating process of their last flight as efficient (68 respondents travelled with LCCs, 115 with FSCs and 22 with charter airlines), with one respondent noting '*the boarding process was long, but fairly ordered and efficient'*. Sixteen percent felt the process was inefficient. Of this group, 35% travelled with Ryanair, 20% with easyJet and 8% with BA. All other passengers travelled with other LCCs, FSCs and charter airlines. One BA passenger remarked *'...I normally take Ryanair, which is in comparison, a lot less efficient...'*, whilst another commented *'we were travelling as a family with two children under 2. We had to be separated as a result, but the system was to wait until everyone was aboard, and then go around asking. Seems like there could be more efficient seating.'*

In line with the findings for the efficiency of boarding and seating, respondents were largely in agreement that the process was completed quickly. On respondent commented '*everything ran very smoothly and quickly...'* Fifty-seven percent of respondents agreed the process was quick (58 respondents travelled with LCCs, 98 with FSCs and 18 with charters), compared to just 19% that felt that the process was slow. Of interest, when split by carrier type, those that travelled with charter airlines were least satisfied. Overall, 31% of charter passengers (65% of whom were female) felt the boarding and seating process was slow, against 22% of respondents that travelled with LCCs and just 13% of respondents that travelled with FSCs. The findings demonstrate that airline passengers perceive LCCs more inline with FSCs where boarding is concerned.

Sixty-percent of the sample held the opinion that the boarding and seating process was orderly (53 respondents travelled with LCCs, 109 respondents with FSCs and 25 with charter airlines), whilst 22% felt the process resembled a scrum. Of this group, perhaps unsurprisingly three quarters travelled with LCCs, 18% with FSCs and 9% with charter airlines. By airline, 23 respondents travelled with easyJet, 20 with Ryanair, four respondents respectively with Jet2 and Monarch and two with bmibaby. Interestingly the latter two airlines employ allocated seating procedures at check-in. On allocated seating one respondent commented *'a budget airline not assigning seats seems cheap. It can't take up that much time and overhead costs can it? It's no bother on a quick flight though.'*

The responses given in reference to seating and space demonstrate that 32% of respondents felt the space available to them was neither spacious nor cramped. This group comprised of 31 respondents that travelled with a LCC, 53 respondents with FSCs, 12 respondents with charter airlines and one respondent that could not recall what airline they had travelled with.

Overall, a greater proportion of respondents indicated that their seating area was short of space. Forty percent held the opinion that their seating area was cramped and within this group 57% travelled with LCCs, 28% with FSCs and 13% with charter airlines. A further 2% could not remember what airline they had travelled with). Interestingly within this group, 59% of the LCC passengers were female and travelled with Ryanair, easyJet, bmibaby and Jet2 respectively. Comments included *'the legroom was tiny'* and *'I guess you get what you pay for!'*

Only 28% of the sample felt their seating area was spacious, of this group 68% travelled with FSCs, whilst 23% accounted for LCC passengers and 9% for charter airline passengers. Passenger perception could be influential in the attitudes expressed here as to could the class of carriage as expressed in respondent comments *'Exceptionally spacious! Very Impressed', 'lots of legroom on the little propeller planes they use', 'very spacious only because I was seated in the exit row'* and *'travelled in Premium Economy. Seats were larger...'*

Thirty-seven percent of respondents considered their seat as neither comfortable nor uncomfortable and within this group, 50% travelled with a FSC, 40% with a LCC and 10% with a charter airline. The split amongst the genders within this group is relatively equal. One respondent commented *'it was what I would expect with a low-cost airline – though better than Ryanair.'*

To investigate these research findings further, independent *t*-tests were run on the data to test whether passengers that travelled with different carrier types and airlines experienced different levels of comfort during their flight. The first *t*-test run sought to explore whether LCC and FSC passengers experienced different levels of comfort during their flight. More specifically whether passengers that travelled with FSCs were more comfortable during their flight than their LCC counterparts. There was a significant difference in the scores, with respondents that travelled with LCCs less comfortable during their flight (*M* = 2.26, *SE* = .090) than passengers that travelled with FSCs (*M* = 1.65, *SE* = .080); *t* (262) = 5.07, *p* < .05. H_0 was rejected at *p*< .05 and H_1 was accepted. There was a difference in the comfort levels experienced by those travelling with the two carrier types.

Further independent *t*-tests were also run on individual airlines. Testing for differences in comfort levels between BA and Ryanair passengers, a significant difference was found reinforcing the earlier *t*-test results. Respondents that travelled with Ryanair were found to have experienced less comfort during their flight (*M* = 2.37, *SE* = .153) than passengers who travelled with BA (*M* = 1.79, *SE* = .155); *t* (69) = -2.65, *p* < .05.

A significant difference was also found in the independent *t*-test scores that investigated the comfort levels experienced by BA and easyJet passengers. Respondents that travelled with easyJet were less comfortable (*M* = 2.43, *SE* = .150) than respondents that travelled with BA (*M* =1.79, *SE* = .155); *t* (75) = -2.93, *p* < .05.

Having recognised a difference in comfort levels between FSCs and LCCs, another independent *t*-test was conducted to investigate whether easyJet passengers experienced different levels of comfort to Ryanair passengers (both LCCs). The results indicated there was not a significant difference in the scores. Respondents that travelled with easyJet were only slightly less comfortable (*M* = 2.43, *SE* = .150) than those that travelled with Ryanair (*M* = 2.37, *SE* = .153); *t* (80) = .294, *p* > .05.

There is a relatively strong correlation between how quickly the boarding and seating process was dealt with on the respondents last flight and how efficient respondent's perceived the process to be (*r* = .798). Of note, Thomson (*r* = .842), easyJet (*r* = .845) and Ryanair (*r* = .882) all had higher correlation coefficient values than the average, demonstrating that passengers who travelled with these airlines associate greater efficiency with a quick boarding process.

Additionally, the way in which the aircraft was boarded i.e. in an orderly or 'scrum' manner was influential as to how efficient respondent's perceived the process overall (*r* = .686). Here, the correlation coefficient values by individual airline are easyJet (*r* = .626), Ryanair (*r* = .678), BA (*r* = .690) and Thomson Airways (*r* = .793). Respondents that travelled with BA (FSC) and Thomson Airways (charter) attributed the greatest importance to the relationship between the boarding process and efficiency. In this regard, respondents may perceive BA and Thomson Airways who both board the aircraft by seat row, to be more efficient than easyJet and Ryanair who do not offer pre-assigned seat allocation.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, there is a strong correlation between onboard space and comfort experienced during the flight (*r* = .791). Also worth noting is the higher significance placed upon the relationship between the speed in which the aircraft was boarded and how comfortable respondents felt (*r* = .497). Whilst both Ryanair (*r* = .482) and easyJet in particular (*r* = .237), indicate a weak correlation between boarding/seating speed and comfort, the relationship appears important to respondents that travelled with BA (*r* = .668) and Thomson Airways (*r* = .795), who associate greater comfort with the speed of boarding and seating.

9.8 Service standards

Interestingly, just less than three quarters of the sample felt the aircraft they travelled on was clean, but only 9% considered the aircraft was dirty (five males and twenty-one females), with LCCs faring worst and their passengers accounting for 58% of those that were dissatisfied with aircraft cleanliness. Just one respondent commented on the cleanliness of the aircraft, noting '*seats were extremely dirty'.* On average however, business passengers (*M* = .31, *SE* = .066) reported greater levels of cleanliness onboard the aircraft than leisure passengers (*M* = .36, *SE* = .043). The difference was not significant *t* (304) = .678, *p* >.05.

Where the helpfulness of crew onboard the aircraft is concerned, respondents expressed similar levels of satisfaction with regard to the service they received. Sixty-eight percent of respondents indicated they thought the crew onboard their last flight had been helpful, whilst only 9% thought the crew had not been helpful. Of those that felt the crew were unhelpful, 54% travelled with LCCs. Comments pertaining to the helpfulness of the crew included '*cabin crew are always nice and friendly (as are the pilots) on Flybe', '...the attendants were fine'*, *'extremely rude, not just to me, but to other passengers too'* and *'cabin staff did not give priority to passengers when moving through the aisle. Their service seemed to take priority, which at times I thought was a bit rude.'*

Business passengers (*M* = .49, *SE* = .079), on average considered the onboard service to be less helpful than leisure passengers (*M* = .38, *SE* = .041). This difference was not significant *t* = (304) = -1.37, *p* = >.05.

Respondents were largely happy with the level of efficiency with which services were delivered onboard the aircraft, with 72% of respondents indicating that the service they had received was efficient. Within this group, FSCs fared best with 52% of respondents that travelled with traditional airlines, rating the service they received as efficient. LCCs did however also fare relatively well, with 37% of respondents that travelled with a LCC rating their service standards as efficient, whilst only 11% of respondents that travelled with charter airlines were of the same opinion. Overall, leisure passengers (*M* = .35, *SE* = .039) did however consider the onboard service efficiency as less efficient than business passengers (*M* = .35, *SE* = .067) did. This difference was not significant *t* = (303) = .015, *p* = >.05.

Respondents indicated a strong association between helpfulness and efficiency where onboard service is concerned (*r* = .759). Respondents that travelled with easyJet however, indicated a weak relationship between these variables (r = .343). A correlation is also evident between the efficiency of crew and aircraft cleanliness (r = .610). Of interest, respondents that travelled with Ryanair identified a relatively strong relationship between cleanliness and efficiency (r = .647), the strongest relationship identified amongst the four key airlines.

9.9 Food and drink

Seventy-three percent of the sample consumed food and drink on their last flight and of those that did, 25% considered what they consumed as insufficient. Of this group, 48% of respondents travelled with FSCs, 27% with LCCs and 21% with charter airlines. One respondent did not indicate which airline they had travelled with. Respondents suggested *'additional food was purchased as food provided was minimal'* and *'one small meal and one snack was insufficient for an 11-hour flight...'* In contrast, 30% believed the food to be neither filling nor insufficient and 45% considered the food and drink was filling. Of this group, 70% travelled with FSCs, 20% with LCCs and 9% with charter airlines. One percent of the sample did not respond to the question.

A number of independent *t*-tests were run to confirm whether these findings had occurred by chance or whether the extent to which the food and drink is deemed to be filling, is related to the carrier on which it is consumed. The first *t*-test sought to compare whether respondents that consumed food and drink onboard a LCC, felt more or less satisfied than respondents that consumed food and drink onboard a FSC flight. The findings illustrated a significant difference in the scores. On average, respondents that travelled with LCCs did not find their food and drink as filling (M = 3.60, SE = .155) as respondents that travelled with FSCs (M = 1.86, SE = .108); t (215.090) = 9.26, p < .05. The independent *t*-test supported the earlier finding that passengers that consumed food and drink onboard FSCs felt more satisfied than passengers that consumed food and drink onboard LCCs.

A second independent *t*-test was conducted to compare whether respondents that consumed food and drink onboard a LCC flight, felt more or less satisfied than respondents that had consumed food and drink onboard a charter flight. A significant difference was again found in the scores. Respondents that travelled with LCCs found their food and drink to be less filling (M = 3.60, SE = .155), than passengers that travelled with charter airlines (M = 2.88, SE = .279); t (149) = 2.21, p < .05. There was a significant difference in how full respondents felt after consuming food and drink onboard a LCC flight than compared with respondents that travelled on a charter flight. Namely, charter passengers were more satisfied/full.

For 50% of the sample, the cost of food and drink was inclusive to the total cost of their flight, whilst 23% purchased food and drink onboard. Twenty-six percent of respondents did not consume food or drink and 1% took their own food onboard.

Where respondents paid for their food and drink, 39% felt the cost was neither cheap nor expensive, whilst a further 34% considered it expensive against 27% of respondents that considered it as cheap. Those that considered food and drink as expensive noted 'a little expensive, but that is to be expected on a budget airline', *'expensive and low quality for what is provided on-board in comparison to café/shops', '...far too expensive', 'there was a meal included with the flight however any extras were VERY over priced - £6 for 2 cans of cola!'* and *'I don't mind paying €5 for a panini, but I think its unacceptable to be charged €3 for water.'*

No correlation is evident between personal income and the rating given by respondents to indicate their attitude towards the cost of food and drink. By gender however, an independent *t*-test indicated that whilst there is not a significant difference between the male and female respondents as they considered the food and drink to be expensive, on average women (M = 2.98, SE = .134) were more likely than men (M = 2.84, SE = .146) to consider the cost of the food and drink as expensive; t (288) = -.701, p >.05.

Comparatively, respondents for whom the food and drink was included in the total cost of the flight, liked their food more than respondents that purchased food and drink onboard. Respondents that neither liked nor disliked or disliked the food and drink they consumed were also more likely to have purchased the food and drink onboard during their flight. These findings are reinforced by an independent *t*-test that was run to compare whether respondents whose food and drink was inclusive to the cost of their flight, felt more or less satisfied than respondents who had purchased their food and drink onboard.

Interestingly, a significant difference was identified in the scores. Respondents that purchased food and drink during the flight did not feel that it was as filling (M = 2.14, SE .132) as respondent's whose food and drink and was included in the overall cost of their flight (M = 1.68, SE = .088); t (214) = -2.88, p < .05. Respondents that consumed food and drink inclusive to the cost of their flight found it to be more filling than respondents who purchased their food and drink onboard the flight.

Forty-eight percent of the sample liked the food and drink they consumed during their most recent flight, whilst 22% indicated a dislike. Respondents that travelled with FSCs accounted for the largest proportion of passengers (by carrier type) that did not like the food and drink they were given or purchased. Class of travel also appears to be influential. '*Premium Economy food on china plates with real knives and forks – food to restaurant standard* and *'travelling business class so above average food/drink.'* The influence of missing data attributable to respondents that travelled with LCCs, but did not consume food and drink on their last flight, could be influential to these findings.

Respondents were largely accepting of the food and drink they consumed, with 58% of respondents indicating they thought the food and drink was acceptable. Fifteen percent of the sample that consumed food and drink considered it to be unacceptable and of this group 62% travelled with a FSC, 24% with a LCC and 12% with a charter airline. One respondent could not recall which airline they travelled with. '*Tea of poor quality – not many healthy options', 'somewhat stodgy cooked breakfast, something lighter would have been preferable', 'I rarely find I enjoy the food on offer...', '...the breakfast* *snack was awful...', '...glad that BA have stopped serving sandwiches on their short haul flights, as they were usually inedible and atrocious anyway. A drink and biscuit are far more pleasant.'.*

There was also discussion as to how appropriate the food was that was served '*no nut free option'*, *'no accommodation for children...the food offered was highly processed with lots of salt', 'having ordered a vegetarian in-flight meal, I was given a packet with 1 ham and 1 cheese sandwich. When I asked if they had a vegetarian option I was told yes, there's a cheese option in the packet!'* and *'breakfast consisted of a chocolate muffin, packet of raisins, a Twix and a triangle of cheddar cheese. Would have liked cereal!'*

The spread of responses over the semantic differential scale as to how tasty or bland the food and drink consumed was, indicated a relatively even spread of scores. Where 27% of the sample considered the food and drink they consumed as tasty, 25% felt it was neither tasty nor bland and a further 20% considered it bland. Twenty eight percent of the sample did not consume food and drink onboard the aircraft. Independent *t*-tests were run to explore whether respondents that travelled with different carriers differed in their ratings.

The first independent *t*-test considered whether there was a significant difference in the taste of food served by LCCs and FSCs and the results confirmed a significant difference in the scores. On average, respondents that travelled with LCCs thought their food and drink tasted blander (M =3.53, SE = .157) than the food and drink consumed by respondents who travelled with FSCs (M = 2.01, SE = .108); t (218.519) = 7.97, p < .05.

LCCs also fared worse when compared to charter airlines, with a significant difference noted in the scores given by respondents that travelled with the different carriers. Respondents that travelled with LCCs reported the food and drink to be blander in taste (M = 3.53, SE = .157) than the food and drink consumed by respondents that travelled with Charter airlines (M = 2.83, SE = .254); t (62.095) = 2.33, p < .05.

The food consumed on charter flights was however also considered to be significantly different in taste to that served by FSCs. On average, respondents that travelled with charter airlines found the food and drink they consumed to be less tasty (M = 2.83, SE = .254) than the food consumed by respondents that travelled with FSCs (M = 2.01, SE = .108); t (176) = -3.25, $p < .05$.

The correlations amongst variables under the heading of 'Food and drink' are relatively strong. There is overall, a very strong correlation between respondents deeming the food and drink to be acceptable and how much they like it (r = .948), yet the relationship was not as significant for BA passengers (r = .757). The taste of food and drink is also highly correlated to whether a respondent deems it to be acceptable (r = .931). Yet, respondents that travelled with BA again attached a weaker level of significance to taste and acceptance (r = .653).

The extent to which the food and drink satisfied respondents in terms of how filling it was, demonstrated a strong relationship with the food and drink being acceptable (r = .881), respondent's liking the food (r = .878) and how tasty the food was (r = .861). In all three instances, respondents that travelled with BA identified a weaker relationship between these factors. A possible explanation for such lower correlations between these variables for BA passengers could lie in the fact that the expectations of BA passengers did not meet with their perceptions of the food service. Where satisfying hunger (i.e. the food being filling) and acceptance is concerned the correlation coefficient for BA was r = .390; in respect of whether respondents liked or dislike the food r = .448 and whether the food was deemed tasty or bland it was r = .444.

In each of the examples above respondents that travelled with BA appear to pertain weaker relationships between the variables related to the food and drink they were served. Given that the cost of food and drink would have been inclusive to the overall cost of the flight could be influential. All passengers that travelled with the three other airlines considered here would have paid for food and drink that was consumed onboard. Whilst for Thomson passengers this purchase is likely to have taken place at the time of booking, a charge for food and drink in addition to the basic flight cost would still be levied.

9.10 Reliability and convenience

Sixty-nine percent of respondents rated the reliability and convenience of the flight as efficient. Of this group, 50% travelled with FSCs, 38% with LCCs and 12% with charter airlines. Elsewhere, twenty-three percent of respondents felt the reliability and convenience of their most recent flight was neither efficient nor inefficient. There is no evidence of a relationship between respondent's attitudes towards the efficiency of the flight and the purpose of the trip, nor in the relationship between efficiency and departure airport.

A similar pattern to that above is evident in the respondent's attitude towards reliability and convenience of a flight and how calm or stressed the respondent felt. Sixty three percent of respondents indicated that the reliability and convenience of their flight made them feel calm, whilst a further 23% felt neither calm nor stressed. Only 14% of the sample felt stressed, of whom 68% were female and aged 16-54 years. The majority of respondents that suggested they felt stressed travelled with Ryanair, easyJet and BA.

General comments suggested that it was not the airline that caused anxiety, but other independent factors *'there was a security alert...no one had any real idea what was going on and everything was rather stressful and disorganised', 'in fairness it's the airports that stress me out rather than the aeroplane', 'the flying itself wasn't stressful, only trying to make the connection between flights'* and *'I am a very nervous air passenger and am stressed and anxious about flying regardless of delay times, convenience etc.'*

Just one comment cited the airline as a cause of stress *'what made the experience so stressful was that it was during the time of BA cabin crew strikes and also around the time of the volcanic ash cloud and the flight was for an important occasion.'*

Sixty-six percent of respondents felt reassured by the reliability and convenience that the airline offered, whilst just 10% of respondents felt anxious. Of those that felt anxious, 74% were female and half travelled with a LCC, 34% with a FSC and 16% with a charter airline.

There is a strong association between how calm/stressed respondents felt and the extent to which they were reassured/ anxious about the reliability and convenience the airline offered (r = .855). Of interest however, the strength of the relationship is weaker amongst respondents that travelled with Ryanair (r = .747) and BA (r = .716). The fact that the survey was carried out shortly after the Ash Cloud in which Ryanair attracted a lot of negative publicity and also amidst the BA strikes/ballots, could have influenced these findings.

Efficiency also appears to be highly correlated to reassurance that the airline will operate a reliable and convenient service (r = .711), although this is not the case for Ryanair passengers (r = .401). Negative press the airline has received could again be influential to this finding (Guardian, 2009). The unallocated seating policy employed by Ryanair could be one reason for the weak correlation, i.e. a 'scrum' approach may be perceived as inefficient.

There is a strong correlation between efficiency/inefficiency and reassurance/anxiety for respondents that travelled with BA (r = .736), yet a weak relationship between efficiency/inefficiency and how calm/stressed the respondent felt (r = .408). A possible reason could be that passengers were attributing their stress to other areas such as safety and security, diverting their attention away from the efficiency of the flight.

9.11 Advertising and branding

Fifty-seven percent of the total sample indicated that they felt indifferent towards the airline's advertising, suggesting that it was neither outstanding nor terrible. The indifference to airline advertising is a common theme to the responses that were given. Whilst 32% felt the advertising and branding was outstanding, only 10% thought it terrible. Of this latter group, 64% were female and 46% travelled with LCCs. The high number of comments that alluded to a lack of awareness is interesting *'did not really notice much branding/advertising', 'I am not aware of their branding', 'I can't remember any', 'I have no interest in this – I was unaware of any advertising and branding', 'I haven't really seen any...', 'no idea – never noticed it'* and *'not seen any!'*.

Independent *t*-tests run on the data confirmed that whilst respondents have indicated a relatively even spread of results across the semantic scale as to how outstanding/terrible the advertising and branding was, differences do exist amongst respondents that travelled with different carriers and airlines.

An independent *t*-test run to compare the attitudes of respondents that travelled with FSCs and LCCs identified a significant difference in the scores. On average, respondents that travelled with FSCs found the advertising and branding to be more distinguished and superior (outstanding) (M = 1.62, SE = .060) than respondents that travelled with LCCs (M = 1.89, SE = .079); t (259) = 2.81, p < .05.

There was not a significant difference between the ratings attributed by LCC and charter passengers and FSC and charter passengers respectively, with regard to how outstanding/terrible the airline advertising and branding was perceived. By airline, the results are however more intriguing, when independent *t*-tests compare like with like, i.e. the same carrier type.

A significant difference was found in the attitudes of respondents that travelled with easyJet and Ryanair as to whether the respective airlines have outstanding or terrible advertising and branding. The test scores confirmed that respondents who travelled with Ryanair rated the advertising and branding of the airline as less superior (M = 2.38, SE = .151) than their contemporaries who travelled with and rated the rival airline, easyJet (M = 1.74, SE = .106); t (81) = -3.467, p < .05. Similarly, a significant difference was confirmed in the ratings given by respondents that travelled with BA and Virgin Atlantic. The independent *t*-test confirmed that respondents who travelled with Virgin Atlantic rated the airlines' advertising and branding at a superior level (*M* = 1.14, *SE* = .231) than the ratings afforded to BA (*M* = 1.91, *SE* = .091) the country's flag carrier, where t (17.170) = 3.086, $p < .05$.

A significant difference was therefore evident in the attitudes held by easyJet and Ryanair passengers and by Virgin Atlantic and BA passengers as to how outstanding/terrible the airline advertising and branding was perceived.

The majority of respondents, accounting for 55% of the sample, felt the advertising and branding of the airline they travelled with was neither modest nor pretentious. At polar ends of the scale, 30% deemed the advertising and branding as modest, whilst 14% felt it was pretentious. Fifty-four percent of those that considered it modest travelled with FSCs, with a 50/50 split in the gender of respondents. Whilst at the opposite end of the scale, 53% of those that considered it pretentious travelled with a LCC, with male respondents slightly more dominant within the group.

The findings are reiterated by the results of an independent *t*-test conducted to investigate whether a significant difference was present in the attitudes of respondents as to whether the advertising and branding of LCCs and FSCs is modest or pretentious. The results indicated a significant difference in the scores. LCC passengers rated the airline advertising and branding as more 'pretentious' (*M* = 1.96, *SE* = .077) than respondents that travelled with FSCs (*M* = 1.76, *SE* = .063); t (259) = 1.98, $p < .05$. A significant difference was not found in the tests that explored attitudes between LCC and charter passengers and FSC and charter passengers.

Forty-five percent of the sample held an attitude of indifference as to how tasteful/tacky they considered the airline's advertising and branding. Elsewhere, 33% of respondents considered the advertising and branding to be tasteful and 22% deemed it tacky. Perhaps unsurprisingly, just over three quarters of those that considered the airline they travelled with to have tacky advertising and branding travelled with a LCC. Notably, the results demonstrated that in addition to a small number of other airlines cited by respondents, Ryanair was considered to have the tackiest advertising by 38% of respondents within this group. Elsewhere, a further 30% considered easyJet's advertising as tacky and a 9% cited Jet2. Comments included *'easyJet not as bad as Ryanair...'* and *'this was one of the reasons I chose to Air Lingus* (sic) *over Ryanair..'*

An independent *t*-test was conducted to investigate whether the attitudes held by respondents that travelled with Ryanair and easyJet pertaining to the 'tackiness' of the airlines' advertising and branding, were significant or occurred just by chance. The test scores showed that whilst the responses given to the attitudinal survey highlighted a difference in attitude, there is not a significant difference in the scores. Ryanair's advertising and branding was not deemed to be less tasteful (M = 2.79, SE = .152) than easyJet's (M = 2.44, SE = .121); t (80) = -1.829, p >.05.

Additional independent *t*-tests were run to explore the attitudes of respondents and how tasteful/tacky airline advertising and branding was deemed. Considering attitudes of LCC and FSC passengers, a significant difference was highlighted. Respondents that travelled with LCCs deemed the airline's advertising and branding to be less tasteful (M = 2.39, SE = .087) than respondents who rated the FSC they travelled with (M = 1.53, SE = 0.66); t (258) = 8.065, p < .05.

Elsewhere, the same parametric test was run on data pertaining to LCC and charter passengers. The results highlighted a significant difference in the scores. When considered in contrast to charter airlines, respondents that travelled with LCCs again deemed the advertising as less tasteful (M = 2.39, SE = .087) than their contemporaries who travelled with charter airlines (M = 1.57, SE = .118); t (150) = 4.799, p < .05. Of note, a significant difference was not found in the attitudes of respondents that travelled with FSC and Charter airlines.

Finally where trust in airline advertising and branding is concerned, the majority of respondents adopted a neutral attitude, with 46% of the sample of the opinion that the airline's advertising and branding was neither truthful nor misleading. Thirty-six percent of respondents indicated that the advertising and branding was truthful, the majority of whom (62%) travelled with FSCs. The gender of respondents was also relatively balanced (53% female / 47% male). Of the 28% that considered the advertising and branding as misleading, 61% travelled with a LCC and 27% with a FSC. Sixty percent of this group was female.

Where respondents discussed the truthfulness of airline branding and advertising, comments largely concerned cost of flights. *'Due to added charges above headline price', 'advertise discounts that amount to very little – no real bargains on schedule flights'* and *'the from fare is the ploy to get you on the website, after that it's a superhuman effort to back-off.'*

A Mann-Whitney *U* test supports these findings, confirming that there is a significant difference in the trust passengers of FSCs and LCCs place in airline advertising and branding. Respondents that travelled with FSCs (*Median* = 2, N =143) thought the advertising and branding of the airline they travelled with was significantly more truthful than the trust LCC passengers placed in the advertising and branding of the airline they travelled with (*Median* = 2, N = 117); U = 6002.50, z = -4.181, p < .05, two-tailed.

Mann-Whitney *U* tests were also run to explore whether significant differences existed in the trust LCC and charter passengers, and FSC and charter passengers have in airline advertising. Both tests failed to indicate a significant difference.

A series of Mann-Whitney *U* tests were also run to establish whether statistical differences exist in the attitudes of passengers by airline. Whilst a statistical difference was not found in the attitudes of easyJet and Flybe passengers and BA and easyJet passengers, statistical differences are evident between Ryanair and easyJet passengers.

Respondents that travelled with easyJet (*Median* = 2, *N* = 43) were found to consider the airline's advertising and branding to be significantly more truthful than the trust Ryanair passengers placed in their airline's advertising and branding (*Median* = 2, *N* = 40); U = 497.50, z = -3.518, p < .05, two-tailed.

Elsewhere respondents that travelled with BA (*Median* = 2, *N* = 33) considered the airline's advertising and branding as significantly more truthful than Ryanair passengers perceived their airline's advertising and branding (*Median* = 2, *N* = 40); U = 406, z = -3.076, p < .05, two-tailed.

The correlation values amongst the variables under the guise of 'Advertising and Branding' do not reveal any significant values, arguably demonstrating that respondents do not hold any strong attitudes/opinions towards the advertising and branding of the airline they travelled with. Perhaps of most interest is the correlation coefficient value of the variable truthful/misleading and tasteful/tacky (r = .568). The relatively weak association suggests that garish media advertising does not lead respondents to place less trust in the advertising and branding of the airline. However, respondents that travelled with Ryanair (r = .761) and Thomson Airways (r = .675) did highlight a more significant relationship between the two variables, with the Ryanair correlation coefficient demonstrating a strong association. Arguably in the case of Ryanair and less so for Thomson, the airline's advertising and branding was perceived as tacky. These correlation values are in contrast to easyJet (r = .251) and BA (r = .449). Further, advertising and branding that was deemed to be modest demonstrated a weak correlation in respect of trust (r = .387).

Additionally worth mentioning is that, in all instances, the correlation coefficients given by respondents that travelled with easyJet, were smaller in value than the average correlation coefficient values for advertising and branding. The results thus suggest that respondents that travelled with easyJet placed less than average emphasis upon the advertising and branding of the airline.

9.12 LCCs

Perhaps unsurprisingly attitudes towards LCC service quality are low. Forty-seven percent of respondents considered LCC crew to be unhelpful, whilst just 22% deemed them helpful (of this group 63% were female). Just under a third felt indifferent, suggesting LCC crews are neither helpful nor unhelpful. The responses are representative of the findings given by all respondents regardless of which airline they travelled with. The responses to this and the following questions relate to general travel attitudes.

With regard to passengers liking or disliking LCCs, 41% of the sample demonstrated a dislike for the carrier type, yet 33% said they liked LCCs. The number of men and women that liked LCCs was relatively balanced, yet where respondents indicated that they do not like LCCs, women indicated a greater dislike for the carrier type. The remaining 26% (equally split by gender) suggested they neither liked nor disliked LCCs.

The comments surrounding liking/disliking LCCs are interesting*. 'Ryanair is the worst, I would not use them out of choice'; 'they are appalling to fly with (especially Ryanair) but they are cheap so I do use them', 'like easyJet, hate Ryanair', 'not all are the same – would not touch Ryanair with a bargepole', 'Ryanair are much worse than easyJet', 'would distinguish between Ryanair (miserable pathetic lying toads) and all others', 'this is for Ryanair – I have had better experiences with easyJet and do not think of them in the same way. Basically Ryanair are is a category of its own', 'I have a moral objection to travelling with Ryanair – I'd rather travel with a higher cost airline and then just pay 1 price rather than all Ryanair's extra costs'* and *'absolutely HATE Ryanair – feels like flying with a tabloid newspaper'.* The comments go on...but interestingly Ryanair is mentioned in nearly every response, but nearly always in an extremely negative manner.

An independent *t*-test run to explore the attitudes of male and female passengers concluded there is not a significant difference in the scores. Female respondents (M = 2.19, SE = .095) demonstrated marginally greater dislike for LCCs than male respondents (M = 2.15, SE = .099); t (298) = -.331, *p* >.05. Business passengers were also found not like or dislike LCCs anymore or less than leisure passengers.

Seventy-four percent of the sample considered the space offered by LCCs to be cramped, with just 4% suggesting they are spacious. The latter group comprised six males and six females.

An overwhelming 88% considered LCCs as basic, whilst just 2% considered them to be luxurious (3 males and 3 females, all aged 25-34 years). Ten percent of respondents were indifferent in their attitude.

Interestingly, 63% of the sample considered the cost of LCC flights as cheap. A further 24% were apathetic in their opinion, whilst 11% believed them to be expensive. Non-response accounted for 2%. There is no relationship between personal income and respondent's attitude towards LCC flight cost. Where cost is concerned, respondents noted *'cheap, but not necessarily cheerful', 'I feel I got what I paid for', 'misleading prices, not as cheap as it is made out to be', '...going away in a few weeks to Majorca with easyJet – the flight cost £30!* ;o)*', 'they're not always cheap!', 'cheap if you adhere to the rules, but can be just as expensive as a BA flight if you break the rules', 'the low cost (airlines) hide the true price of the trip through an appealing base price. I do not like to be cheated'* and *'very cheap tickets advertised if you're happy to fly at 5am on a Wednesday if* (sic) *January to 100 miles radius of your destination. The costs soon add up to make it an expensive way to fly.'*

The correlations evident between the variables considered in relation to LCCs are generally quite weak. One anomaly is that between crew helpfulness and the respondent liking the airline (r = .777). The results indicate that if LCC crews are helpful, passengers are more liable to like the airline. There is also evidence to suggest that the amount of space a respondent has onboard the aircraft is linked with it being deemed basic or luxury (r = .622). Given that space is highlighted as a luxury, it adds support for the notion that in times of economic austerity, luxuries are the first thing to go. Thus there is added impetus for business passengers switching to economy from business and first class travel.

Of note, there is a weak correlation between the cost of travelling with an LCC and space onboard the aircraft, i.e. there is little association made between cost and space where LCCs are concerned (r = .030). Given that LCCs offer by and large, a standard seat pitch and layout onboard that is largely unidentifiable from its competitors, price may not be considered in the luxurious/basic dichotomy as the product is universally indifferent. The cost of the airfare, i.e. cheap/expensive was also deemed to hold a weak association with the extent to which respondents like or dislike LCCs (r = .021).

9.13 FSCs

Sixty-five percent of respondents consider that FSCs offer ‘frills’ whilst 27% feel indifferent, considering that FSCs neither offer frills nor no-frills. Just 8% consider that FSCs do not offer ‘frills’. One respondent noted *‘space and frills are for upper class passengers’.*

The breakdown of respondent’s attitudes towards the cost of FSC services is split almost identically to that above in terms of percentage breakdown. Sixty-seven percent of respondents were of the opinion FSCs are expensive, whilst 27% felt indifferent to the prices charged by FSCs. Just 6% believed FSCs offer a cheap service, a group relatively balanced in gender representation. There is no clear trend in the spread of respondents by income group, although none of the respondents that perceived FSC flights as cheap or neither cheap nor expensive had a personal income over £114, 999.

As may be expected a high percentage of respondents like FSCs, with 73% demonstrating a liking for the carrier type. Elsewhere, 22% of the sample indicated indifference in their liking of FSCs, whilst 5% suggested they do not like FSCs. Men aged 25-64 years accounted for 64% of the respondents that indicated a dislike for FSCs, whilst the remaining 36% was attributable to women predominately aged 25-34 years.

Forty-nine percent of respondents consider FSCs as luxurious in contrast to just 11% that believe they FSCs basic in their offerings. Of those that consider the FSC service as basic, 63% were male and aged 64 years or younger. A further 40% considered FSC service as neither luxurious nor basic. Interestingly, women dominated both the luxurious and neither/nor groups. Comments pertaining as to how luxurious/basic FSCs *include 'all air travel is pretty basic apart from long-haul first class', 'depends on which class you fly – economy class little different whichever airline you fly on', 'not as luxurious as they used to be'* and *'I've flown BA and Virgin recently and it was pretty far from luxurious.'*

Seventy-one percent of the sample held the opinion that, in stark contrast to their attitude of LCCs, that FSC crewmembers are helpful. A further 23% considered that FSC crew are neither helpful nor unhelpful and just 6% believed them to be unhelpful. Amongst those that perceive LCC crew as unhelpful, 88% were male and aged 25-64 years. The remaining 12% accounted for women aged 25-34 years.

Where space is concerned, 49% of the sample considered FSCs as spacious; whilst a further 38% felt the onboard legroom/seating areas are neither spacious nor cramped. The 14% of respondents that considered FSCs as cramped comprised of 60:40 gender split, with male respondents dominating the group. There is no relationship apparent between the age of respondent's and their propensity to consider FSCs as cramped.

Respondent's attitudes towards FSCs yielded relatively staid results. Yet there was evidence to suggest in respondent's comments that long haul v. short haul flights are very different as too are differences between individual FSCs, with BA in many cases seen as inferior. *'Radical differences between them', 'can depend on whether they are short haul or long haul', 'not all full service airlines are the same. BA are crap, Singapore Airlines are excellent, 'variable!', 'there is no competition between Emirates and British Airways. BA are second rate compared to Emirates, Virgin etc.' and 'standards vary* *considerably...Japanese airlines are great. The US ones are awful. Air Canada is good. KLM also good...'*

As with the LCC findings, there is evidence to suggest a strong relationship between onboard space and respondent's perception of a basic/luxury offering (*r* = .644). A very weak correlation is evident between respondents liking FSCs and the cost of flying with a FSC (*r* = .021). The relationship between crew helpfulness and the cost of flying with a FSC is also very weak (*r* = .008). Thus, flight cost does not appear hold any significance for air travellers as to whether the crew is helpful.

9.14 Ash cloud

Interestingly, 74% of respondents suggested that the threat and consequences of the ash cloud will not change their attitude or behaviour to air travel. Fifteen percent of the sample was uncertain as to whether the ash cloud will lead to a change in their behaviour, whilst a further 11% suggested they would change their behaviour. Of the group that signified a change in behaviour, 68% were female and aged 25-64 years. Respondents suggested *'confirmed the fact I will get the train wherever possible!'*, *'shit happens, act of god etc.', 'I always tried to keep my flying to a minimum before the ash cloud, so it has only reinforced this view'* and *'live in New Zealand, so beside reading the news and hearing of people stranded, had little impact on behaviour towards air travel in Europe and UK home.'*

Respondents were largely indifferent as to the effect the ash cloud and the steps taken by authorities had upon how worried or reassured they felt. Forty-seven percent of respondents stated they were neither worried nor reassured by the event and the measures in place, whilst the majority of remaining respondents, accounting for 39% of the sample, felt reassured by the procedures in place. Just 14% were worried and within this group, 63% of respondents were female, aged 25-64 years. Overall however, there is no evidence to suggest age is linked to respondent's feeling reassured or worried.

The comments that were made in reference to steps taken by authorities were however largely positive. *'Flew Alitalia during this period – excellent communication and flexibility', 'we were re-routed...but staff tried their best to make us feel comfortable and assured', 'the ash cloud was an act of nature, it was something the authorities were concerned about and lacked knowledge of, therefore the decision to ground plans was just'* and *'the actions of several of the interested parties (led by Ryanair) in demanding a resumption of flights and questions the CAA's judgement seemed particularly reprehensible – they appeared to put profits before safety, yet passed any responsibility for safety on to the airline manufacturers.'*

Whilst the appears to be an attitude of indifference held by respondents, a Mann-Whitney U test was run to examine whether a significant difference existed in the attitudes of respondents that travelled with LCCs and those that travelled with FSCs, and how reassured or worried they felt about the ash cloud. A significant difference was found in the scores. Respondents that travelled with LCCs (*Median* = 2, N = 117) were significantly more likely to be worried about the implications of the ash cloud on travel plans than respondents that travelled with FSCs (*Median* = 2, N = 138); U = 6816, z = -2.290, p <. 05 two-tailed. There was not a significant difference in the attitudes of respondents that travelled with LCC and charter airlines or between respondents that travelled with FSCs and charter airlines.

By airline, Ryanair passengers again emerged as those most likely to be worried about the impact of the ash cloud when considered alongside BA passengers. A Mann Whitney U test confirmed a significant difference in the scores of both respondents. Respondents that travelled with Ryanair (*Median* = 1.5, N = 38) were significantly more likely to be worried about the ash cloud than respondents that travelled with BA (*Median* = 2, N = 32); U = 450, z = -1.984, p <. 05 two-tailed. Significant differences did not occur in the scores for the Mann-Whitney U tests run on Ryanair and easyJet and easyJet and BA.

Whilst the majority of respondents were neither worried nor reassured by the ash cloud, 52% of the sample considered the ash cloud to be safe.

Elsewhere, 40% considered the natural event to be neither safe nor unsafe and just 8% deemed the ash cloud unsafe. Women aged 16-64 years were again more concerned than their male counterparts, whilst men aged 25-54 years also indicated about the safety of the ash cloud. One female respondent stated *'my flight was cancelled which I was pleased about. Think its better for them to be safe than sorry.'*

Despite the attitudes of indifference noted in the preceding sections where the ash cloud is discussed, when respondents were asked if they felt the effects of the ash cloud were controllable or uncontrollable, 40% indicated that they felt the situation was uncontrollable. Of this group, 69% travelled short haul and 31% long haul (a similar breakdown is evident amongst those that deemed the situation controllable). A further thirty-one percent considered that the ash cloud was neither controllable nor uncontrollable and 29% believed the situation was controllable. There was no evidence that age has an influence on the perceived level of control over the ash cloud.

Amongst those that considered the ash cloud as uncontrollable, female respondents accounted for 66% of the total group. An independent *t*-test run on the data concluded that there is not a significant difference in the scores of male and female respondents as to how in control they felt over their travel plans during the ash cloud. The findings demonstrated that men (M = 2.03, SE = .109) did not feel in anymore in control of their travel plans during the ash cloud than women (M = 2.32, SE = .099); t (291) = -1.922, p >.05. On similar lines, a significant difference was not found in the attitudes of business and leisure passengers. Business passengers (M = 2.13, SE = .086) did not however feel they had any greater control of their travel plans during the ash cloud than leisure passengers (M = 2.21, SE = .086); t (293) = .502, p >.05.

A strong positive correlation is evident where the ash cloud is considered as safe/unsafe and how reassured/worried respondents feel (r = .744). This finding could be of particular interest to airlines as to how the media portray the ash cloud situation and the information that is given to passengers by airlines. The level of control respondents felt they had over the travel situation during the ash cloud is surprisingly, not highly correlated with respondent's propensity to change their travel behaviour (r = .260). The perceived impact of the ash cloud upon respondents travel behaviour appears minimal.

9.15 Summary

Chapter 9 considered the results of the online attitudinal survey. Whilst the results of the BHX structured interviews discussed in chapter 8 focused upon the practical aspects of air travel decision-making, this chapter has sought to address the attitudes held by air travellers.

The research highlighted that confidence held by the potential air passenger at the time of booking a flight is strongly linked to the availability of information the individual possesses/has access to, and the thoroughness with which they approach the booking process. Additionally cost emerged as an important factor in the decision-making process and choice of airline for many.

Respondents demonstrated a positive view overall towards air travel safety and security measures that are in place, yet variable experience was recognised as to the comfort levels experienced by passengers travelling with different carriers. Space and comfort are highly correlated, adding impetus to the notion that space is considered as a luxury and will be readily forfeited during an economic downturn.

The relationship between the boarding process and efficiency was also found to vary between carriers, whilst efficiency is strongly associated with the helpfulness of airline crew. Differences are also evident in the satisfaction derived from food and drink consumed during the flight on different carriers, with the time of payment attributable to the satisfaction passengers derive from the food they consume. Advertising and branding was also found to elicit variable attitudes, particularly between FSC and LCC carriers.

It is not perceived that the impact of the ash cloud will instigate a change in air travel behaviour, although LCC passengers were more worried than FSC passengers about the implications of the natural event.

The results of the online attitudinal survey indicate that there are key differences in the attitudes of passengers that travel with LCC, FSC and charter airlines and also amongst individual airlines operating the same business model. Non-passengers also hold strong views as to what is expected of the carriers and individual airlines. Whilst LCCs and FSCs stand in complete contrast to one another, charter airlines occupy a middle ground. Ryanair emerged as a complete outlier to all other airlines, particularly where direct competition from other LCCs is concerned.

In a similar manner to the summary table presented in chapter 8, table 19 presents a summary of the key variables (identified in section 7.5.1) that were tested to explore relationships within the online attitudinal data and the main research findings to have emerged. The significance of each test is shown alongside an indicative example of the percentage share of respondent answers.

Variables	Significance of test	Percentage share of respondents (Indicative survey findings)
Comfort level & carrier type	Significant	21% of LCC passengers were comfortable on their last flight compared with 49% of FSC passengers
Comfort level & airline	Significant	Just 30% of BA passengers felt uncomfortable on their last flight compared with 67% Ryanair passengers
Satisfaction with food and drink (filling/insufficient) & carrier type	Significant	37% of LCC passengers that consumed food and drink onboard the aircraft considered it to be filling compared with 50% of passengers that consumed food and drink onboard a FSC
Satisfaction with food and drink (tasty/bland) & carrier type	Significant	28% of LCC passengers that consumed food and drink onboard the aircraft considered it to be bland in taste compared to just 14% of passengers that consumed food and drink onboard a FSC

Passenger attitude towards advertising and branding (outstanding/terrible) & carrier type	Significant	15% of LCC passengers rated the advertising and branding of the airline they travelled with as terrible, compared with just 5% of FSC passengers
Passenger attitude towards advertising and branding (outstanding/terrible) & airline	Significant	33% of Ryanair passengers rated the airline's advertising and branding as terrible compared to 9% of easyJet passengers that rated their airline's advertising and branding as terrible
Passenger attitude towards advertising and branding (modest/pretentious) & carrier type	Significant	19% of LCC passengers rated the advertising and branding of the airline they travelled with as pretentious, compared with 12% of FSC passengers
Passenger attitude towards advertising and branding (tasteful/tacky) & airline	Not significant	5% of Ryanair passengers rated the airline's advertising and branding as tasteful compared to 9% of easyJet passengers that rated their airline's advertising and branding as tasteful
Passenger attitude towards advertising and branding (tasteful/tacky) & carrier type	Significant	Just 14% of LCC passengers considered that the advertising of the airline they travelled with was tasteful compared with 48% of their FSC counterparts
Passenger trust in advertising and branding & carrier type	Significant	27% of LCC passengers considered the advertising and branding of the airline they travelled with to be misleading, compared with just 8% of their FSCs counterparts
Passenger attitude towards LCCs (like/dislike) & gender	Not significant	Just 32% of all male respondents indicated that they like LCCs in contrast to 33% of all female respondents
Passenger control over the ash cloud (in control/not in control) & gender	Not significant	29% of male passengers felt in control of their flight booking during the ash cloud compared with 28% of female passengers

Table 19: Reference summary table presenting the significance of the statistical tests employed to explore relationships between variables in the online attitudinal data analysis and percentage shares of indicative respondent answers)

The following chapter will analyse the results discussed here in addition to those identified in the BHX structured interviews, linking the findings back to the concepts identified and discussed within chapters 2, 3 and 4 that dealt with the literature surrounding this study.

10. Discussion of field research

10.1 Introduction

This thesis has sought to identify key characteristics and attitudes of airline passengers and the implications for pre-trip decision-making and airline choice, with an emphasis upon the low-cost sector.

BHX was offered as a case study to effectively illustrate the impact of LCCs on UK aviation (particularly within the regions) and the implications for both airlines and potential air travellers. The literature discussed in chapters 2, 3 and 4 provided a theoretical base from which the structured interview and online attitudinal survey were developed, the results of which were considered in the two preceding chapters. It is the aim of this chapter to analyse the research findings in reference to the literature considered in the initial sections of this thesis and identify key characteristics and attitudes of airline passengers and implications for pre-trip decision-making and airline choice. The focus remains upon LCC passengers.

Whilst every attempt has been made to collect, interpret and analyse the results to this study with care, the reader is invited to consider the research findings with an open mind to the end that perception is considered central to the findings of this research. The literature review considered the work of Meyer and Reynolds (1967 cited in Ateljevic, 2000) to highlight individual perception as being as much what the individual wants to perceive as what actually exists in reality, whilst Mayo and Jarvis (1981, cited in Ateljevic (2000:193) were recognised for their belief that what a respondent actually sees is attributable to what they pay attention to.

This study holds that both viewpoints are true, taking into consideration the experiences of individuals interviewed and surveyed, yet faith is also held in the belief that experience is not vital to perception, but interaction with popular culture and society in a wider sense can also be influential (see Urry, 2002).

The discussion begins by offering an insight into the attitudes and experiences airline passengers have of LCCs, FSCs and charter airlines, before delving further to consider different aspects of the decision-making and research process and the implications of wider attitudes held by airline passengers.

10.2 Business models

The changes that are taking place within passenger aviation signify a continued fusion and blurring of what were once clearly defined airline business models. The implications of this slow burning, yet sustained transformation upon both airlines and their passengers is profound. With strong evidence to suggest that a business strategy should have one focus and one alone, this continued period of transition finds airline passengers seeking clarification of the airline product.

Where some airlines have attempted to bridge the gap between low cost and full service (and vice versa) and failed, others are reportedly making great strides – Air Asia X and easyJet being good examples. In the seven years that have elapsed since Barrett (2004) questioned the sustainability of the 'Ryanair' model and considered that consumer taste may someday turn away from the Ryanair product, it would appear that day might now be upon us.

A speculative dialogue by Ellson (2011) argued that Ryanair passengers are fed up with the manner with which they are treated and are realising that the airline is not always as cheap as it portrays itself. Whilst this discussion is not intended as a personal attack on Ryanair, the airline has emerged as a clear outlier in this study, not only amongst passengers that travelled with the LCC, but those that saw fit to comment on their perception and previous experience of travelling with Ryanair.

There is a wealth of evidence within the findings to suggest that Ryanair is as one respondent stated *'...[in] a category of its own'.* Both statistical tests and comments made by respondents, particularly in the attitudinal survey, highlight such sentiments. There is also support for the work of Tarry (2008) who recognised that mixed messages are being sent out by certain airlines (he suggested BA and easyJet) in their short-long term strategies, by their virtue of their *drifting*.

The work of MacCannell (1999) is of interest when considering the responses given by respondents to the attitudinal survey. MacCannell established use of the term ‘markers’ to refer to tourist objects/sites, to suggest that the first contact/awareness a tourist has with a site, is not the site [sic] itself, but a representation of it.

In this respect, the attitudes held by respondents with regard to LCCs, FSCs and Charters should be considered in the same way. The attitudes expressed by individuals were just that, attitudes, and in many cases not based upon actual experience of travelling with the carriers.

MacCannell’s work highlights the impact a ‘representation’ can have on a particular carrier type/model and more specifically, airline. Individuals as is proven here, need not have experience of ‘something’ whether it be an object or site to which MacCannell refers, but can easily develop a representation regardless. As Thurstone (cited in Fishbein, 1967:77) suggested, an attitude is ‘the sum total of a man’s inclinations and feelings, prejudice or bias, preconceived notions, ideas, fears, threats and convictions about any specified topic.’ To this end, the carrier types highlighted of prominence within this study, namely LCCs, FSCs and charter airlines are now considered in detail.

10.2.1 LCCs

Male and female passengers emerged as indifferent in their opinion of LCCs, with the same true of both business and leisure passengers. In addition, LCCs are perceived in a rather negative light across areas including helpfulness of crew, onboard space and luxury. A strong correlation between crew helpfulness and passengers liking an airline is evident, with nearly the entire online attitudinal sample indicating they believe LCC crew to be unhelpful Interestingly a recent article by Vink et al (2011) recognised that the 'rude flight attendants' reduce the comfort experience of passengers significantly. The same study has also highlighted that there are clear relationships between comfort and legroom, hygiene, crew attention and seat/personal space.

Onboard space is not inherently linked to the cost of travel with a LCC nor is personal income considered a perquisite of whether LCCs are considered to be cheap or expensive to travel with. Where space is unrelated to the cost of travelling with an LCC, the largely standardised seat pitch and configuration of LCCs could be instrumental. With relatively little difference in the offerings of LCCs based upon onboard space, there is no opportunity for more money to be spent on obtaining a seat with extra space/legroom.

The issue of income and perception of cost is more complex. Income as was be seen in section 9.5, emerged as a factor evasive to whether the cost of the flight is deemed cheap or expensive, with underlying factors such as the availability and cost of alternative flights/modes and onboard service more likely to be influential. The subject of income and low-cost travel thus presents an interesting dichotomy. By their very nature, LCCs exude everything that is considered cheap, from the advertising and branding used by such airlines, through to the onboard service and ambience. Yet as data from the CAA demonstrates and as has been proven here, use of LCCs amongst middle-high income earners is rife (CAA, 2006a).

One must therefore question whether income can be used as a barometer of symbolic consumption and social status or if the argument stems further to the socio-economic status of airline passengers and perhaps further still, into the individuals own personality and influence of wider societal norms.

Within the literature review, Luft's work (1957 cited in Furnham, 1984) was considered, which suggested that the weekly income of an individual determines how their peers perceive them. Whilst today there remains an emphasis upon personal wealth, one may argue that the importance it assumes between peers is not so great. Nevertheless the riots that took place throughout the summer of 2011 in the UK may suggest the contrary, with the divide between the rich and poor considered a fundamental cause of the ever growing social divide (Poole, 2011). The findings of this research do however suggest that income is not a sound indication of airline choice with the decision-making process bound by an intrinsically complex web of factors.

The awareness of symbolic consumption as discussed by Mowforth and Munt (2009) and purchase of goods and services for functional and performance benefits to express personality, social status or affiliation as discussed by Kim et al. (2002), appears elusive to the decision by increasing numbers of middle and high income earners to travel with LCCs.

The segregation of passengers by class of travel as considered by Urry (2002) suggests that the boundaries could be pushed further to today include choice of carrier too, i.e. FSC and LCC. In a culture that has arguably established itself as a turbo-consumer society (Lawson, 2009) riddled with social anxiety and the untiring aspiration or need to socially better oneself (de Botton, 2005), there appears as one may expect from air travellers with a high disposable income, no apparent desire to disengage from travel using LCCs. In fact, the opposite appears true.

Passariello's work (1983 cited in Burns, 1999) is particularly relevant here, in that it considers influential factors as to the choice and use of tourist modes. Whilst this discussion has considered the preference for air travel over other modes, it is particularly concerned with the choices made between carrier types and individual airlines. Passariello suggested that not only could discretionary income limit choice of mode, but so too could wider implications such as distance and length of travel, in addition to cultural background, all of which were considered influential here.

As a further point, evidence was found to suggest that as opposed to boasting about how expensive the flight was, as may be assumed when discussing air travel (and more frequently about FSCs), the perceived *cheapness* of LCC flights was highlighted by one respondent who said *'I'm going away to Majorca in a few weeks with easyJet – the flight cost £30!*' The feeling of having sought a bargain is clearly evident.

In contrast, where the high prices employed by LCCs are concerned, the influence of the consumer's value system, which is said to be prejudiced by the consumer's social influences and cultural background, has emerged as influential (Samil et al. 1988; Yau, 1994 cited in Lee and Carter, 2005). Despite unsubstantial experience of travelling with LCCs, a number of respondents that participated in the attitudinal survey offered negative comments about one carrier in particular, namely Ryanair. Many comments alluded to the fact that respondents would not travel with the airline despite having no first hand experience of the airline. The influence of wider societal views and media attention is clearly evident here and influential in airline choice (Urry, 2002).

Branding also appears inextricably linked to the perception held by LCC passengers and as Field (2008) identified, it is no more evident than when cost features as a prerequisite for airline choice. Nevertheless the airline passengers that contributed to this study demonstrated through their responses that LCCs are in reality, not always the cheapest option and in consequence are no longer seen as the definitive go-to option for cheap flights. This view is supported by the research undertaken by Foxall and James (2003) and Bacon (2005) who suggest that few customers are 100% loyal to a brand, with most buyers practicing 'multiband purchasing' (Ehrenberg, 1988).

10.2.2 FSCs

Passengers aged 35-64 years were identified as most likely to travel with FSCs with the majority sole travellers or travelling as a couple. FSC passengers are also likely to have a high personal disposable income (on short haul routes).

Attitudes held by respondents towards FSCs stand in relative contrast to those held by the same respondents towards LCCs. FSCs are liked by the majority of passengers, as well as being considered to offer frills and employ helpful cabin crew.

Again in further opposition to the findings purported by respondents in reference to LCCs, a strong correlation is held between the onboard space a passenger has and the extent it is considered a luxury. The cost of the flight is not however deemed indicative of a helpful crew, thus it appears that airline passengers expect to find helpful FSC crew regardless of the cost they have paid to fly with the airline.

FSC passengers consider the cost of their flight as neither cheap nor expensive, but to be reflective of a truthful pricing policy. The trust that airline passengers place in FSC fares is reflective of the change that Taneja (2004) considers to have taken place since deregulation occurred within the airline industry, eradicating much of the confusion and mistrust that was felt amongst passengers in respect of airline pricing policies.

FSCs also emerged as spacious and more comfortable than other carriers, and in addition, considered to offer a more superior service in terms of efficiency.

Food and drink was also identified as more satisfying to passengers of FSCs, with the finding considered inherent to the cost being subsumed within the overall airfare. At the same time however, FSC passengers accounted for the largest proportion of passengers (by carrier type) that did not like the food and drink they were given or purchased. Here, class of travel emerged as influential, with different standards found onboard (Jones, 2004). The service quality gap that Parasuraman et al. (1985) refer to in the SERVQUAL model is of particular relevance here.

A gap is clearly evident where expectations have fallen short of the outcome. Perception is likely to be central to such findings, with the ‘perception’ that

FSC food and drink is likely to be of a higher quality than that served by other carriers. The influence of media as highlighted by Urry (2002) is significant here, whereby awareness and perception of a product or service may be manifested in social media, which is unrepresentative of what is consumed.

Elsewhere, FSCs emerged as the most efficient service provider in terms of reliability and convenience, which maybe attributable to their strong network connections and alliance partnerships that can be lent upon when necessary (Kleymann and Seristö, 2004; Iatrou and Oretti, 2007).

Where advertising and branding is concerned, FSCs were found to employ more distinguished and superior (outstanding) advertising and branding, which was also considered to be more truthful than that of other carriers. Interestingly, significant differences were not found between the advertising and branding of FSCs and charter airlines.

As a final point on FSCs, whilst the research highlighted relatively staid results, it did identify discrepancies in passenger opinion between long haul and short haul services, with the two considered to be very different. The finding is supported by the work of Shaw (2007) who suggested that the extended time spent on-board the aircraft during long-haul flights gives airline passengers greater time in which to be exposed to poor service standards, from which it will be harder for the airline to recover its reputation.

10.2.3 Charter airlines

Charter airlines were found to attract larger groups of travelling passengers (3+) who are more likely to check-in hold luggage than passengers travelling with other carriers. The total size of passengers travelling with charters, demonstrates a higher than average group size based upon CAA data collected at BHX in 2006, where the average group size for leisure passengers was two persons (CAA, 2006c). Additionally, low personal income levels are also typical of charter passengers, particularly on short haul routes. Age is also a key demographic variable that differentiates charter passengers from those of other carriers, attracting in particular, an ageing population. Charter airlines are most popular amongst leisure travellers aged 55+ years and within this group, a larger than average percentage of passengers book their flights as part of a package - with an equal number of flights booked independently as well as with a travel agent. The findings are inline with the TNS research (Taylor, 2011c) that identified the 55+ years age group as those most likely to travel abroad and additionally seek travel agent advice when booking.

Travel with charter carriers remains overwhelmingly dominant within the short-haul market, with air fares considered to be neither cheap nor expensive, yet more emphasis is placed upon cost overall by the charter passenger. The finding is reflective of charter flights featuring as the staple of the package holiday (preferred by the 55+ group) and that the majority of charter passengers are assumed to have lower levels of disposable income.

Price is considered increasingly important to charter passengers, for whom payment responsibility is likely to fall on the individual and the relative infrequency with which charter passengers travel. TNA data found overall holiday cost to be a key consideration for many individuals when purchasing holidays in 2010 (Taylor, 2010a).

The research recognised that charter passengers place more emphasis upon the thoroughness of safety and security procedures, which are seen as reflective of a good and efficient process. Additionally an intrusive search is assumed to be thorough. Mitchener-Nissen et al (2011) support the link with thoroughness, through their research into full-body scanners, which highlighted the welcomed ‘intrusiveness’ of the screening facility.

Where boarding the aircraft is concerned, charter passengers considered the process as slow, with women most dissatisfied. Additionally, efficiency is linked to the speed with which the aircraft is boarded. Steffen and Hotchkiss (2011) explored the boarding process and found pre-assigned seating to be the most inefficient boarding process, thus adding gravitas to these findings.

Whilst food and drink served on charter airlines was considered to be tastier and more satisfying than LCC offerings, it did not meet the same standards as FSC provisions. This finding stands in contrast to what Kahn (1995 cited in Jones, 2004:65) suggested passengers have previously confirmed that ‘all food tastes the same.’

Elsewhere, the attitudes held by charter passengers assumed a middle ground where airline advertising and branding is concerned and attitudes towards the ash cloud and its perceived safety.

10.3 Socio-demographics

The socio-demographic profile of respondents, which was found across both strands of primary research, was largely representative of the wider population. Mintel (2011) suggest that the average air passenger (travelling for leisure) is aged 25-34 years, a middle-high earner (£28,750-£34,499) and in socioeconomic group ABC1 (Mintel, 2011). Leisure passengers at BHX differentiated slightly from the wider population by being (on average) slightly older at 45-54 years and with a slightly lower personal income of £17,250-£22,999. This finding could be a regional difference linked to economic prosperity within the region. For business passengers the average income of those interviewed at BHX was £46,000-£57,499, this too is inline with previous data collected by the CAA (2006).

The number of passengers travelling by group size at BHX is similar to data collected by the CAA in previous years, although a small increase is evident in the total number of passengers travelling as a group of three (CAA, 2006). A possible explanation for the large number of passengers travelling independently or as a couple could be attributable to the decreasing size of the average family from 2.4 to 1.9 children, thus making the family unit smaller (Hughes, 2010). A factor that may be of particular relevance where leisure travel is concerned.

The findings also suggest there has been little change in the socio-economics of individuals flying with LCCs for leisure purposes. CAA data from 1996-2005 indicated that the greatest increase in the propensity to fly amongst all income groups was within the income band £23,000 to £34,500 (CAA, 2006). With time elapsed since this data was collected, the majority of leisure passengers continue to earn £23,000 to £34,500, yet the range has widened to include those with an income of £17,250-£22,999.

The growth of this income group exemplifies the impact of the recession upon personal income (Verity, 2010). Nevertheless, whilst passengers may currently feel the strain of the economic crisis upon personal wealth, the desire to travel by air remains, albeit more sporadic in frequency. To this end, competition within passenger aviation is rife, with the three main carrier types vying for business within an increasingly saturated passenger market, as demonstrated at BHX (see section 3.4) The implications of the growing divide between the rich and poor has arguably never been greater, thus the findings pertaining to passenger income and its implications for airline choice are far reaching.

This research suggests that income is an influential factor pertaining to airline choice and consequently may act as a barrier to travel with particular airlines. Whilst use of LCCs, FSCs and charter airlines was evident amongst all income groups, use of LCC services was greatest amongst passengers with lower levels of personal income. The choice not to travel with an LCC by passengers that have a higher level of disposable income could be linked to elitism, but it could arguably also be linked to knowledge that the individual possesses.

Whilst a subjective link is made here as to the positive relationship between income and education, it suffices to illustrate an important point. Much discussion has focused upon the perception that passengers have that LCCs are always the cheapest fare option, yet it is this gap that exists between the consumer's perception and what is experienced in reality as illustrated by Parasuraman et al. (1985) in the SERQUAL model, that lies at the root of this misconception. Armed with the knowledge of how best to locate the cheapest flights, could be a possible (although tentative) explanation as to why passengers within higher income levels travel with FSCs over their LCC counterparts.

Recognition is given the fact that other underlying factors could be influential to this finding, with further research welcomed. The data may be blurred by an unusually high number of passengers with a high personal income travelling on a specific route with limited competition from other airlines. Additionally, flight availability could also be influential.

Age was also found to be influential to airline choice. At BHX in particular, respondents aged 35-64 years were found to favour FSCs and passengers aged 55+ demonstrated a preference for travelling with charter airlines. Whilst a similar pattern is evident in the findings from respondents to the attitudinal survey, the higher representation of younger respondents within the sample skews the results.

Linked to the demographic implications of carrier and airline choice, the well-documented Hierarchy of Needs proposed by Maslow, is of interest in that it considers that once biological needs are met, individuals will strive towards ultimately achieving self-actualisation (Reisinger, 2009). The ambiguities of the model were discussed in the literature review of psychology and behaviour (see section 2.1.2), yet it is important to recognise here that there may be some validity in Maslow’s model and the sustained use of LCCs by middle and higher income earners, particularly for leisure travel.

The continued use of LCCs by both groups may be attributable (ignoring the social connotations of travelling with such airlines) to the pursuit of self-actualisation in that once basic needs are met, travel will help broaden the mind and impart new experiences. LCCs have arguably made air travel more accessible, thus allowing greater freedom to those middle and high-income earners.

10.4 Travel by trip purpose

The research has confirmed that use of LCCs is greatest amongst the leisure market, whilst business passengers remain loyal to FSCs. Nevertheless, the opposite appears true for business passengers that travelled upwards of 20 times on the same route during the year preceding interview, with the majority travelling with LCCs. The higher representation of leisure passengers in the attitudinal survey that used FSCs on their last flight may be misleading given that business passengers were under-represented within the sample.

10.4.1. Business passengers

This study supports the CAA findings that recognise the emphasis business passengers continue to place upon network connectivity, frequency and convenience. Although evidence suggests that a notable trend in cost rearing its head as an influential factor in class of travel and airline choice, particularly on short haul routes (CAA, 2010a). Although as Fourie and Lubbe (2006) noted, there is a continuing trend in business passengers considering the LCC as a viable alternative to the FSC.

On short haul routes where the presence of LCCs is influential, 85% of business passengers at BHX stated that they were unrestricted in their choice of airline, yet of this group 38% chose to fly with a LCC. There could be numerous reasons to explain this finding. First, whilst there may be no formal limitations placed upon the individual to reduce their travel spend, they may have feel a moral obligation to limit their spend and locate a flight that represents value for money. To this end, there is evidence to reject the argument put forward by Button (2010) who suggested that business passengers are more price elastic in their decision making than leisure passengers.

As Fowkes et al. (1991) suggested, contrary to popular belief, business passengers will not always opt for the highest quality service, but in reality take into account the cost to the organisation. As one respondent considering the cost of their business flight remarked '*it might have been on the company* *card, but I do search for the lowest price. Just habit I guess. I'll always think a rip off price is a rip off price, regardless of whether it comes out of my pocket or work's.*' Additionally, there could be cultural implications underlying such attitudes and beliefs, with business passengers from more reserved countries taking different views as to travelling in business class.

Additionally operational factors are likely to have been central to the decision to fly with a LCC, namely either route/flight availability or flight schedule, particularly from a regional airport. The situation may differ from an airport located within the M25 zone, where flight availability is likely to be much greater. On this point, business passengers that travelled to the same destination more than 45+ times in the 12 months booked prior to interview all booked their flight via a BTA. Further, all but one business passenger who booked via a BTA and travelled to the same destination more than 20+ times during the last year, booked direct with an airline via the airline website.

The high use of just one research tool supports the work of Crotts (2000) who suggests that repeat purchase is often borne from prior satisfaction based upon an internal information search, with external information not required. That is, if the business passenger is aware of the airline(s) that operate on the route and that are perceived to offer the best service to the individual, it is unlikely they will need to do any research ahead of booking their flight.

Interestingly, 60% of those that travelled more than 20+ times to the same destination travelled with LCCs and only one of the frequent flyers within this group continuously travelled long haul with a FSC. The findings thus suggest that as opposed to being airline-loyal purchasers, the majority of frequent business travellers to the same destination are repeat purchasers. Such business passengers are therefore as Hawkins et al. (1986) suggest, more likely to change their habits/behaviour.
On long haul travel, the situation is somewhat different with 70% of business passengers restricted in their choice of airline, with the majority limited to travel in economy class and restricted by price. The findings support recent research by the CAA that confirmed the proportion of business passengers

travelling in premium cabins continues to decline (CAA, 2010a). Whilst Rickard (2010 cited in Rigby, 2010) contemplating travel for business passengers, suggested that 'organisations have a moral duty to make sure their staff travel in reasonable comfort', there seems to be little evidence to suggest organisations extend this notion to exclude travel in economy.

Overall, just 30% of business passengers were restricted in their choice of airline, with 14% required to fly economy and 7% limited by a financial budget. This research failed to consider the size of the organisation and the organisation's annual turnover, thus there is no evidence to support the argument put forward by Mason (2001) and Evangelho et al. (2005) that company size affects the organisations' willingness to spend or that the organisation's turnover is influential (Barclaycard, 2009). Further research would help to identify whether this is still the case, that is, whether the size of the organisation and its turnover is influential in the choice of airline and class of carriage.

Just under half of the business passengers that travelled from BHX indicated they had contemplated reducing their air travel and considered alternative measures i.e. teleconferencing or business relocation, yet ultimately did not pursue either method. A further 23% made use of teleconferencing, but at times found it essential to meet with clients. The research therefore suggests that whilst alternative options to air travel are considered, in reality only a small number of business passengers actively seek to reduce their air travel.

The 2008 Barclaycard Commercial Business Travel Survey supports these findings, suggesting that 85% of business passengers deem face-to-face meetings as more effective than technologies such as video and teleconferencing (Barclaycard, 2009). Business travel by air thus looks likely to remain a key transport option for many, regardless of the cost implications and developments within technology. There is undoubtedly pressure for organisations to consider the cost implications of travel, yet the convenience and business acumen that is derived from meeting with clients face-to-face would appear to outweigh the short-term economic and environmental costs of flying.

10.4.2. Leisure passengers

Of the passengers interviewed at BHX, 19% of leisure passengers travelled domestically (within the UK). Albeit based upon a much larger sample and not segregated by trip purpose, the CAA data for 2006 at BHX suggested domestic travel was at 16.8% up from 16.3% in 2005. Whilst a steady decline was noted in the number of passengers travelling domestically at the airport between 1991-2001, it has since continued to show signs of growth.

The passenger data collected at BHX also supports findings by TNS (Taylor, 2011c) who found individuals with children were most likely to holiday in the UK during 2011 compared to those without. Elsewhere, Visit England (2010) indicated an 18% year on year increase in the number of domestic holiday trips taken by UK citizens, with two groups most likely to holiday domestically highlighted as 'switchers' predominantly families trying limit their financial expenditure and 'extras' comprising younger, single travellers generally more likely to take more overseas and domestic breaks. Interestingly this research found 33% of those that travelled domestically for leisure were single and a further 51% married. Whilst information was collected on the total number of people in the household, data was not obtained as to the total number of dependents.

This study has also found the majority of leisure passengers travelling overseas from BHX were aged 55-64 years. The same age group were also identified by TNS (Taylor, 2011c) as those most likely to take an overseas holiday in 2011.

This research offers evidence to suggest that leisure passengers are fluid in their decision-making and at times, motivated by cost in the decision to travel to a destination they had no previous inclination to visit. The decision could also be influenced by VFR travel. Of the 11% of leisure passengers that indicated their choice of flight as the key driver in destination choice, 95% travelled short haul and all with LCCs. Of this group, just short of half travelled with Ryanair and a further 41% with Flybe.

Whilst Wood (2005) suggested that when the price is low enough, consumers will take advantage of cheap fares on *nowhere* routes whether the purchase was intended or not, the majority of passengers motivated here by cheap fares travelled on established routes including (by popularity) DUB, ALC, BHD, EDI and HAM. To this end, the findings demonstrate that all other things being equal, individuals will demonstrate similar purchasing behaviour of flights on popular routes, as they will on *nowhere* routes.

10.5 Frequency of air travel

The study confirmed that business passenger's travelled more frequently by air than leisure passengers in the 12 months prior to interview, whilst also recording the greatest number of repeat visits to the same destination. The findings should however be treated with care as passengers were only asked to state how many return flights they had taken overall during the 12 months prior to interview, with no stipulation to distinguish between leisure and/or business travel. To this end, passengers that recorded flights for both business and leisure purposes may have skewed the results.

Nevertheless, whilst 79% of leisure passengers made 0-4 return flights to any destination during the 12 months prior to interview, just 6% travelled the same number of times to the same destination during the equivalent period. Without historic data it is impossible to say whether the findings are representative of the wider population. The results do however suggest that a low percentage of passengers travel to the same destination for several short breaks, either to a second home or for VFR, throughout the year. It would in hindsight have been useful to ask respondents to recall which airline(s) they had travelled with during the previous year (and for what purpose). Such data would help to build a passenger profile and explore trends in carrier/airline use over time.

To assist the interview process, respondents were presented with grouped timeframes to indicate how many flights they had taken throughout the previous year. Whilst the groups 0-4, 5-9, 10-14 and so on, were deemed useful to facilitate the collection and analysis of data on trip frequency, it is only now at the stage of data analysis that a key flaw in the approach is fully realised.

The classification retains its robustness for assisting data collection, yet particularly in the lowest classification i.e. 0-4 flights, the results that can be drawn are limited. In retrospect, as is the case with CAA data collection, respondents could have been asked to indicate the total number of flights they had taken, for the results to be aggregated and coded at a later stage. Alternatively, respondents that had taken less than four return flights could have been asked to stipulate the total number of flights they had taken, before all other passengers were clustered into wider groups.

The uncollected data would have helped to confirm whether, as considered by Nordstrom (2005), the CAA (2006) and Yeoman and McMahon-Beattie (2006), individuals are continuing to opt for several short breaks as opposed to just one two week holiday a year. Further research could help to indicate whether more frequent trips by air is now the norm, particularly in light of the current economic climate.

10.6 Routes

The most popular routes from BHX emerged as EDI, DUB, BHD and Spain (inc. the Canaries) and the USA within the attitudinal sample. The popularity of the routes is also supported by ONS data (2010) that indicates that Spain, France, USA and the Irish Republic, (in that order) dominate as the most popular destinations for UK visits abroad. Additionally, Edinburgh topped the domestic towns visited for one night or more. The implications for modal substitution on domestic routes are interesting. At BHX, just 15% of respondents that travelled domestically indicated they had considered an alternative transport mode in their decision-making process. The close proximity of the airport to the respondent's home address and the comparative timesaving's made through air travel were influential in the decision to fly.

Consideration of substitute transport modes was most prevalent on the EDI, GLA and BHD routes, with the train widely cited as an alternative modal choice for both business and leisure passengers. Recent research by Mintel (2010) recognised the emergence of rail as an increasingly competitive modal choice for airline passengers on journeys of up to 5 hours, thus supporting the considered choice alternatives for passengers from BHX on both the EDI and GLA routes.

For airlines, but also airports too, there is an inherent need to remain competitive on such routes and stand as the preferred alternative to other modes, but to the train in particular. One respondent remarked on the financial implications of travelling by plane domestically, it '*shouldn't be so cheap compared to the train'.* With further fare increases now facing rail travellers, the aeroplane is likely to remain a viable alternative for many (Pym, 2011). As Fowkes et al. (1991) noted some 20 years ago in their research, and as is still largely the case today, 95% of individuals still choose to travel by air over alternative modes because of the comparatively short journey time. Until fundamental changes are made (i.e. the proposed High Speed 2 comes to fruition), journey time is likely to remain an influential factor for many.

For respondents at BHX that considered travelling from another airport, mainly one closer to home, flight availability and destination choice ultimately led them to fly from BHX rather than their first choice airport. EMA was the preferred airport for the majority of passengers that considered an alternative airport. The psychology behind the choice of potential substitute airports is interesting, with the majority of passengers opting for an airport within a 60 minute drive to BHX. Little attention was given to MAN, LTN and LPL all within a 90-minute drive of the airport (BIA, 2009). Further research exploring the choice process of passengers at BHX that give consideration to substitute airports would be of interest to ascertain why certain airports are highlighted as substitutes and others not, despite being in a similar catchment.

10.7 Luggage

The majority of respondents checked-in just one item of luggage per person on their most recent flight, with a slightly smaller percentage having not checked-in any hold luggage. Carrier type was found to be a statistically significant factor in the decision to check-in luggage with respondents travelling with LCCs least likely to check-in hold luggage and charter passengers most likely. This finding could be attributable to a number of factors that are by their very nature inextricably linked.

First, trip length could be influential, with day-return passengers or those on a short break likely to require less luggage, than passengers travelling for a longer duration. To this end, trip purpose and destination could also be significant. Travel to warmer climes for leisure is likely to assume travel with more personal effects than would be necessary on a city-based domestic trip for business. Additionally and perhaps key, is the price levied by airlines for passengers to check-in luggage. Unfortunately neither research instrument explored the respondent's decision to check-in or conversely, not check-in hold luggage. Nevertheless given that LCCs charge per item for hold luggage, where most charter airlines and FSCs include the cost in the overall flight cost, price could be a key factor in the decision-making process.

10.8 Pre-trip research

Inline with previous research conducted by TGI on behalf of Mintel (2011), this study found airline websites to be the most popular research tool used by both business and leisure passengers searching for short haul flights. The research does however stand in contrast to the Greenlight (2010) study, which found UK consumers to largely start their web search in Google.

What this research failed to explore was the device that passengers used to access the website(s) i.e. through a PC, laptop, mobile phone, tablet or other device. The evidence provided by SITA (2011) clearly demonstrates the colossal investment airlines are willing to devote to mobile technologies. With ABTA suggesting that 2011 would see use of mobile phone applications and services emerging as key trends throughout the year (ABTA 2011), Google confirmed that online research using travel websites via a mobile, today makes up 20% of all queries, up from 6% in 2010 (Mintel, 2011). An exploration of the devices used by passengers would seek to confirm whether mobile technologies are indeed emerging as strong contenders to the traditional PC.

Use of online agency websites and high street travel agents (particularly by leisure passengers) were also popular. Leisure passengers that travelled long haul were however more likely to employ the services of a high street travel agent ahead of using airline websites to undertake their travel research. The likelihood of a higher per person spend on long haul trips could be influential. To this end, there was little evidence that long haul purchases were made on a whim, that is, purchased on impulse. Those travelling long haul were most likely to evoke an informed choice set, before opting to purchase a flight. The lead-time in booking a flight was not influential as to the choice of research method(s) used by either business or leisure passengers. For business passengers who outsourced the research process, BTA's were most likely to take responsibility.

Interestingly, in contrast to the three travel websites considered to be most visible online, namely cheapflights.co.uk, skyscanner.net and travelsupermarket.com (all of which are price comparison sites) (Greenlight, 2010), such sites did not assume great stature in this study. By airline, LCCs emerged as the most searched for airlines by flight natural search in the Greenlight (2010) study: Ryanair, Flybe and Jet2.com; yet British Airways, Monarch and easyJet ranked someway behind. The emphasis upon the LCC is reiterated within this research, yet it is interesting to note that other key airlines rank so far behind. Elsewhere, the emphasis upon domestic flight searches highlighted by Greenlight (2010) is evident within this study.

Neither discussions with friends and family nor personal experience assumed prominence within the research methods used by passengers interviewed for this study, although both methods were widely employed by respondents that participated in the TGI study. Less than 1% of the sample to this study suggested that they had spoken to friends and/or family for advice before booking their flight and just over 1% suggested that they had used Trip Advisor as a reference. Christou and Kassianidis (2002) considered online socialisation as a key motivator for the purchase of online travel products, yet the reason for such a low percentage of air passengers seeking advice from friends and family and others online could lay in the cultural background of respondents to this study.

Interestingly the aforementioned Greenlight study (2010) also highlighted the importance of airlines engaging in popular social media as a key to maintaining market share and increasing awareness and sales. Yet as noted, such social networking sites also assumed minor prominence here.

In contrast to the work of Decrop (2000) who suggested that family and friends are likely to be a major reference group, Lee and Kacen (2008) considered that the cultural background of an individual could influence the extent to which an individual will consult with friends and family ahead of making a decision. The individualist and collectivist cultures to which they refer would support the findings of this research.

The majority of participants to this study were native to the UK (i.e. westerners) and inline with Lee and Kacen’s (2008) theory, such individuals are not likely to seek advice or compliance from others when making travel decisions, as was the case in this research. The larger sample size of the TGI survey could also be influential (where *n*=25,000), although with great strides taken to ensure this study was representative of the larger population, it is unlikely. It is acknowledged that the results found here are limited to the population under study and could thus highlight a regional difference in the research methods used by passengers that travel from BHX. Additionally it could also be that a greater number of respondents to the TGI study emanated from a more diverse cultural background thus accounting for the difference in discussions with friends and family.

The timeframe in which respondents made their purchase decision could also be influential, as was suggested by Silvera et al. (2008). Silvera et al. consider that if the purchase was made in haste i.e. as an impulse purchase, it is unlikely by its very nature, that advice and acceptance would have been sought from others. Nevertheless, the desire and need to conform to wider societal opinion could be influential in the purchase decision. This matter is discussed further within later sections.

The literature concerning impulse purchase behaviour demonstrated an ambiguity surrounding the definition and nature of impulse purchase. Yet what emerged was an understanding that the amount of research undertaken by an individual before making a travel purchase is indicative as to whether the purchase is classed as impulse or planned. To this end it was suggested that the decision process engaged in when making an impulse purchase is based upon the information available at the time of purchase or pre-existing knowledge.

Whilst this research did not explore whether passengers booked their flight in light of a seasonal sale, the majority of (leisure) passengers, i.e. those generally paying for their own flight, suggested the reason for booking when they had was to secure the flight at the *best price*. Of this group, the majority booked their flight 1-2 months in advance and undertook research before administering their booking. Even where the cost of the flight was considered to be cheap, research was undertaken.

The findings thus signify that impulse purchase where air travel is concerned is limited, even where financial outgoings are considered to be relatively low. The negative state of the economy could however be influential to this finding, with consumers under increasing pressure to limit and monitor their expenditure. Had the research taken place in a more buoyant economic period, the findings may be different. The theory of regret minimization as considered by Spears (2006) is thus evident here, with research linked to the desire to avoid regretting the purchase at a later time.

Additionally, airlines seem to be in a constant ‘sales’ period offering airfares at a reduced price. The consumer’s awareness of such marketing techniques could too be influential, leading the consumer to undertake research before purchasing their flight to ensure that they receive the best price available. The difference between 40% off a £19.99 flight is very different to 40% off a £100 flight, thus with consumers increasingly savvy of airline pricing, purchasing on impulse could be limited by this factor alone.

Elsewhere, whilst Crotts (2000) suggested that socio-demographic variables including age, income and education do not influence the pre-purchase research of tourism products and services, this research has found the opposite to be true. Age was found to be a significant factor in the choice and use of research methods and findings supported by Teo and Yu (2005). Half of those aged 16-34 years and 65-74 years used airline websites to undertake research before booking a flight, whilst approximately a quarter of passengers aged 65+ used the services of a high street travel agent, compared to just 2% of passengers aged 16-34 years. Online agencies were most popular amongst leisure passengers aged 45-54 years.

The findings suggest that as air passengers become older, they are more likely to engage in traditional research methods that focus upon human interaction and ultimately the expertise of a third party to undertake the research for them. Conversely, younger passengers are much more likely to undertake in independent, computer based research. The different approaches adopted by the generations was identified by Bei et al. (2004), yet their research suggested younger consumers were more likely engage in a variety of Internet based sources, whilst older consumers rely upon online retailers or manufacturers’ information. Whilst the research distinguished between the different approaches used by the young and old, the methods of research undertaken differ slightly to what was found in this study.

The extent to which consumers engage in research ahead of booking a flight may also be attributable to their approach to air travel in a wider sense. Where Jun et al. (2007) suggested that airline tickets are low risk travel products that consumers feel comfortable purchasing online, McCleary and Whitney (2001) considered that the nervous disposition of an individual could greatly affect the level of research they undertake. Elsewhere other authors suggested that purchasing a holiday is a complex decision that requires thorough research and evaluation of alternatives (Schul and Crompton, 1983; Gitelson and Crompton, 1984), with the financial implications also influential (McIntosh and Goeldner, 1986).

Whilst this research did not explore the underlying motivations of individuals employing specific research tools when searching for flights, the evidence suggests that only a small minority of airline passengers used more than one research tool when undertaking pre-trip research. Instead, respondents placed emphasis upon using just one approach, i.e. online research methods or traditional research methods (high street travel agent, brochures, call centre), not both.

To this end, the results would appear to support, on the surface, the argument put forward by Jun et al. (2007), that purchasing airline tickets online is something that the majority of individuals are now comfortable with. The changes that have come about as a result of investigations into pricing and the removal of many of the barriers pertinent to effective website navigation, could be instrumental to such attitudes. Demonstrating increased comfort in the purchasing process, there is also evidence to suggest that purchasing airline tickets is no longer perceived a complex decision-making process as was suggested by Schul and Crompton (1983) and Gitelson and Crompton (1984). The majority of airline passengers engaged with just one method of research (largely online). The time that has now elapsed since these comments were made could also be influential, with the deregulation of the airline sector and the changes that have been brought about by the growth of LCCs also influential.

Whilst this study asked respondents to identify the research methods employed, it did not explore in greater detail the number of visits passengers made to websites or travel agencies ahead of securing their flight. Additional research would help to identify whether decisions are made instantaneously or over a prolonged period. Further understanding of why some passengers use just one research method and others a wide range, in addition to depth of research undertaken (i.e. surface or deep research) when searching for flights, would offer airlines increased scope to better understand how best to meet the needs of both frequent and infrequent flyers and those familiar/unfamiliar with booking airline tickets.

As Rook and Gardner suggested (1993 cited in Silvera et al; 2008), the mood of the individual can also be significant in the research/purchase process, with positive and negative mood states leading to different behaviour. Whilst difficult to measure, it would be interesting to explore whether mood does infact influence the extent to which individuals carry out research ahead of booking a flight and in addition, whether mood can influence carrier and airline choice. On similar lines, the personality of the individual is key to the findings discussed here.

The work of Freud (in Nye, 1999), Stern (1962), Rim (1982), McClure (1984) and Furnham and Heaven (1999) alluded to the far-reaching implications of personality and sound evidence to suggest that personality does infact influence behaviour. Thus, whilst not measured here, but based upon the research findings and literature considered in chapter 2, it is suggested that further research into personality types and the extent to which pre-trip research is conducted and the methods employed, would highlight differences between individual personalities. To some extent the attitudinal survey helped to explore this area, although admittedly in its broadest sense.

Socio-economic status is also deemed influential in the choice of research methods employed. Individuals in socio-economic group A were found most likely to undertake pre-trip research via traditional avenues, whilst those in socio-economic groups B and C1 predominately used online sources of information. The limited use of traditional research methods by individuals in socio-economic group A is interesting given that data suggests eight in ten individuals of socio-economic status AB, were believed to have access to the Internet throughout the four years to 2010 (Mintel, 2011).

The relatively small representation of respondents to this research that are located in socio-economic group A could be influential to this finding, yet there may also be other underlying factors. Namely, by virtue of the fact that socio-economic grades are based upon occupation, those in socio-economic group A may hold positions that perceive time spent on researching flights as inefficient and/or cost ineffective. Thus enlisting the help of a third party to undertake the necessary legwork to locate flights may be one justification for outsourcing the research.

Gender is also considered indicative of the research methods employed by airline passengers when locating flights, with women most likely to use online sources of information and men, traditional research methods.

Whilst Crotts (2000) considered socio-demographic factors as insignificant in the decision-making process, he did recognise that the practice is not uniform and will vary from trip to trip, a belief supported by Cosenza and Davis (1981 cited in Hyde, 2000). Factors including, but not exclusive to, trip purpose, time, monetary spend, choice of destination and accommodation were considered influential in the decision-making process. This research does not argue the contrary, with the opposite actually considered true, yet it is beyond the scope of this study to consider the research methods used by respondents when researching and booking flights over a sustained period of time. A longitudinal study would help to explore and clarify whether individuals do employ different research methods and ultimately make different choices for different trips.

The minimization of regret in the research and purchase process maybe as Hetts et al. (2000, cited in Spears, 2006) suggest, a key reason so many airline passengers conduct research ahead of booking their flight, as was the case here. In contrast, the minimization of regret may also be found in the desire by passengers to purchase on impulse so as not to regret missing out on an offer that is perceived too good to miss. Whilst not investigated here, this could be a potential area of interest for future investigation. Possible measures for reducing risk may be in talking to others (family and friends) about travel plans and/or use of comparison sites and online 'screen scraping' facilities to simultaneously locate the cheapest airfare. Interestingly as was proven in this study, both risk minimization measures considered here were slow to be taken up by airline passengers when researching and consequentially booking flights.

As a final point, a retrospective method of risk minimization is seen in the *radical* (*operant conditioning)* theory proposed by Skinner (also referred to as an anxiety state by Davies (1987, cited in Malim and Birch, 1998) which suggests a previous experience (good or bad) can lead to a change in behaviour. As is seen here and in subsequent sections (see Flight price), many respondents to the attitudinal survey indicated that a previous bad experience with an airline, led them to avoiding particular airlines in their decision-making process when researching/purchasing their most recent flight.

Teo and Yu (2005) consider the work of Weitz (1988) who noted the impact website design can have upon the research process and that ultimately, if it is not considered to be user friendly, it will lead consumers to shop elsewhere for their air ticket. The 'travel stress curve' proposed by Scholvinck (2000 cited in Crawford and Melewar, 2003) is particularly relevant here, with many of the comments made in the attitudinal survey reflective of the stress that was imparted onto passengers during the booking process through arguably unfriendly website design.

The consequences as are also evident, in that lost custom is the ultimate outcome of poor website design. '*I have all information stored on my Flybe account, so booking is very quick and easy'*, *'while not misleading, the amount of time double-checking if insurance or checked-in luggage has been included due to changes or past experiences is naturally quite large...*' and *'felt I had to review the choices I had made several times and was concerned about the small print'.* The comments reiterate the emphasis Teo and Yu (2005) and Dodds et al (1991) suggest should be placed upon consumer confidence in brands and the development of an online relationship between the consumer and supplier.

The results of the attitudinal survey and in particular the comments made by respondents highlight the need for continued research such as the 'Online Travel Sector Usability' study, which benchmarks user experience of prominent UK travel agent and airline websites against best practice usability guidelines (Webcredible, 2010). Whilst consumer groups such as Which? (see OFT, 2011) and the OFT (2009) have applied pressure for greater transparency and user-friendly websites, the research demonstrates that from the consumers viewpoint, more still needs to be done. Of note, those that fared worst within the Webcredible survey were not LCCs as may have been expected, but charter airlines.

The findings discussed here demonstrate the gaps that Zeithmal et al. (2002) refer to in the e-SQ model, that considers where organisations may fall short in meeting the customers expectations in the online retail environment. The issues raised by respondents to the attitudinal survey in relation to purchasing airline tickets online, suggest that certain airlines and other online retailers should seek to address the design gap that is clearly evident. The examples cited highlight a failure on the airline's part to incorporate the customers requirements into the website design – particularly where LCCs are concerned. There also appears to be a discrepancy pertaining to the information gap, with airlines and their designated online outlets again failing to meet the expectations of consumers in communicating information (particularly concerning flight prices) to the consumer. Whilst some airlines/carriers bridge this gap successfully, there is a need for all airlines to foresee where potential problems may arise.

10.9 Booking administration

Just over half the respondents that took part in this research booked their flight personally. The findings are supported by TGI data for Mintel (2011) that recognised the majority of travel bookings are made directly by consumers via the supplier. The TGI study also highlighted the small number of flight bookings that are booked with a travel agent (9%) and tour operator (4%). Based upon the collective data (business and leisure passengers) gathered in this research, 13% of passengers booked via a high street travel agent (a further 8% booked with a BTA) and 4% of all bookings were made via a tour operator. Confidence can therefore be gained in that the findings are reflective of the broader picture.

This study found age to be a statistically significant factor in the decision of passengers to book their own flight or outsource the booking administration to a third party. Business passengers (and particularly those aged 35-54 years) were found most likely to dissolve responsibility of their flight booking, with the majority employing a BTA to take responsibility. Elsewhere, leisure passengers aged 16-24 years and 65+ emerged as the most likely age groups to outsource the booking of their flight to a relative other than a partner. These findings are supported by recent data collected by Mintel (2011), which found young adults (aged 16-24 years and 25-34 years) most likely to use the Internet to book a holiday, whilst those least likely are older adults (aged 65+ years).

With reference to gender, Farag et al. (2007) suggest that women are less inclined to buy online than their male counterparts. Of note, this research found the opposite to be true. More women (specifically 14% more) within this study booked their flights online than compared with male airline passengers.

Where the socio-economic status of passengers is concerned, passengers across all socio-economic groups largely booked their flights online. This finding stands in contrast to research by Farag et al. (2007) and Mintel (2011) who suggests individuals in socio-economic groups ABC1 are most likely to book travel/holidays online, whilst those least likely to book online are individuals in socio-economic groups C2, D and E (Mintel, 2011). The relatively small representation of passengers in lower socio-economic groups could be influential to these findings.

Where the booking was outsourced, choice of destination was a key stipulation for the majority of leisure passengers, with dates of travel, accommodation and cost, other key factors cited (in order of importance). For business passengers flight time emerged as the definitive request.

The majority of business and leisure passengers booked their flight direct with an airline via its website, with online agency websites the second most prevalent method employed. High street travel agents and online tour operators were also widely used. BTA's remained popular with business passengers.

Business passengers unsurprisingly booked their flights with the shortest lead-time, with three quarters of the sample booking within a month of travel and a third within 1-2 weeks of departure. Whilst in relative terms, this period is considered relatively short, for business passengers it is actually still quite a long way in advance of travel. The realisation that flights need to be booked quite sometime in advance of travel could be an influential factor. Additionally, the pressure from the organisation to limit travel expenditure could also be influential, leading business passengers to seek to secure their flights well in advance, to benefit from cheaper airfares where possible.

Interestingly, leisure passengers also identified a relatively short lead-time in booking flights. Over half of those travelling for leisure booked within two months of departure, whilst a third booked for travel within the preceding month and a quarter within 1-2 weeks of travel.

This finding is significant and reflective of the current change in travel behaviour. The results are in line with recent findings published by Mintel (2010), who found that over half of both domestic and overseas holidays are booked within the three months of travel. There is increasing evidence as is shown here, to suggest that travel providers would be wise to consider increased segmentation of the last-minute travel and tourism market as it is far from homogenous. Further segmentation would help to further understand the motivations and intentional and un-intentional purchase decisions of consumers (Dacko, 2004).

Whilst the bulk of business flights were booked as dates became available for meetings/conferences/exhibitions, date availability was a minor consideration for leisure passengers, who were largely driven to book flights at a time they perceived would offer the best price. Cost was therefore found to assume precedence for leisure passengers and time/availability for business passengers.

In support of the research findings, Moller and Watanabe (2010) concluded that the optimum time to purchase an air ticket in respect of cost is eight weeks before departure. Thus given that half of those travelling for leisure booked their flight within this timeframe, there is further evidence to support this affirmation.

This study has identified consumers who are knowledgeable about the research and booking process to be more thorough in their approach to booking flights online. Awareness of 'opting out' of particular products when booking flights could be one area in which this is most relevant. Respondents that are well informed, that is, who have undertaken appropriate research ahead of booking their flight, were also found to be more confident when administering their flight booking.

Further, confidence is also highly correlated to experience, thus there is evidence to suggest that as respondents become more accustomed and engage more frequently in pre-trip research and booking flights online, they will be more confident in administering a flight booking. This finding supports the work of Williamson (1981) who recognised early on, that the frequency with which technology (in this case the Internet) is used could influence consumer willingness to purchase online. Confidence may however extend beyond familiarity with airline websites (and other websites used to research and book flights), to the use of computers and new technologies in a wider setting that facilitate online research and purchase consumption. As Beldona et al. (2005) suggest the more time consumers spend online and have positive experiences, the likelihood of them making a purchase will also increase. This issue particularly ties in with website design and the implications of user-friendly sites as previously discussed.

The majority of participants in this research were from the UK and Europe and with recent research demonstrating that 62% of consumers today have trust in online transactions (Mintel, 2011) the high number of individuals researching and booking air travel online is unsurprising. The research undertaken by Gartner in 2002 (cited in Kolsaker et al. 2004) considered the shopping habits of Hong Kong residents and their inclination to purchase airline tickets online. The findings suggested that those who participated in the research were largely unwilling to spend online (despite high PC ownership) due to security fears, but also bound in their preference for in-store shopping. Elsewhere, Park and Jun (2003), with reference to the American and Korean markets, noted that whilst there are growing numbers of Internet users, only a small number are using the Internet to purchase products.

Whilst this research is now nearly a decade old, more recent evidence (although not directly relevant to the aviation industry) suggests that key differences remain in the propensity of individuals from different cultures to purchase goods and services online (Kotler, 2009). Security concerns are not only central to such differences, but so too is the preference to satisfy personal needs (through engaging with another human) that cannot easily be met by shopping online (Christou and Kassianidis, 2002). Nevertheless, whilst online shopping offers timesaving capabilities, for novice Internet users and those unfamiliar with online purchasing, the process can be time consuming and more fraught with uncertainty, anxiety and time than if the consumer had visited a traditional ‘bricks and mortar’ store. The sample of participants in this study was not large enough to fully explore the cultural implications of pre-trip decision-making and purchase behaviour amongst passengers of different nationalities and from different cultures. Further research within this area would be welcomed.

10.10 Flight cost

The average price paid for both business and leisure travel was £100-£200, with the majority of employers picking up the cost of travel for business passengers. Whilst package travel assumes a minimal proportion of business travel, it also only accounts for a quarter of all bookings made by passengers in the sample. The growth of LCCs and dynamic packaging could be attributable to this move away from package travel.

Personal income does not appear as a prerequisite to the level of spend on flights, with cost an important consideration for the purchase of both business and leisure flights, although more so for the latter group. There is not however a significant relationship between the cost of flights and the importance of cost to the individual. It would appear that when the decision to travel by air is made, whilst cost may be a key focus in the choice of airline, it does not deter travel. Confidence can be gained in this finding, which is supported further by a recent TNS survey for Travel Weekly, which found price to be a key factor 52% of those interviewed (Taylor, 2010a).

The relationship between flight cost and the level of trust placed by passengers in the airline that the fare is a true reflection of the service on offer, are not synonymous. Mistrust in the airline was however significant for passengers a few particular airlines including easyJet, Ryanair and BA. The fact that each of these airlines has attracted negative press in recent years pertaining to the misleading advertisement of fares and unlawful business practices could be one reason for this finding. The super-complaint led by

Which? and industry support from the CAA (2011) and OFT (2011) has forced airlines to make prices, charges and advertising more transparent.

This study did not probe respondents who indicated a level of mistrust in the pricing used by the airline they travelled with, as to why they continued with their booking/purchase despite holding a negative attitude. In hindsight this would have been a valuable line of enquiry. Whilst two of the aforementioned airlines highlighted by respondents for their perceived 'rogue' pricing employ drip pricing techniques, BA does use up-front pricing on its website. Further research would be welcomed in this area to consider at what point and why passengers continue with their booking despite a feeling of loss or missing out on the sale, as highlighted by the OFT (2010).

As a final point, nowhere more so than in consideration of flight cost is the work of Skinner and his *radical* (*operant conditioning)* theory arguably more prevalent. The behavioural approach suggests that as a form of associative learning of attitudes, reinforcement by reward or punishment can influence behaviour. The comments made by respondents to the attitudinal survey suggest that this is indeed the case, with many indicating that as a consequence of a previously bad experience with an airline, particularly LCCs, airline passengers have modified their behaviour and will no longer fly with a particular airline(s). '*one Ryanair steward was extremely rude to me...it was late at night and extremely stressful. I would never fly with Ryanair again'*, *'Air New Zealand is great. I think it is the best airline*' and *'I have had really bade experiences of flights being cancelled and then being simple (sic) abandoned with no attempt by the airline to fulfill the requirements of the travel directives. Also time consuming and difficult to make appropriate claims for compensation afterwards. All in all not worth the hassle and I try not to use low cost airlines.'*

10.11 Willingness to pay

Willingness to pay amongst both business and leisure passengers for 3" extra legroom and a full meal service (excluding drinks) is low. There is also not a significant difference between the genders as to the willingness to pay for the auxiliary services. Two thirds of the sample were unwilling to pay for either service. Further, no evidence was found to support Jeffrey and Hodge's claims (2007) that by increasing the number of products purchased (and consequentially spend) within one transaction, is considered less painful for the consumer than if the purchases are made separately. No correlation was found between consumer spend and their willingness to purchase extra legroom or a full meal service.

Whilst three quarters of both business and leisure passengers were united in their decision not to purchase 3" extra legroom, a marginally higher proportion of leisure passengers were unwilling to pay for a full meal service compared to their business counterparts. The findings are in stark contrast to the 'peak' consumption Wang (2002) suggests leisure travellers are more likely to assume during their holidays, a time when they are free from both temporal and financial constraints. Wang postulates that during this period, individuals are not only more likely to spend more than they do in their everyday life, but be more luxurious in their spending too. Whilst Wang's assumptions refer to the holiday in its broadest context, it appears the frivolous approach to spending that may be adopted in the destination, is not reflected in the journey to the destination.

Although not part of the main findings to this research, some of the comments made by respondents during the attitudinal pilot study conducted at BHX noted '*I'm not interested in what the airline has to offer*', '*just want to get to the destination*', '*flying is a means to an end...it is not important which airline we fly with*'. The small sample from which these comments were derived is acknowledged, nevertheless the comments are insightful and demonstrate that leisure passengers do not always perceive the flight as part of the holiday. Further research on this matter would be insightful in developing greater understanding of WTP amongst airline passengers for services.

10.12 Safety and security

The thoroughness with which airlines and airports approach safety and security is significant to the extent to which passengers perceive the procedures to be good or bad. That is, the more thorough the search, the better passengers perceive it to be. However, the extent to which it is deemed intrusive is not considered to have any significance upon it being considered good or bad. The findings are supported by recent research undertaken by Mitchener-Nissen et al (2011) who found a high public acceptance of full body scanners (which by virtue of their nature are more thorough than pat-downs). The research highlighted a preference for the body scanners as they are considered less intrusive and also quicker than the body pat-down.

Comments from respondents to the attitudinal survey did however indicate a tiring of safety and security procedures that are in place, particularly within the airport environment. Emphasis upon the relaxation of measures currently upheld was evident in the comments offered by respondents and a need for safety and security to be dealt with on a case basis as opposed to airports and airlines' following universal rules, was made. The recognition of such sentiments is supported by a recent announcement from the Transport secretary Phillip Hammond that a consultation is now under way to review the measures in place at airports in an attempt to "move away from the current highly-prescriptive, one-size-fits-all approach" and offer greater flexibility to UK airports (Travel Weekly, 2011c).

10.13 Boarding and seating

Passengers that travelled with LCCs largely considered the aircraft to be cramped, whilst those that travelled with FSCs on the whole felt that the seating area was spacious. Differences were also found in the comfort levels experienced by passengers of different carrier types and individual airlines. FSC passengers on the whole experienced greater comfort that LCC passengers, with BA passengers reportedly more comfortable on their last flight than both Ryanair and easyJet passengers. There was no difference assumed in the comfort levels experienced by Ryanair and easyJet passengers, both of which are LCCs. Unsurprisingly comfort is highly correlated to the amount of personal space passengers have onboard.

Passengers travelling with FSCs and charter airlines reported greater comfort than passengers that travelled with LCCs and had a smaller seat pitch.

The time taken to board the aircraft (quick or slow) is considered by passengers to be an indicator of the airline's efficiency. Passengers that travel with airlines that board by seat row consider the airline to be more efficient than passengers who travel with an airline that boards on a 'first come, first served basis', often referred to as a scrum. This finding is interesting given that the airlines with the quickest turnaround time are usually those that employ non-allocated seating.

Nevertheless, academic research into the boarding process has found boarding by seat row and back-to-front boarding to actually be the two slowest methods (Steffen and Hotchkiss, 2011) whilst other research argued that use of front and back door access with sheep pens and allocated seating is fastest (Nyquist and McFadden, 2008). In their research Steffen and Hotchkiss recognised that the random boarding and unallocated seating approach adopted by many LCCs, fares particularly well, as the random boarding approach avoids space conflicts. Nevertheless they propose that the Steffen approach is the fastest method, alternating the rows that are boarded using a window-middle-aisle strategy.

Perhaps of greatest importance is the fact that there is a difference in the attitudes held by airline passengers towards aircraft boarding and seating processes. In reality, the perception held that airlines boarding using the standard row procedure, whilst appearing to be organised, are arguably the least efficient.

10.14 Onboard service standards

A positive relationship is evident between the perceived helpfulness of airline cabin crew and the efficiency with which they deliver on-board service. Airlines deemed to have the most helpful crew (largely FSCs) were also deemed to be the most efficient by passengers in delivering the in-flight service. The findings are indicative of what Bokaie (2007) suggested is an era in which airline passengers are emerging as more discerning and caring about how they are treated by LCCs and in consequence as is evident here, considering more closely their choice of airline.

To this end, whilst this study did not consider habitual purchase behaviour, Bandura's (1973) *observational modelling* theory would be usefully employed to explore the implications of on-board service on the basis of what Hawkins et al. (1986) differentiated between repeat purchase and loyal consumers. Further research would be welcomed to explore further the implications of onboard service for airline choice over time.

The attitudinal survey also highlighted, in agreement with research by Müller and Gosling (1991) and Humphreys et al. (2002) that business and leisure passengers do hold different perceptions of airline service levels, but within each group similar service levels are expected. Where business passengers thought the aircraft was cleaner and the on-board service more efficient, leisure passengers found the cabin crew to be more helpful.

10.15 Food and drink

Food and drink consumed by LCC passengers emerged as less filling than food and drink consumed by both FSC and charter airline passengers. It was also considered to be blander in taste than food served on FSC and charter flights. To this end, the research found that respondents who purchased their food and drink on board the aircraft were less satisfied (in respect of being full and enjoying the taste of their food) than respondents whose meal was inclusive to the cost of their flight or those that had purchased the meal ahead of travel (i.e. at the time of booking). Given that the respondents travelling with LCCs have to part with their cash at the time of consuming the food/drink could be intrinsic to this attitude.

Nevertheless, a third of respondents that considered the food and drink they consumed as unacceptable travelled with FSCs. Passenger perception could be a key factor here, with FSCs deemed to offer a better quality of service which may be perceived to include a better standard of food. The SERVQUAL model as proposed by Parasuraman et al. (1985) would help to highlight the gap that exists between passenger's perceptions and expectations.

Comments from passengers also indicated that class of travel was significant as to whether respondents liked or disliked the food and drink they consumed, with those travelling in all classes other than economy, complimentary about the meal service. The extent to which a passenger considers the food and drink they consume to be acceptable, is also highly correlated to whether or not they like it.

10.16 Reliability and convenience

Female passengers emerged as those most likely to feel stressed or anxious about the reliability and convenience of their flight. A strong correlation was also found between the feelings of reassured/anxious and calm/stressed. That is, passengers who were reassured of the reliability/convenience of their flight were most likely to feel calm, whilst those who were anxious displayed signs of stress. Feelings of stress and anxiety were highest amongst passengers that travelled with Ryanair and BA – two very different carriers.

The timing of this research maybe significant to this finding, as too is the general perception held by passengers of both airlines. Ryanair has emerged within this research as an airline that attracts a great deal of negative press and has been well documented to have left passengers stranded when flights are delayed or cancelled (Guardian, 2009). The negative attention that the airline received during the time this research was undertaken was rife; with Ryanair at the centre of claims they were negligent in paying compensation to passengers affected by the ash cloud (Guardian, 2010). Elsewhere, BA was also amidst ongoing strike action by cabin crew over changes to staff benefits, with the impact said to be detrimental to its brand and encouraged loyal BA customers to switch to alternative airlines (Ritson, 2010).

Airline efficiency was also highly correlated to the feeling of reassurance, yet the relationship between the two was not significant for passengers that travelled with Ryanair. This finding is interesting and could indicate that the negative press that the airline has attracted could be influential. With a perception that the airline is unreliable, no matter how efficient it may be, passengers may feel that the airline has the ability to let passengers down and assume no responsibility for inconvenience or out of pocket monetary loss. Thus explaining the weak connection between the two variables.

10.17 Advertising and branding

A clear theme to have emerged from this research is that airline advertising and branding assumes a back seat in the decision-making process of many airline passengers. Nevertheless it does appear to sub-consciously affect the decisions airline passengers make.

Whilst FSC advertising and branding emerged as more outstanding (superior), less pretentious, more tasteful and truthful than that of LCCs, a significant difference was not found between LCC advertising and that of charter airlines, nor that of FSCs and charter airlines. The greatest difference in attitudes towards airline advertising and branding on each semantic scale lay between the carriers that adopted distinctly different business models.

Amongst the airlines specifically, the advertising employed by easyJet was considered to be more outstanding and truthful than that of Ryanair, whilst the advertising employed by BA was also considered as a more trusted source than Ryanair. Interestingly, when BA's advertising was compared with that of Virgin Atlantic Airways it was considered less superior (outstanding) to its FSC rival. No difference emerged in the extent to which advertising used by Ryanair and easyJet was considered tasteful/tacky.

Whilst trust is seen as a differential in airline advertising and branding it is not linked to the use of 'tacky' or *garish* advertising campaigns. It is however likely that high profile investigations such as that by the OFT in 2007 which found thirteen airlines culpable of misleading passengers by not including all fixed and non-optional costs in the advertised price, could be symptomatic of such an attitude.

It is interesting to see that classical conditioning as a form of associative learning, no longer appears a key factor in the pre-trip decision-making process and choice of airline (particularly where LCCs are concerned), for both business and leisure passengers. As Pavolv recognised (see Gross, 2005), repetitive exposure to previously neutral stimuli can elicit a response because of its association with an unconditioned stimulus, thus automatically producing the same or similar response. Whilst airline passengers may have at one time symptomatically considered LCCs as the cheapest flight alternative by virtue of the high profile advertising campaigns littering newspapers and billboards (Field, 2008), it would appear that airline passengers are increasingly wise and untrusting of the LCC business model having found that the headline price is not always representative of the total cost.

Zajonic's *mere exposure effect* was considered within the literature review as an explanation/extension of classical conditioning (Zajonic, 1968 cited in Malim and Birch, 1998), suggesting that the frequency an individual meets with an attitude object (stimulus), will influence their perception of it. Zajonic's theory was considered here in reference to the advertising and branding of airlines and whilst the comments offered by respondents to the attitudinal survey were largely indifferent, with many not aware of any advertising and branding, others did infact suggest that the frequency with which an individual meets the advertising and branding of an airline can influence their perception of it, infrequently demonstrated a positive outcome.

Ryanair emerged in the most negative light with comments suggesting the advertising and branding was '*too bold and looks very uncomfortable inside the aircraft'*, whilst another respondent noted '*this was one reason I chose Aer Lingus over Ryanair, which would receive the worst levels on these measures*' and another added '*I do find the constant chatter of promotional material* *during Ryanair flights and the trumpeting fanfare if the plane arrives even nanoseconds early to be extremely irritating indeed'*.

10.18 Ash cloud

As a final point, the recent ash cloud event is considered and the implications for air travel decision-making and pre-trip research. Importantly, it must be recognised that the unprecedented nature of this event means that academic literature currently could not be located pertaining to its impact on the travelling public and implications for travel decisions. Literature surrounding the subject matter appears to focus largely upon the more technical aspects of the volcano eruption on air travel.

Overwhelmingly three quarters of respondents to the attitudinal survey suggested that they would not change their travel behaviour as a result of the ash cloud, a finding supported by TNS data (Costley, 2010). Of those that did indicate a change in behaviour, the majority were women. Women also emerged as those most likely to worry about the measures taken by authorities to resolve the ash cloud crisis, in addition to the safety of travelling by air during the period in which the ash cloud was a concern. This finding is consistent with earlier research that highlighted women as being more inclined to worry than men, particularly in crisis situations (Stavosky and Borkovec, 1998).

The worry experienced by air passengers was highly correlated to the perceived level of safety surrounding the ash cloud and the implications for air travel. Those that felt the situation was unsafe for flights to continue operating were worried about the situation, with the opposite true when the situation was deemed safe.

LCC passengers also indicated greater concern over the ash cloud and its implications for air travel than their FSC counterparts, although there were not significant differences in the attitudes of LCC and charter passengers or between FSC passengers and charter airline passengers. Interestingly however, whilst Ryanair passengers emerged as more worried than BA passengers, there was not a significant difference between Ryanair and easyJet passengers and BA and easyJet passengers. The positioning of easyJet as a LCC moving in the direction of FSC territory in respect of its business operations could be influential to this finding (CAPA, 2010c), with passengers arguably of the opinion that the airline is more reliable than a traditional LCC.

Passengers who felt in greatest control of their travel plans during the ash cloud crisis, travelled long haul. This finding is interesting given that there is increased scope to use alterative transport modes on short-haul routes, nevertheless low cost traffic was reportedly hardest hit, whilst long-haul flights that were reinstated quickest after the event (Eurocontrol, 2010).

There is no evidence to suggest that business passengers felt more or less control of their travel plans during the ash cloud crisis than leisure passengers, nor was a relationship found between the perceived level of control over travel plans during the period and respondents inclination to change their travel behaviour in the future.

10.19 Summary

Chapter 10 has brought together the key findings from the BHX structured interviews and online attitudinal survey results that were discussed in chapters 8 and 9 respectively, and considered the findings here in light of the literature that was reviewed in the early chapters.

The discussion has highlighted the validity of the research findings that have emerged from this study and illustrated that key differences do exist in the characteristics and attitudes of airline passengers that travel with LCCs, FSCs and charter airlines. It is not the intention of this summary to readdress all of the key points again here; suffice to say this will be dealt with in section 11.4 of the following chapter. It is however appropriate to draw attention to the differences that have emerged not only between passengers of different carrier types as to the research and decision-making approach adopted and attitudes held, but also between passengers that travel with airlines that operate the same business model. Section 11.5 in the subsequent chapter presents a passenger classification that seeks to highlight the key characteristics of airlines passengers that have been identified here.

Chapter 11 will now present the conclusions of this study and the recommendations for further research that have emerged, but within the confines and limitations of this work, have been impracticable to pursue futher.

11. Conclusions and recommendations

11.1 Introduction

The previous chapter brought together the key findings of this study and revisited the literature discussed in chapter 2 and 4 to substantiate the research findings. It is the purpose of chapter 11 to therefore highlight the original contribution of this research to knowledge, whilst recognising its limitations and recommendations for future research.

It is important to begin by reiterating the aim of this study, which was 'To identify key characteristics and attitudes of airline passengers, with particular emphasis upon the low-cost sector: implications for pre-trip decision-making and airline choice.'

In sections 11.2 to 11.5 the objectives of this research will be readdressed and the conclusions pertaining to each objective summarised, by way of addressing the research aim. Section 11.6 will offer a reflection of the chosen approach, highlighting the benefits and limitations of the study, before section 11.7 considers the recommendations for further research.

11.2 To understand the changing nature of the UK airline industry and implications for airline business models

The UK airline industry has undergone tremendous change in the years following deregulation, with the introduction of LCCs in particular imparting the greatest change onto the industry. The impact of the of the low-cost model has been far reaching, not only in facilitating greater access to air travel through the removal of fare restrictions and introduction of a streamlined service, but in respect of airline competition and benefits to the travelling public.

The transformation has not however occurred in isolation, with social mobility facilitating change within everyday life. Although not exclusive to, but largely as a result of the economic, socio-cultural, technological and environmental changes that have and continue to be significant in the increasingly fluid lifestyles of individuals, the airline industry has evolved partly in response to the changes within society.

The passenger aviation sector within the UK has arguably reached a point of saturation, with what would appear to be little room left for further innovation to take place. The business models of traditional FSCs, LCCs and charter airlines are themselves becoming increasingly fluid, with increased blurring of business models rife. There also exists within each model, variation of the archetypal framework.

At one extreme the LCCs have stripped back the business model to its bare bones (Ryanair), whilst others demonstrate an increasing shift towards the FSC market (easyJet and Flybe). In some areas the FSC on the other hand remains true to the full service model, although there is little evidence of this within the UK. A foreign premium carrier such as Emirates provides a good example. In the UK BA has, whilst trying to retain its traditional offerings, found itself embroiled in cost cutting and consequentially removing many of the elements that once set it apart from its rivals. This is arguably most evident within economy class where competition from LCCs is most prevalent. Elsewhere, in recent years the charter airline has too begun to adopt traits of the low cost model, unbundling the airline product and allowing the passenger to (some degree) build a tailored service.

To remain operational, let alone profitable, the fundamental approach appears to lie (to a large extent) in airlines remaining true to their original business model, without deviating too far from the central core of their business operations. In reality, airline business models are becoming increasingly blurred and airlines are in danger of not only losing sight of who they are but ultimately their passengers by virtue of no longer meeting their needs and expectations.

To this end, this research seeks to help strengthen the market position of airlines and develop further understanding of the preferences that air travellers have with airlines operating under all three broad business models.

Further, the research has highlighted where air travellers are dissatisfied with the service they receive, thus airlines can seek to address gaps in service quality where appropriate.

Understanding of the pre-trip research in which potential passengers engage in the early stages of choosing their flight is intrinsic to airlines seeking to forecast and strengthen the market share of their business operations and demand for products and services across all classes of travel (where appropriate). Where different levels of service quality are offered, products and services should be tailored to better meet the needs of passengers across all cabins, in what is an increasingly saturated marketplace. Whilst this has long been the role of airline marketers, the ever-changing nature of the industry means that attention to detail across all aspects of business operations is greater than ever - a key finding to emerge from this study.

It is the intention that the findings of this study be used to facilitate airlines and airports alike in focusing their marketing and promotional efforts into specific areas of business operations. For airlines seeking to strengthen their market share of the business sector for example, promotional strategies targeted at secretaries and business travel agents would serve airlines well, given that much of the research undertaken for this segment of the travelling market is outsourced. Elsewhere, offering incentives to high street travel agents who sell charter flights and packages to the ageing population may seek to capture greater market share of what appears to be an ever-growing sector. Whilst for LCCs specifically, given that the majority of research is undertaken by the potential traveller themselves using airline and online travel agency websites, up-front, clear and targeted marketing focused specifically upon the consumer is likely to be most beneficial in securing not only one-off, but repeat flight bookings.

11.3 To investigate the evolution of passenger operations at Birmingham Airport

The inception of low-cost carrier at BHX has been fundamental to the growth of the regional airport and its market position. The implications for airline competition, the airport portfolio and in consequence, passenger choice, have been far reaching. The airport has witnessed deep-rooted changes to its core passenger operations. Moving away from a portfolio heavily reliant on charter operations and relatively strong European scheduled services, it today retains its high passenger yield traffic, but also benefits from the growth in long-haul operations and growing low-cost base.

BHX has seen passenger numbers fall in recent years, most likely a knock-on effect of the downturn in the economy. Yet with increased investment in new and existing airport infrastructure, there is optimism that BHX will emerge from the doldrums fighting.

The growth of LCCs at the airport has been meteoric, with Ryanair having come from nowhere to holding the position of largest airline by passenger numbers within just a few years (BIA, 2009). Charter airlines, as was proven in section 3.5 retain the hold on 'sun' routes, yet the competition brought about by LCCs has opened upon once monopolized routes, providing passengers with greater choice and seat availability.

It is likely that BHX will continue to expand its long-haul routes, taking advantage of the Emirates regional base at the airport and seek to expand its operations further into Asia. More locally, it would appear that attention remains upon developing the low cost product, whilst seeking to sustain its strong charter provision.

11.4 To evaluate the pre-trip decision-making process and attitudes of airline passengers. What differentiates low cost passengers from full-service and charter airline passengers?

Central to the findings of this research is the fact that the attitudes and behaviour articulated by LCC and FSC passengers are in general, at greatest odds with one another, whilst the attitudes and behaviour expressed by charter passengers largely maintain a middle ground. To this end, charter passengers are perhaps most diverse in their attitudes, spanning a broader spectrum of opinion.

This study has found socio-demographic variables as significant in the differentiation of airline passengers. Age, gender, cultural background, income and social influences are powerful in the decision-making process and choice of airline. Trip purpose is to an extent, also indicative of carrier and airline choice, whilst carrier type also bears significance as to the total items of luggage passenger's check-in.

The extent to which passengers engage in research ahead of booking flights is relatively consistent across carriers, yet age, socio-economic status and trip purpose are also influential as to the research methods employed. Use of airline websites in the research process is dominant amongst the majority of passenger groups, nevertheless booking confidence; experience and knowledge also dictate the methods of research passengers employ.

Armed with this information airlines may consider investing further in the user experience of potential customers when researching and ultimately booking flights online, with particular attention given to those who lack confidence in the research and booking process. With increased emphasis upon online sales in order to drive down distribution costs, one strategy airlines may consider pursuing is the development of an interactive online guide (e.g. a video tutorial), using video media to *walk-and-talk* would-be customers through the online booking process. Such a facility may offer much needed support and guidance to potential customers that particularly lack the experience and confidence of researching and booking flights online. Further, from the airlines perspective, the tool may also potentially draw some consumers away from engaging with other research methods and mitigate potential loss of sales via third party retail outlets.

Elsewhere, in seeking to address consumer confidence, most notably where it is recognised as low (e.g. when researching and booking flights with LCCs), this research found the reputation of certain airlines to exist independently of passenger experience. That is, individuals were found not to have necessarily needed first hand experience of researching/booking a flight or to have travelled with an airline in order to form a negative opinion of it. To this end, some potential and quite simplistic strategies would seek to minimise the negative perception that so often surrounds (although not exclusively) LCCs in respect of their booking process.

To improve the customer experience airlines would do well to adopt clear pricing structures and ensure that all costs are presented up-front and that the headline price is reflective of the final cost the consumer pays. Whilst it is recognised that many airlines have made great strides in this area, there still remains room for improvement. Easy to navigate websites would also greatly improve the customer experience and as mentioned above, seek to minimise the frustration of many who feel that they have to check and double check the webpage for fear of ‘being caught out’.

An online video tutorial such as that considered above or use of a virtual assistant (e.g. someone that offers real time information and advice to customers online – as is used by the telephone company O2 for example) or webinars (held at regular times to allow customers to ask questions on the spot); whilst potentially expensive, could in the long-run capture a new breed of online shopper and seek to retain customers who are increasingly wary of purchasing flights online.

Where flight bookings are concerned, leisure passengers were found to book their flights with the longest lead-time, with cost central to the decision-making process. At the same time, business passengers book closer to departure, with work schedules indicative of booking administration. Whilst this study found that more than half of airline passengers personally book their flight(s), age is indicative as to whether the booking process is outsourced. Socio-economic status was not found to be influential in the booking process however, with the Internet in particular used to administer bookings by airline passengers across all socio-economic groups.

Airline passengers have largely emerged as confident and experienced in booking flights independently and informed as to the flight options available to them. A strong correlation was found amongst the three factors. For leisure passengers who outsource the booking administration, choice of destination emerged as a key stipulation when booking flights, whilst dates of travel assume precedence for business passengers.

The study identified airline websites as the most popular tool by which to book flights for all airline passengers, but online agency websites, high street travel agents and online tour operators are also widely used (particularly by leisure passengers). After airline websites, BTA's appear most popular amongst business passengers.

Passenger trust in airline pricing policies was also found to vary between carriers, with LCCs faring worst. Previous experience is instrumental in the trust passengers assume; yet as before, travel experience with an individual carrier is not necessarily indicative of attitude formation and behaviour.

Once at the airport, airline passengers associate good airline/airport safety and security checks with the implementation of thorough processes, yet intrusiveness is not considered reflective of thoroughness or how good or bad the processes are. Boarding procedures emerged as variable amongst carrier types, with charter airlines perceived as slow when boarding and LCCs considered worst overall for their unruly, scrum like boarding processes. Efficiency was found to be associated with the speed of boarding and on this point LCCs rate highly.

To counteract the negative publicity that surrounds the boarding of the aircraft, LCCs such as Ryanair who do not adopt a pre-assigned seating policy, may do well to promote the benefits of the boarding strategy they employ. By educating travellers on the boarding approach adopted by the airline and perhaps as with many of the marketing campaigns that are used by LCCs, the airline could present a comparison as to how long it takes to board the aircraft with them in contrast to their competitors (e.g. simply advertising the variable times taken by airlines to board the aircraft). Such a promotional campaign may seek to add justification as to why some airlines do not pre-assign seating and also highlight the time and monetary savings to the customer of such an approach. In turn, airlines may see the complaints surrounding their boarding and seating policy, which remains a real gripe for many, reduce significantly.

Onboard space and comfort is also variable amongst carriers, with FSCs and charters offering the highest levels of service, yet differences are not obvious in airlines operating the same business model. Efficiency and crew helpfulness are also considered to be at their best on FSC operated services. Similarly, the taste and satisfaction experienced by passengers that consume food and drink is changeable amongst carriers, with LCCs fairing worst. Central to this finding is the time at which airline passengers pay for their food and drink. Airline passengers that pay at the time of consumption are generally less likely to be satisfied with what they consume, than passengers that pay for food and drink at the time of booking or have the cost inclusive to their flight price.

On this point, airlines that charge for food onboard the aircraft (namely LCCs and charter airlines) may do well to offer customers the opportunity to pre-book food and drinks at the point of administering their booking. The benefits of doing so would be two-fold. First, in offering a pre-bookable service for onboard catering, based upon the research findings highlighted here, it is likely that the passenger would derive greater satisfaction from the food and drink they consume than if they were to purchase it onboard. Secondly, the airlines themselves would also seek to benefit from the forward sales that may be generated, in that there may be less product waste onboard (particularly where fresh food is concerned) as the carrier has some indication of sales prior to take-off.

The study also found flight reliability to be synonymous with passenger stress and anxiety levels, with efficiency also considered an indicator of reliable and convenient flight operations. Whilst some airlines are already making good use of social media such as Twitter and Facebook to advise passengers in real-time of delays to their flight, more airlines and airports too, would do well to engage further in communications with passengers and keeping them advised of changes to their travel plans. As a relatively inexpensive method of communication, the real-time information that can be relayed via social media would undoubtedly go a long way towards better meeting the needs of passengers.

Where airline advertising and branding is concerned, FSC passengers perceive marketing activities as more outstanding (superior), less pretentious, more tasteful and truthful than that of LCCs, whilst charter airline passengers adopt a middle ground between the two carrier types. Nevertheless, charter airline passengers were found to consider LCC advertising and branding as less tasteful than that employed by charter airlines. Beyond the differences that exist between carriers, this study also identified differences in the attitudes held by passengers using similar carriers, i.e. LCC and LCC (i.e. easyJet and Ryanair) and FSC and FSC (BA and Virgin), as to the advertising and branding campaigns employed.

Neither business or leisure passengers nor male and female passengers were found to differ significantly in their liking of LCCs. Whilst LCCs are considered to offer a basic product, they have also been identified as a source of cheap air travel. A helpful LCC crew helps to create airline likability.

Whilst FSCs are expensive, they do offer ‘frills’ and are liked by the majority of air passengers. Male passengers did however emerge as the most difficult to satisfy and account for the majority that dislike FSCs.

As a final point, this research has found that airline passengers do not consider the ash cloud to have been so significant as to bring about a change in their attitudes and behaviour towards air travel. Nevertheless, FSC and LCC passengers are at considerable odds as to the worry they assumed as a result of the ash cloud, with charter passengers again occupying a middle ground.

To reassure passengers of this real and potential threat to their travel plans, airlines would do well to learn from their past handling of similar events and strive to put in place clear and digestible policies that set out where the passenger stands, should their travel plans be affected by the ash cloud. Whilst the majority of airline passengers were found to be indifferent in their view of the ash cloud, there remains a segment of the population that would welcome the availability of such information in the likelihood of such an event occurring again.

Whilst the recommendations proposed within this section are for the benefit of all airlines seeking to improve the passenger experience, it is also recognised that such enhancements may be an anathema to the core values of some, most notably Ryanair. Having created a successful business model that to date has shunned large investment in the passenger experience; it is unlikely that in the short-term such improvements will be adopted by an airline fitting the Ryanair model. Whilst the consumer may adopt a different viewpoint, from the airline’s perspective, they may adopt the approach ‘if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it’.

11.5 To develop a classification highlighting key characteristics and attitudes of airline passengers based upon their pre-trip decision-making

Whilst this research lent heavily upon tourism literature as to potential classifications/typologies, little was found within the context of aviation and airline passengers. What exists within the current academic literature (largely within the field of tourism) focuses principally upon the behaviour of the tourist once in the destination; with little emphasis upon the journey to the destination. Additionally, most definitions focus upon recreational (leisure) tourism.

Based upon the findings of this research, the classifications that follow seek to categorise airline passengers by way of key characteristics that signify the passengers of different carrier types, with a focus upon their pre-trip decision-making. As with Cohen's typology (1972 cited in Hudson, 2000), the classifications are not considered as fixed. It is believed that dependent upon a variety of situational factors and reflective of socio-demographic factors, passengers may assume different roles throughout their air travel career. The classification is also reflective of travel from a regional airport.

For each carrier type, passengers are segmented by domestic, short haul and long haul travel (where appropriate). The classification label for each profile is shown in red alongside the business model specification. The approximate percentage market share for each passenger type is also shown in brackets – a matter that will be discussed in more detail at the end of this section. The classification is situated in the context of BHX where the surveys were conducted, to this end it is considered to be representative of UK regional airports, but clearly different proportions would apply at other types of airport.

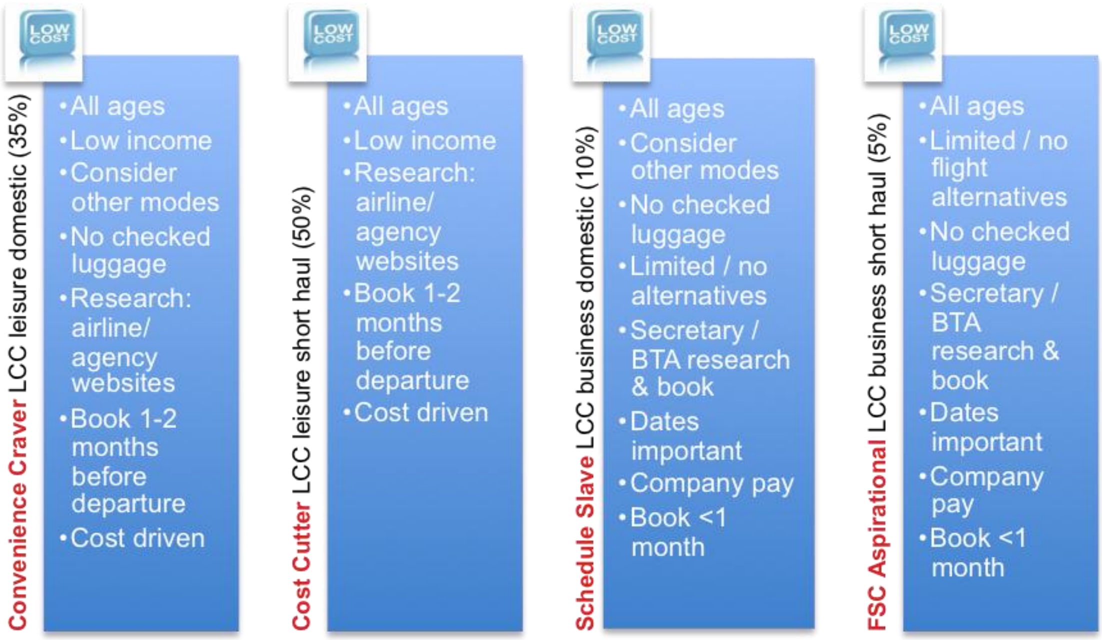

Figure 6: Classification of LCC passengers

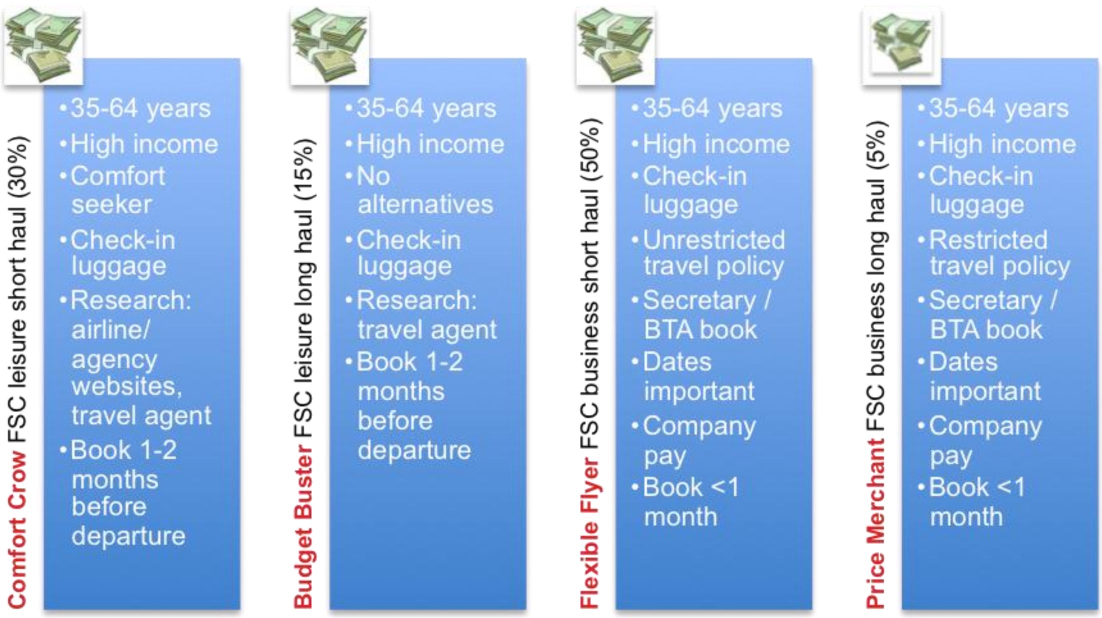

Figure 7: Classification of FSC passengers

Figure 8: Classification of charter passengers

Note: Percentages given for each classification are approximate.

As is evidenced, the classifications proposed seek to highlight the complexity of the UK passenger market in a simplistic manner and serve as the end product to the much more detailed research that took place in order to develop the model.

The classifications draw upon the research findings to highlight key differentials of passengers travelling with LCCs, FSCs and charter carriers. Subtle differences are recognised amongst passengers travelling with a particular carrier type based upon their distance of travel.

The labels attached to each classification were chosen to add meaning to the attributes and overall passenger profile, thus allowing for recognition of key passenger markets.

To this end, the classifications inherently serve a dual purpose. As the first published independent and academic profile of airline passengers to be based upon pre-trip decision-making, the research adds to an ever-growing field of knowledge. Yet, perhaps from a more practical viewpoint, the classifications seek to facilitate airline awareness and recognition of how passengers are undertaking their pre-trip travel research.

For airlines in particular, but airports too, the classification is seen as a sound market research tool in helping to better meet the needs of passengers through an understanding of how and why decisions pertaining to pre-trip research are made relative to socio-demographic variables. Further, the findings are central to the marketing activities undertaken by third parties such as travel agents and online brokers.

As was discussed in section 11.4, the importance of this research for airlines and airports should not be underestimated. Here, the role of the proposed classifications is to equip both service providers with an understanding of how air travellers (across all three airline business models) assimilate their travel motivations and arrive at a choice as to which airport to fly from and with which carrier to make their journey with.

With awareness as to how these decisions are made, both airlines and airports can seek to increase their market share and deliver services that are focused primarily upon the key markets they attract and ultimately look to limit / deflect the threat of competition. The choice of marketing strategy adopted and channels of promotion employed, can also be refined further to better meet the needs of potential customers long before the air traveller experiences first-hand the services provided at the airport and on-board the aircraft. In turn this will seek to further strengthen the customer-service provider relationship in its early stages.

To build upon the implications of the classifications in determining market share, the findings highlight significant data for airlines (and airports too), in terms of forecasting and determining the potential success of product features and potential new routes.

Where LCC passengers are concerned, the Cost Cutter (LCC leisure short haul passenger) constitutes approximately 50% of the market, with the Convenience Craver (LCC leisure domestic passengers) also comprising a respectable 35% of the market share. Perhaps unsurprisingly, LCC business passengers represent the smallest percentage of travellers within this group, with the Schedule Slave holding approximately 10% of the market and the FSC Aspirational passenger (LCC business short haul passenger) making up the remaining 5% share.

Based upon the analysis of the market, it is clear that short haul leisure passengers generate the majority of passenger traffic, whilst short haul business passengers making least use of the services on offer. The results are telling for airline marketers in tailoring their products and services to meet the needs of their prime market and offer consideration as to the feasibility of increasing the market share of the smaller passenger segments.

Elsewhere, the Flexible Flyer (FSC business short haul passenger) dominates the FSC market, with the Comfort Crow (FSC leisure short haul passenger) also taking up a significant share at approximately 30%. The Budget Buster meanwhile (FSC leisure long haul passenger) represents approximately 15% of the market, whilst the Price Merchant (FSC business long haul passenger) signifies just 5%. This latter finding is significant and supports the notable shift away from long haul business travel that has been witnessed within recent years. Additionally, the availability of long haul routes from regional airports could also be influential.

The results highlight that short haul routes operated by FSCs attract the greatest levels of demand for both business and leisure markets, with the limited availability of direct, long haul routes from regional airports perhaps central to this finding. The development of long-haul routes away from larger hub airports is one area that FSCs might seek to consider. Whilst the percentage of passengers travelling for both business and leisure purposes on long-haul FSCs assumes a small percentage of the total market, as before, it is likely that supply-side considerations are more likely to be at the root of influencing the market profile, as opposed to the demand for such services.

Lastly, the charter market also demonstrates significant data in terms of its constitution. Dominating the market is the Package Hound (charter leisure short haul passenger), representing approximately 70% of the sector's market share, whilst Assurance Seekers (charter leisure long haul passengers) make up a much smaller, yet significant proportion of the market representing approximately 25%. The Reluctant Rider meanwhile (charter business short haul passenger) signifies perhaps unsurprisingly, the smallest share at just 5% of the total.

The significance of the short haul leisure market should not be underestimated by either airlines or regional airports, with much to be gained from seeking to continuously meet the needs of passengers within this group. It is unlikely given the nature of the product, that charter flights will ever assume any meaningful significance in the flight choices available to business passengers. With this in mind, charter airlines may do well to remain loyal to their core market.

Clearly, for airlines, these findings highlight where the market strengths lie and indicate where promotional campaigns and new product features should be directed. Further, as has been briefly touched upon, the passenger groups that constitute a much smaller proportion of the market should also be considered. Airlines may seek to nurture and develop the smaller markets that they attract or indeed limit their spend and development of new routes and product features directed specifically towards such passengers.

Regional airports can too seek to benefit widely from the data that is presented here. From the perspective of the airport provider, the classification is valuable to service providers of non-aeronautical revenues that operate within and around the terminal buildings. The information can thus be used to ensure that products and services are well matched to the travelling public and yield the highest revenues possible.

11.6 Reflecting on the chosen approach

The research methods employed in this study were sound in achieving the research objectives; nonetheless it is important at this stage to identify the strengths and limitations of the chosen research approach. Airport based research is commonplace within aviation, with the CAA and ONS regularly undertaking large-scale public surveys, nevertheless academic research within the airport environment is limited, particularly within the airside area. To this end, the interviews that were held at BHX were sound in that they were able to lean upon the robust methodology employed by the CAA and ONS (although the former was largely utilised for comparative purposes) and target airline passengers at the place of consumption.

Whilst it would have been preferential to survey passengers at the point of purchase, as was the method used by Caussade and Hess (2009) to seek avoidance of memory loss and misinterpretation, the method of interviewing passengers at the airport was in hindsight, preferential as it allowed for a diverse passenger population to be interviewed and removed the implications of focusing solely on web-based bookings and just one carrier type/airline. If similar research is undertaken within the airport environment, specific attention should be given to monitoring the numbers of passengers interviewed. An over representation of Flybe passengers within the sample at times implicated the results and caused problems for data interpretation.

The financial limitations of the research process proved restrictive in that the available financial resources would not stretch to the collection of attitudinal data in the airport environment. Use of the online attitudinal survey did however work well, capturing attitudes of airline passengers from around the world. In hindsight the online survey would have benefited from wider distribution to alleviate emphasis upon specific groups of the population (i.e. the large number of respondents that worked in academia).

Application of a higher-level of statistical analysis to the attitudinal survey findings using a method such as Principal Component Analysis (PCA) would also have helped to further the statistical emphasis of the research data. Use of the semantic scale approach in further research would be likely to generate more statistically robust data analysis if the PCA technique were employed, as is advocated by Osgood et al. (1957) the pioneers of the attitude measurement scale.

11.7 Recommendations for further research

The findings of this research seek to assist airlines (particularly LCCs) in better meeting the needs of airline passengers and understanding and interpreting their attitudes of air travel. Whilst the study has identified key areas of differentiation between airline passengers, its scope has been limited within the confines of the research aim. It is therefore the intention of section 11.7 to identify areas in which additional research could be undertaken to further explore the differences that exist between airline passengers of different carrier types.

Further segmentation of airline passengers by trip purpose, i.e. beyond business and leisure travel to include for example VFR and hen and stag groups would help to identify the implications of decision-making within particular travel contexts. Such research would benefit either from a longitudinal study to identify changes in individual decision-making over time or trip purpose. Different travel situations as was considered by Cosenza and Davis (1981 cited in Hyde, 2000) and Crotts (2000) in reference to general travel decision-making may be another avenue of research that could be explored. Additionally, whilst difficult to measure, it would be interesting investigate whether an individual's mood is influential as to the research they conduct ahead of booking a flight and/or whether mood can influence carrier and airline choice.

Alternatively, a stated preference survey could help to explore such patterns of choice and examine the trade-offs that are made by individuals when seeking to book a flight. Possible scenarios could employ choice sets that use variables such as flight price, destination, the boarding process, catering, distance to the airport, security wait time, luggage allowance and comfort to explore the importance of the individual variables upon airline choice. Whilst the stated preference technique has been employed widely within transport research, its application to aviation and in particular within the field of low-cost transport is less researched. Such exploratory research would help airlines to better understand the trade-offs that passengers make when choosing which airline to fly with and help align the pricing of auxiliary services in particular, more akin to the willingness to pay of airline passengers.

The profile of BHX as a regional airport was restrictive in that it did not lend itself to fully explore whether substantial differences exist in the pre-trip decision-making process of airline passengers of different nationalities based upon their cultural background. The localised nature of the study did not benefit from a diverse geographical sample that would have facilitated an exploration of the cultural implications of decision-making and airline choice.

Further research as to why airline passengers do or do not check-in hold luggage would also be of value and seek to offer airlines greater understanding of choices made where luggage is concerned. With increasing numbers of airlines seeking to charge to check-in hold luggage, Spirit Airlines a Florida based carrier offers a good example of an airline that has already made the step to charge for cabin-baggage, with Allegiant Air on the cusp of a similar move (Parker Brown, 2011). There is evidence to suggest that this is one area in which further changes should be anticipated, particularly within the low-cost sector.

Income emerged within this study as a factor influential to airline/carrier choice, with low-income passengers most likely to use LCC services. The study did not however explore the income of passengers on particular routes on which there is direct competition between different carrier types. Whilst the routes operated from BHX may inhibit such research, from a larger airport such as LGW, a comparison of passenger income on, for example, a traditional ‘bucket and spade’ route such AGP or ALC would explore whether differences exist in airline choice based upon income on routes where direct competition exists. On similar lines, income data could also be matched with passenger trips per year (for leisure passengers), but with use of smaller trip frequency groupings than those that were used here.

This research explored the limitations and restrictions placed upon employees through company travel policies, yet it did not consider whether the size of the organisation is influential. Previous research conducted by Mason (2001) and Evangelho et al. (2005) concluded that there is a direct link between organisational size and company travel restrictions, yet given the dated nature of both studies and the critical economic climate in which organisations currently find themselves, it would be interesting to see whether such differences still exist.

Elsewhere, the attitudinal survey in particular highlighted a level of mistrust amongst many airline passengers, particularly low cost passengers, where the advertised flight cost is concerned. Supported by consumer group and non-ministerial government enquiries (OFT, 2010), this research has identified some of the investigations that have been undertaken to alleviate misleading advertising, yet there remains no research as to the point at which and why, airline passengers continue with their booking despite feeling mislead/cheated.

As a final point, whilst this research considered the 'tools' used by airline passengers to undertake research, it did not delve into the more complex issue of how many times individuals visited a website, travel agent and other source, before confirming their flight, nor how the information was accessed (i.e. via a mobile or traditional PC). Greater understanding of why some passengers use just one research tool and others a wide range, how individuals are accessing information, in addition to the depth of research undertaken (i.e. surface or deep research,) would offer airlines increased scope to better meet the needs of their passengers.

11.8 Conclusion

Low cost air travel is widely documented within academic literature for having revolutionised the air travel industry. Whilst there is a wealth of literature pertaining to the business models employed by airlines and the blurring of the traditional models as a result of the low cost era, there is little evidence as to the decision-making processes passengers employ and choices they make in choosing which airline to fly with. There has also been a lack of research undertaken on the UK market and in particular at regional airports. This research has sought to contribute knowledge within this branch of academic study. It has found that key differences do exist in the decision-making processes and choices airline passengers make, that lead them to fly with a particular carrier / airline. Whilst socio-demographic factors are inherent to the choice process, situational factors are also pertinent. Attitudes, whether based upon actual experience or social representation, are also central to airline choice.

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Appendix 1: Preliminary Question

Are you a visitor to Birmingham? (If answer is no, explain unable to interview as survey focuses upon visitors to the City)

Motivations for Trip

Q1 Why have you come to Birmingham?

Q2a Was Birmingham your first choice of destination for this trip?

Q2b If you answered NO to question 2a, what other alternative destinations did you consider?

Q2c Why did you choose to visit Birmingham as opposed to any of the alternative destinations?

Q3 Where is the main place you are visiting or staying at, in the Birmingham area?

Decision Making

Q4 What mode of transport did you use to get to Birmingham?

Q5a Did you consider alternative modes of transport in getting to Birmingham?

Q5b If alternatives were available, what were they?

Q5c Why did you disregard the alternative modes of transport?

Q6a If the cost of getting to Birmingham had been twice the amount you had paid with the carrier you arrived with, would you have still continued with your journey?

Q6b If you answered NO to question 6a, what alternative action would you have taken?

Air Ticket

Preliminary Question

Did you arrive by air? If yes, continue to Q7. If no, proceed to Q14

Q7 When was your air ticket purchased?

Within the last week	☐	1-3 months ago	☐
1-2 weeks ago	☐	More than 3 months ago	☐
2-4 weeks ago	☐		

Q8 Where did you book your air ticket?

Q9a If you booked your air ticket online, what website did you use?

Q9b Did you use any other websites when looking to book your air ticket? If so, what websites?

Q10a What airline did you fly with?

Q10b Why did you choose to fly with the airline stated in Q10a?

Q10c Did you consider flying with any alternative airlines? If so, what airlines?

Q11a How much did you pay for your air ticket?

Q11b Are you able to provide a breakdown of your ticket price? If so, what are the different charges that make up the total cost?

Q12 Are you aware that an Air Passenger Duty (APD) tax is levied on your flight? If so, do you know what the tax is charged for?

Q13a Did you pay to check your luggage into the hold?

Q13b If you paid to check your luggage into the hold, how much did it cost?

Frequency of Air Travel

Q14 How many times have you flown in the last 12 months?

Q15 Have you been to Birmingham before?

Additional Information

Q16 Where are you from?

Q17 Including you, how many people are in your travel party?

Q18 What is your annual household income?

£0-£9,999	☐	£10,000-£19,999	☐
£20,000-£29,999	☐	£30,000-£39,999	☐
£40,000-£49,999	☐	£50,000-£59,999	☐
£60,000-£69,999	☐	£70,000-£79,999	☐
£80,000-£89,999	☐	£90,000-£99,999	☐
£100,000 +	☐	Other	☐
Prefer not to say	☐		

Q19 Which of these age groups do you come into?

18-29 yrs ☐ 30-39 yrs ☐ 40-49 yrs ☐ 50-59 yrs ☐ 60+ yrs ☐

Q20 What gender are you?

Male ☐ Female ☐

Appendix 2: Which? No-frills questionnaire

Further to your reply to the 'Help Wanted' request on the subject of no-frills airlines (e.g. Ryanair, easyJet and Jet2), we would like to thank you once again for your contributions and ask for your assistance in completing the questions below to further inform us of the decisions that you made when booking your last no-frills flight and in-hindsight, if you would make similar decision in the future. Thinking about your most recent flight with a no-frills airline, please answer the questions below:

Section 1: Your last journey with a no-frills airline

Q1 Where did you travel to on your last no-frills flight?

……………………………………………………………………………………..

Q2 Which airline did you fly with?

……………………………………………………………………………………..

Q3 What airport in the UK did you fly from?

……………………………………………………………………………………..

Q4 What was the purpose of the trip stated above?

Business	☐	Visit Friends and Relatives	☐
Leisure	☐	Other (Please specify)	☐

Q5 Was the airport stated above, your first choice of airport to fly from? If your answer is no, please indicate why you chose to fly from this airport and what your first choice airport was?

Yes ☐

No ☐ Please specify ……………………………………………………………

Q6 How far in advance of your trip did you purchase your airfare?

Within the same week of travel	☐	1-3 months before	☐

1-2 weeks before	☐	More than 3 months before	☐
2-4 weeks before	☐		

Section 2: Pre-trip decision making

Q7 Who made your flight booking?

You	☐	Travel agent/tour operator as part of holiday package	☐
Partner	☐	Other (Please specify)	☐
Colleague	☐		

Q8 If someone else other than you made the booking, did you offer guidance as to where you wanted to go, your maximum spend, what airline you wanted to fly with etc?

Yes ☐ Please specify ……………………………………………………

No ☐

N/A ☐

Q9 Did you consider using any alternative modes of transport before purchasing your last no-frills flight?

Yes	☐	No	☐

If yes, please indicate the mode(s) of transport you considered below

Train	☐	Car	☐
Taxi	☐	Boat / ferry	☐
Bus / coach	☐	Other (Please specify)	☐

Q10 If you did compare alternative modes of transport, why did you ultimately choose to fly with the no-frills airline stated above?

…………………………………………………………………………………………

Q11 Did you consider any other airlines before booking your last no-frills flight with the airline stated above? If yes, please indicate what airline(s) you considered and your reason for not flying with them

Yes ☐ Please specify ……………………………………………………

No ☐

Q12 When you booked your last no-frills flight, did you visit any other airline websites, price comparison sites (e.g. Skyscanner), use an online agency (e.g. Expedia) or consult a travel agent to compare the cost?

Yes ☐ Please specify ………………………………………………………

No ☐

Q13 If you explored alternative ways of booking your flight, why did you decide not to use other methods?

……………………………………………………………………………………

Section 3: The cost of your last no-frills flight

Q14a How much did you pay for your last return no-frills flight (per person)?

……………………………………………………………………………………

Q14b What services were included in the total cost of your last no-frills flight?

Taxes and Charges	☐	In-flight meal	☐
Pre-bookable seats	☐	Priority boarding	☐
Check-in charge	☐	Extra legroom	☐
Check bag(s) into hold	☐	Travel insurance	☐
Credit/debit card charge	☐	Other (please specify)	☐

Q15 Would you consider the price you paid for your last no-frills flight to have been cheap?

Strongly disagree ☐

Disagree ☐

Neither agree nor disagree ☐

Agree ☐

Strongly agree ☐

Q16 If the price of your flight had been more than you were happy to pay, what action would you have taken?

Continued with the journey to the same destination regardless ☐

Continued with travel, but visited another destination ☐

Not travelled ☐

Changed the dates/times of travel to get a cheaper flight price ☐

Other (please specify) ☐

Section 4: Airline services

Q17a Were you happy with the service that your received onboard the flight?

Strongly disagree ☐

Disagree ☐

Neither agree nor disagree ☐

Agree ☐

Strongly agree ☐

Q17b If your airfare had been 20% more than the total price you paid for the air ticket, would you have been happy with the service that you received?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐

Q17c Please explain your answer to Question 17b?

……………………………………………………………………………………….

Q18 Considering your last no-frills flight, how much more would you have been willing to pay (per person, on top of your basic fare) for 3 inches more legroom on-board the aircraft?

Nothing	☐	£10 - £14	☐
£1 - £4	☐	£15+	☐
£5 - £9	☐		

Q19 Considering your last no-frills flight, how much more would you have been willing to pay (per person, on top of your basic fare) for a hot meal, dessert and snack on-board the aircraft (excluding drinks)?

Nothing	☐	£10 - £14	☐
£1 - £4	☐	£15+	☐
£5 - £9	☐		

Section 5: Air travel behaviour

Q20 Before your last no-frills flight, did you have previous experience of having flown with both a no-frills airline and a full-service airline?

Yes	☐	Don't know	☐
No – only flown no-frills	☐	No – only flown full-service	☐

Q21 How many return flights (with any airline) have you made within the last 12 months?

1 – 4	☐	10 – 14	☐
5 – 9	☐	15+	☐

Q22 How much in advance of your flight departure time did you arrive at the airport check-in?

Less than 1 hour	☐	3 – 4 hours before	☐
1 – 2 hours before	☐	More than 4 hours before	☐
2 – 3 hours before	☐		

Q23a If the UK government had introduced a compulsory £10 carbon tax onto the total price of both your outbound and inbound flight, what action would you have taken?

Continued with the journey to the same destination regardless ☐

Not travelled ☐

Other (please specify) ☐

Q23b If the UK government had introduced a compulsory £20 carbon tax onto the total price of both your outbound and inbound flight, what action would you have taken?

Continued with the journey to the same destination regardless ☐

Not travelled ☐

Other (please specify) ☐

Q23c If the UK government had introduced a compulsory £30 carbon tax onto the total price of both your outbound and inbound flight, what action would you have taken?

Continued with the journey to the same destination regardless ☐

Not travelled ☐

Other (please specify) ☐

Section 6: Personal Information

Q24 In which town/city/district have you mainly been living for the last 12 months?

……………………………………………………………………………………………

Q25 How many people (including yourself) were travelling with you on your last no-frills flight?

……………………………………………………………………………………………

Q26 What is your main occupation (or previous occupation if retired)?

……………………………………………………………………………………………

Q27 Which of these age groups do you come into?

18 - 29 yrs	☐	50 – 59 yrs	☐
30 - 39 yrs	☐	60 – 69 yrs	☐
40 - 49 yrs	☐	70 – 80 yrs	☐
80+ yrs	☐		

Q28 What gender are you?

Male ☐ Female ☐

Appendix 3: BHX business passenger structured interview format

	Birmingham International Airport and University of Westminster **2010 Business Passenger Survey**	

My name is Jane Edwards and I am a PhD student at the University of Westminster. The aim of this questionnaire is to understand the pre-trip decision making of airline passengers and explore what motivated you as an air passenger to fly from Birmingham International Airport today with the airline that will take you to your destination.

The information from this survey will be used to inform Birmingham International Airport and the airlines that operate from the airport, as to what motivates passengers in their travel decisions. The results of the research will be published as an academic report, as conference presentations and as a recommendation report to Birmingham International Airport.

The information that you provide is entirely confidential and will not be disclosed to any third parties.

The questionnaire will take approximately 5 minutes to complete.

I would like to thank you in advance for taking the time to complete this questionnaire and in appreciation of your help, would like to offer you the chance to win £100 in Selfridges vouchers. If you would like to be considered for the draw, please write your email address / contact details below so that you I can notify you in the event that you win (Your details will NOT be used for any other purposes).

Date / /

Q1 Which airline are you flying with today?

Q2 What destination are you travelling to?

Q3 What time does your flight depart?

Q4 Including yourself, how many people are travelling in your immediate group? (Please CIRCLE)

Just you	2	3	4	5+

Q5 How many items of luggage (in total) did you check in today? (Please CIRCLE)

None	1	2	3	4+

Q6a When was this trip booked? (Please CIRCLE)

<1 month ago (Please state)	1-2 months ago	2-3 months ago	3-6 months ago	> 6 months ago

Q6b Why did you book your fight when you did?

Q7 Who is paying for your flight? (Please TICK)

You	☐	Client	☐
Company	☐	Other (please specify)	☐

Q8a Would you have preferred to travel from a different airport today? (Please TICK)

Yes ☐ (Continue to Q8b)

No ☐ (Continue to Q9a)

Q8b Please state what airport you would have preferred to travel from?

Q8c Why did you want to travel from the airport stated in Q8b?

Q9a Was any mode of surface transport considered to get you to your final destination as opposed to flying? (Please TICK)

Yes ☐ (Continue to Q9b)

No ☐ (Continue to Q10)

Q9b What travel options were considered as alternative(s) to using the plane (Please TICK)

Train	☐	Car	☐
Taxi	☐	Boat / ferry	☐
Bus / coach	☐	Other (Please specify)	☐

Q10 Why did you ultimately choose to fly from Birmingham International Airport today? (Please TICK)

Close to home	☐	Flights full from preferred airport	☐
Closest / only airport to serve destination	☐	Other (Please specify)	☐

Q11a Did you book the flight yourself? (Please CIRCLE)

Yes (continue to Q12)	No (Continue to Q11b)

Q11b Who booked your flight? (Please TICK)

Secretary	☐	Company	☐
Colleague	☐	Business Travel Agent	☐
Don't know	☐	Other (please state)	☐

Q11c Did you offer the person that booked your flight any advice about the destination / airport / price / travel time etc? If yes, please state what advice did you gave.

Yes ☐ Please explain

No ☐ Please explain

Q12 Was your choice of flight restricted by a company travel policy or could you fly with any airline? If it was restricted, please explain what restrictions were in place.

Q13 Thinking about the research that was undertaken before booking today's flight, what travel services were used? (Please TICK)

Internet	Airline's website (e.g. Ryanair, Emirates, Lufthansa)	☐
	Online agencies (e.g. Expedia, Opodo)	☐
	Tour operator (e.g Thomas Cook, Thomson)	☐
Business Travel Agent	Business travel agent	☐
Phone	Telephone (Call centre)	☐
TV	Television (e.g. Teletext, Holiday shopping channel)	☐
Company	Company travel department	☐
Other	Other (Please specify)	☐
Don't know can't recall	Do not know or cannot recall	☐

Q14 Where was your air ticket purchased? (Please TICK)

Internet	Airline's website (e.g. Ryanair, Emirates, Lufthansa)	☐
	Online agencies (e.g. Expedia, Opodo)	☐
	Tour operator (e.g. Thomas Cook, Thomson)	☐
Business Travel Agent	Business travel agent	☐
Phone	Telephone (Call centre)	☐
TV	Television (e.g. Teletext, Holiday shopping channel)	☐
Company	Company travel department	☐
Other	Other (Please specify)	☐
Don't Know	Don't know	☐

Q15a Do you have a: Single Ticket ☐ Return Ticket ☐

Q15b Were your flight and accommodation booked separately? (Please CIRCLE)

Yes (Continue to Q15c)	No (Continue to Q15d)

Q15c How much did this flight cost (return), including ticket, tax and other charges (but excluding insurance)? (Please CIRCLE)

< £100 (Please state)	£100-£200	£200-£300	£300-£400	£400+ (Please state)	Don't know

Q15d How much did your flight and accommodation cost (excluding insurance)? (Please CIRCLE)

< £100 (Please state)	£100-£200	£200-£300	£300-£400	£400-£500	£500-£600
£600-£700	£700-£800	£800-£900	£900-£1000	£1000+ (Please state)	Don't know

Q16 Do you consider that the price paid for your ticket represents value for money?

Yes ☐ Please explain

No ☐ Please explain

Q17 Considering the flight you are about to take, how much more would you have been willing to pay (per person, on top of your basic fare) for 3 inches more legroom on-board the aircraft? (Please TICK)

Nothing	☐	N/A (included in cost)	☐
£1-4	☐	£5-9	☐
£10-14	☐	£15-19	☐
£20+	☐		

Q18 Considering the flight you are about to take, how much more would you have been willing to pay (per person, on top of your basic fare) for a full meal service (excluding drinks)? (Please TICK)

Nothing ☐ N/A (included in cost) ☐

£1-4 ☐ £5-9 ☐

£10-14 ☐ £15-19 ☐

£20+ ☐

Q19 How many return flights have you taken in the last 12 months – to any destination? (Please CIRCLE)

0 - 4	5 - 9	10 - 14	15 - 19	20 - 24
25 - 29	30 - 34	35 – 39	40 – 44	45+

Q20a How many times in the last 12 months have you flown to the destination you are visiting today from Birmingham International Airport (not including this trip)? (Please CIRCLE)

0 - 4	5 - 9	10 - 14	15 - 19	20 - 24
25 - 29	30 - 34	35 – 39	40 – 44	45+

Q20b If you travel frequently by air for business purposes have you considered reducing you air travel i.e. by teleconferencing or re-locating the business? Please explain your answer

---

Q21 Are you:

Male ☐ Female ☐

Q22 Which of these age groups do you come into? (Please CIRCLE)

16 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 – 54	55 – 64	65 – 74	75+	Prefer not to say

Q23 What is your marital status?

Q24 In which country have you been living in for the last 12 months?

UK ☐

Other (Please state) ☐

Q25 What is your postcode? (First part only i.e. B77)

Q26 How many people (including you) live in your household? (Please CIRCLE)

Just you	2	3	4	5+

Q27 What is your main occupation?

Q28 Can you indicate from this card the total ANNUAL income that applies to you BEFORE tax and other deductions?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.
Your help is very much appreciated

Appendix 4: BHX leisure passenger structured interview format

BIRMINGHAM INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT	**Birmingham International Airport and University of Westminster** **2010 Leisure Passenger Survey**	UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER

My name is Jane Edwards and I am a PhD student at the University of Westminster. The aim of this questionnaire is to understand the pre-trip decision making of airline passengers and explore what motivated you as an air passenger to fly from Birmingham International Airport today with the airline that will take you to your destination.

The information from this survey will be used to inform Birmingham International Airport and the airlines that operate from the airport, as to what motivates passengers in their travel decisions. The results of the research will be published as an academic report, as conference presentations and as a recommendation report to Birmingham International Airport.

The information that you provide is entirely confidential and will not be disclosed to any third parties.

The questionnaire will take approximately 5 minutes to complete.

I would like to thank you in advance for taking the time to complete this questionnaire and in appreciation of your help, would like to offer you the chance to win £100 in Selfridges vouchers. If you would like to be considered for the draw, please write your email address / contact details below so that you I can notify you in the event that you win (Your details will NOT be used for any other purposes).

Date / /

Q1 Which airline are you flying with today?

Q2 What destination are you travelling to?

Q3 What time does your flight depart?

Q4 Including yourself, how many people are travelling in your immediate group? (Please CIRCLE)

Just you	2	3	4	5+

Q5 How many items of luggage (in total) did you check in today? (Please CIRCLE)

None	1	2	3	4+

Q6a When was this trip booked? (Please CIRCLE)

< 1 month ago	1-2 months ago	2-3 months ago	3-6 months ago	> 6 months ago

Q6b Why did you book your fight when you did?

Q7 What did you choose first? (Please TICK)

- Flight (i.e. airline, date) ☐
- Destination (i.e. hotel, resort, country) ☐
- N/A (booked as a package – with one combined price for both accommodation & flight) ☐

Q8a Would you have preferred to travel from a different airport today? (Please TICK)

Yes ☐ (Continue to Q8b)

No ☐ (Continue to Q9a)

Q8b If yes, please state what airport you would have preferred to travel from?

Q8c Why did you want to travel from the airport stated in Q8b?

Q9a Was any mode of surface transport considered to get you to your final destination as opposed to flying? (Please TICK)

Yes ☐ (Continue to Q9b)

No ☐ (Continue to Q10)

Q9b What travel options were considered as alternative(s) to using the plane? (Please TICK)

Train	☐	Car	☐
Taxi	☐	Boat / ferry	☐
Bus / coach	☐	Other (Please specify)	☐

Q10 Why did you ultimately choose to fly from Birmingham International Airport today? (Please TICK)

Close to home	☐	Better price from Birmingham Airport than preferred airport	☐
Closest / only airport to serve destination	☐	Other (Please specify)	☐

Q11 Did you book the flight yourself? (Please CIRCLE)

Yes (continue to Q13)	No (Continue to Q12a)

Q12a If someone other than you booked the flight, who was it? (Please TICK)

Spouse / Partner	☐	Other relative	☐
Part of holiday package	☐	Friend	☐
Don’t know	☐	Other (please state)	☐

Q12b Did you offer the person that booked your flight any advice about the destination / airport / price / travel time etc? If yes, please state what advice did you gave.

Q13 Thinking about the research that was undertaken before booking today’s flight, what services were used? (Please TICK)

Internet	Airline’s website (e.g. Ryanair, Emirates, Lufthansa)	☐
	Online agencies (e.g. Expedia, Opodo)	☐
	Tour operator (e.g. Thomas Cook, Thomson)	☐
High Street	High street travel agent	☐
Phone	Telephone (Call centre)	☐
TV	Television (e.g. Teletext, Holiday shopping channel)	☐
Other	Other (Please specify)	☐
Can’t remember or Don’t know	Can’t remember or do not know	☐

Q14 Where was your air ticket purchased? (Please TICK)

Internet	Airline's website (e.g. Ryanair, Emirates, Lufthansa)	☐
	Online agencies (e.g. Expedia, Opodo)	☐
	Tour operator (e.g. Thomas Cook, Thomson)	☐
High Street	High street travel agent	☐
Phone	Telephone (Call centre)	☐
TV	Television (e.g. Teletext, Holiday shopping channel)	☐
Other	Other (Please specify)	☐
Don't Know	Don't know	☐

Q15a Do you have a: Single Ticket ☐ Return Ticket ☐

Q15b Were your flight and accommodation booked separately? (Please CIRCLE)

Yes (Continue to Q15c)	No (Continue to Q15d)

Q15c How much did this flight cost (return) including ticket, tax and other charges (but excluding insurance)? (Please CIRCLE)

< £100 (Please state)	£100-£200	£200-£300	£300-£400	£400+ (Please state)	Don't know

Q15d How much did your flight and accommodation cost (excluding insurance)? (Please CIRCLE)

< £100 (Please state)	£100-£200	£200-£300	£300-£400	£400-£500	£500-£600
£600-£700	£700-£800	£800-£900	£900-£1000	£1000+ (Please state)	Don't know

Q16 Do you consider that the price paid for your ticket represents value for money?

Yes ☐ Please explain

No ☐ Please explain

Q17 Considering the flight you are about to take, how much more would you have been willing to pay (per person, on top of your basic fare) for 3 inches more legroom on-board the aircraft? (Please TICK)

Nothing	☐	N/A (included in cost)	☐
£1-4	☐	£5-9	☐
£10-14	☐	£15-19	☐
£20+	☐		

Q18 Considering the flight you are about to take, how much more would you have been willing to pay (per person, on top of your basic fare) for a full meal service (excluding drinks)? (Please TICK)

Nothing	☐	N/A (included in cost)	☐
£1-4	☐	£5-9	☐
£10-14	☐	£15-19	☐
£20+	☐		

Q19 How many return flights have you taken in the last 12 months – to any destination? (Please CIRCLE)

0 - 4	5 - 9	10 - 14	15 - 19	20 - 24
25 - 29	30 - 34	35 – 39	40 – 44	45+

Q20 How many times in the last 12 months have you flown to the destination you are visiting today from Birmingham International Airport (not including this trip)? (Please CIRCLE)

0 - 4	5 - 9	10 - 14	15 - 19	20 - 24
25 - 29	30 - 34	35 – 39	40 – 44	45+

Q21 Are you:

Male ☐ Female ☐

Q22 Which of these age groups do you come into? (Please CIRCLE)

16 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 – 54	55 – 64	65 – 74	75+	Prefer not to say

Q23 What is your marital status?

Q24 In which country have you been living in for the last 12 months?

UK ☐

Other (Please state) ☐

Q25 What is your postcode? (First part only i.e. B77)

Q26 How many people (including you) live in your household? (Please CIRCLE)

Just you	2	3	4	5+

Q27 What is your main occupation?

Q28 Can you indicate from this card the total ANNUAL income that applies to you BEFORE tax and other deductions?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.
Your help is very much appreciated

Appendix 5: Online attitudinal survey

Air Travel Attitudinal Survey

Your last flight

1. Thinking about the most recent flight that you have taken, which airline did you fly with?

2. What was the main purpose of your trip?

- Business
- Leisure

3. Which airport did you depart from?

4. What destination did you travel to?

5. How long ago did you make the outward journey?

< 1 month ago | 1-2 months ago | 2-4 months ago | 4-6 months ago | > 6 months ago

6. Did you book the flight yourself? *

Yes | No

Next

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Air Travel Attitudinal Survey

7. Where was your air ticket purchased?

- ◯ Airline's website (e.g. Ryanair, Emirates, Lufthansa)
- ◯ Online agencies (e.g. Expedia, Opodo)
- ◯ Tour operator website (e.g. Thomas Cook, Thomson)
- ◯ Business travel agent
- ◯ High street travel agent
- ◯ Telephone (All bookings made over the telephone)
- ◯ Television (e.g. Teletext, Holiday shopping channel)
- ◯ Company travel department
- ◯ Other
- ◯ Can't remember

Back Next

Air Travel Attitudinal Survey

Your travel attitudes

Thinking about when you booked your flight online (using the internet), please consider the pairs of words below and select ONE button on each line that best describes how you felt when making the booking.

Confident	○	○	○	○	○	Nervous
Cautious	○	○	○	○	○	Impulsive
Informed	○	○	○	○	○	Uninformed
Thorough	○	○	○	○	○	Careless
Quick	○	○	○	○	○	Slow
Experienced	○	○	○	○	○	Inexperienced

14. If you have any further comments about booking your flight online, please feel free to add them here.

Back Next

Air Travel Attitudinal Survey

Your travel attitudes

Thinking about the cost of your last flight, please consider the pairs of words below and select ONE button on each line that best describes how you feel about the price you paid for the flight.

Cheap	○	○	○	○	○	Expensive
Truthful	○	○	○	○	○	Misleading
Important	○	○	○	○	○	Unimportant

18. If you have any further comments about the cost of your last flight, please feel free to add them here.

Back Next

Air Travel Attitudinal Survey

Your travel attitudes

Thinking about the boarding process and seating on your last flight, please consider the pairs of words below and select ONE button on each line that best describes the boarding process and seating.

Efficient	○	○	○	○	○	Inefficient
Quick	○	○	○	○	○	Slow
Orderly	○	○	○	○	○	Scrum
Spacious	○	○	○	○	○	Cramped
Comfortable	○	○	○	○	○	Uncomfortable

29. If you have any further comments about the boarding process and seating on your last flight, please feel free to add them here.

Back Next

Air Travel Attitudinal Survey

Your travel attitudes

Thinking about the service standards on board the aircraft during your last flight, please consider the pairs of words below and select ONE button on each line that best describes the level of service you received.

Clean	○	○	○	○	○	Dirty
Helpful	○	○	○	○	○	Unhelpful
Efficient	○	○	○	○	○	Inefficient

33. If you have any further comments about the service standards onboard the aircraft, please feel free to add them here.

Back Next

Air Travel Attitudinal Survey

Your travel attitudes

34. Did you consume any food or drink on your last flight (either included in the cost of your flight or purchased on-board)?

◯ Yes ◯ No

Back Next

Air Travel Attitudinal Survey

Your travel attitudes

Thinking about the food and drink that was served during your last flight, please consider the pairs of words below and select ONE button on each line that best describes your impressions of the food and drink that you consumed.

Filling	○	○	○	○	○	Insufficient
Cheap	○	○	○	○	○	Expensive
Like	○	○	○	○	○	Dislike
Acceptable	○	○	○	○	○	Unacceptable
Tasty	○	○	○	○	○	Bland

40. Was the food and drink included in the cost of your flight or did you purchase it onboard during the flight?

☐ Included in the cost of the flight

☐ Purchased on board during the flight

41. If you have any further comments about the food and drink served during your last flight, please feel free to add them here.

Back Next

40

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Air Travel Attitudinal Survey

Your travel attitudes

Thinking about the reliability and convenience of your last flight, please consider the pairs of words below and select ONE button on each line that best describes what you thought of the service and how the flight made you feel.

Efficient	○	○	○	○	○	Inefficient
Calm	○	○	○	○	○	Stressed
Reassured	○	○	○	○	○	Anxious

45. If you have any further comments about the reliability and convenience of your last flight, please feel free to add them here.

Back Next

56%

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Air Travel Attitudinal Survey

Your travel attitudes

What do you think about the advertising and branding used by the airline that you last travelled with? Please consider the pairs of words below and select ONE button on each line that best describes how you feel about the airline's advertising and branding.

Outstanding	○	○	○	○	○	Terrible
Modest	○	○	○	○	○	Pretentious
Tasteful	○	○	○	○	○	Tacky
Truthful	○	○	○	○	○	Misleading

50. If you have any further comments about the airline's advertising and branding, please feel free to add them here.

Back Next

63%

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Air Travel Attitudinal Survey

Your travel attitudes

Thinking about low cost airlines in general (e.g. Ryanair and easyJet), please consider the pairs of words below and select ONE button on each line that best describes your impression of such airlines.

Helpful	○	○	○	○	○	Unhelpful
Like	○	○	○	○	○	Dislike
Spacious	○	○	○	○	○	Cramped
Luxurious	○	○	○	○	○	Basic
Cheap	○	○	○	○	○	Expensive

56. If you have any further comments about low cost airlines in general, please feel free to add them here.

Back Next

69%

Air Travel Attitudinal Survey

Your travel attitudes

Thinking about full service/traditional airlines in general (e.g. Emirates, British Airways), please consider the pairs of words below and select ONE button on each line that best describes your impression of such airlines.

Frills	○	○	○	○	○	No-frills
Cheap	○	○	○	○	○	Expensive
Like	○	○	○	○	○	Dislike
Luxurious	○	○	○	○	○	Basic
Helpful	○	○	○	○	○	Unhelpful
Spacious	○	○	○	○	○	Cramped

63. If you have any further comments about full service/traditional airlines, please feel free to add them here.

Back Next

75%

Air Travel Attitudinal Survey

Your travel attitudes

Thinking about the recent disruption caused by the Ash Cloud, please consider the pairs of words below and select ONE button on each line that best describes the impact the Ash Cloud has had on your attitude and behaviour towards air travel on UK domestic and European flights.

No-change	○	○	○	○	○	Change
Re-assured	○	○	○	○	○	Worried
Safe	○	○	○	○	○	Dangerous
Controllable	○	○	○	○	○	Uncontrollable

68. If you have any further comments about disruption caused by the Ash Cloud, please feel free to add them here.

Back Next

81%

Air Travel Attitudinal Survey

About You

69. Are you:

Male Female

70. Which of these age groups do you come into?

-- Please Select --

71. What is your marital status?

-- Please Select --

72. In which country have you been living for the last 12 months?

-- Please Select --

73. What is your postcode (First part only i.e. B77)

74. How many people (including you) live in your household?

-- Please Select --

75. What is your main occupation?

76. Please select from the list, the income group that represents your ANNUAL income BEFORE tax and other deductions.

-- Please Select --

Back Next

88%

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Air Travel Attitudinal Survey

New Page

77. All responses to this survey are anonymous, but if you would like to take the opportunity to be entered into a draw to win £100 of Amazon vouchers for taking the time to complete the survey, please enter your email address here. Your details will not be used for any other purpose.

Back Submit

94%

Air Travel Attitudinal Survey

Thank You!

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your response is very much appreciated.

100%

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