

Ministry of Higher Education

King Fahd University of Petroleum & Minerals

COLLEGE OF INDUSTRIAL MANAGEMENT

OFFICE OF THE DEAN



وزارة التعليم العالي

جامعة الملك فهد للبترول والمعادن

كلية الادارة الصناعية

مكتب العميد

October 12, 1997

Dr. Khalid I. Al-Sulaiti
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Sub: Acceptance of your manuscript for the conference on "Administrative Sciences: New Horizons and Roles in Development"

Dear Dr. Al-Sulaiti:

I am pleased to inform you that your manuscript entitled, "*Qatari Consumers' Perceptions and Selections of Domestic vs. Foreign Airline Services*," has been accepted for presentation at the forthcoming scientific conference going to be held on 16-18 March, 1998. Your manuscript has been very much enjoyed by reviewer. He spent a lot of time to prepare some suggestions and comments. These are being forwarded to you.

You are requested to please send a **diskette 3.5"** (MS Word or WP) containing your above manuscript.

Looking forward to see you here.

Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

Dr. Mohammed A. Al-Sahlawi
Chairman, Scientific Committee of the Conference on
"Administrative Sciences: New Horizons and Roles in Development"

Encl: As stated above.

Comments by Reviewer

- 1) Sample frame of Qatari teachers should reflect behavioral information regarding their frequency of airline use and whether such flights are paid for by the employer or out of the "teacher's pocket" i.e. the effect of price on H1.
- 2) Change title to reflect "Teacher's perceptions".
- 3) Literature review is impressive, however, for a 1996/97 study, the methodology and instrument are superficial at best.

UNIVERSITY OF STRATHCLYDE

Department of Marketing

**QATARI CONSUMERS' PERCEPTIONS AND SELECTIONS OF
DOMESTIC VS. FOREIGN AIRLINE SERVICES**

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Qatari Consumers' perceptions and Selections of Domestic vs. Foreign Airline Services

Abstract

A questionnaire was distributed to 324 consumers to determine the effect of country of origin (COO) on their perceptions and selections of Gulf versus non-Gulf airline carriers. Results indicated that country of origin significantly affects consumers intention to fly with a foreign or a domestic carrier.

Background

Country of origin effects have been defined in many ways in the literature. According to Wang and Lamb (1983) country of origin effects are intangible barriers to enter new markets in the form of negative consumer bias toward imported products. Johansson, Douglas and Nonaka (1985) and Ozsomer and Cavusgil (1991) define country of origin as the country where corporate headquarters of the company marketing the product or brand is located. Typically, this is the home country for a company. Country of origin is inherent in certain brands. IBM and Sony, for example, imply US and Japanese origins, respectively (Samiee, 1994). Bilkey and Nes (1982), Cattin et al. (1982), Han and Terpstra (1988), Lee and Schaninger (1996), Papadopoulos et al. 1993 and White (1979), define the product's country of origin as "the country of manufacture or assembly". It refers to the final point of manufacture which can be the same as the headquarters for a company. According to Samiee (1994) "country of manufacture pertains to firm that maintains a relatively large global network of operations or do business with a variety of suppliers, e.g., contract manufacturing" (p. 581). While, Bannister and Saunders (1978), Chasin and Jaffe (1979) and Nagashima (1970, 1977) used the term "made in----"¹ to define the country of origin of the product.

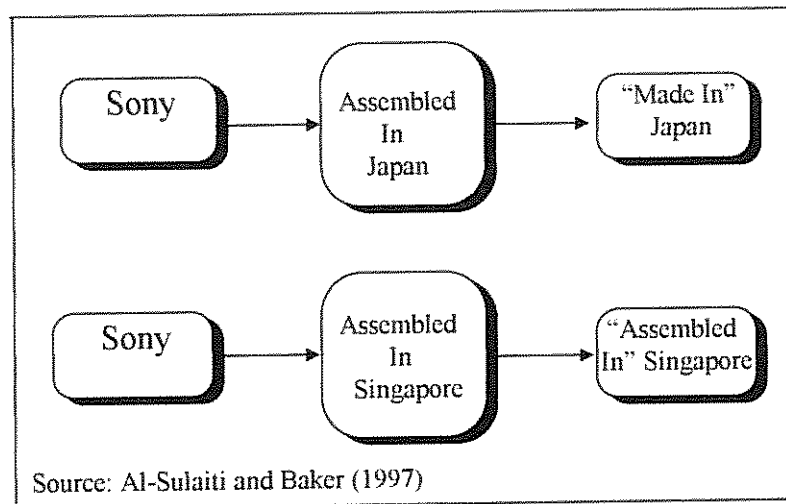
In the modern market place defining the country of origin can be a very complicated task. The growth of multinational companies and the evaluation of hybrid products² with components from many source countries, have in many cases blurred the accuracy or validity of made in ----" labels (Baker and Michie 1995; Baughn and Yaprak 1993; Chao 1993; Yaprak and Baughn 1991). For example, Sony is a Japanese manufacturer but some of its products are assembled outside Japan in a country like Singapore (Baker and Michie, 1995). With this example, the product assembled in Singapore would be denoted "assembled in Singapore" and that

¹ "Made in" can mean *manufactured-in* but also *assembled-*, *designed-*, or *invented-in*, *made by a producer whose domicile is -in*, and, often *wanting to look like it was made-in* (Papadopoulos 1993, pp. 4).

² Hybrid products are products that contain components or ingredients made in various countries (Baughn and Yaprak 1993, p. 90).

assembled in Japan would be considered as “made in Japan” (see figure 1).

Figure 1
Country of Origin Definition



Baker and Currie (1993) suggested that the country of origin concept should be considered a fifth element of the marketing mix along with the product itself, its price, promotion and distribution. Since the mid-1960s, the country of origin effects have been the impetus for a number of studies. Most of these studies have found that country of origin of a product does affect product evaluation (Al-Sulaiti and Baker 1997; Baker and Currie 1993; Baker and Michie 1995; Bilkey and Nes 1982; Ozsomer and Cavusgil 1991; Thakor and Katsanis 1997; Yaprak and Baughn 1991). However, the issue of how much influence the country of origin cue provides in product evaluations is not yet decided and therefore opinions appear to differ widely (Baker and Currie, 1993). Several studies, referred to in Olson and Jacoby (1972), conclude that intrinsic cues (a product's characteristics such as taste, design and performance) have greater effect on quality judgements than do extrinsic cues (considerations associated with the product such as price, brand name and warranties). Therefore, country of origin (an extrinsic) cue might have only a limited influence on product quality perceptions (Bilkey and Nes 1982; Thakor and Katsanis 1997).

In addition, most of these studies involve single cue models (e.g., the country of origin was the only information supplied to respondents on which to base their evaluation) which tend to bias the results in the direction of detecting positive country of origin effects (Johansson et al., 1985). Later studies adding multiple cue models appear to show a much lesser role of country of origin influencing consumer product evaluation (Ahmed et al. 1993, 1994, 1995; Ettenson et al. 1988; Johansson et al. 1985; Roth and Romeo 1992; Tse et al. 1996). These results are not surprising, because as consumers have a greater number of cues, the efficacy of one particular cue, such as country of origin, in influencing consumer product evaluations can be

expected to be reduced.

To sum up, the literature regarding country of origin suggests a general home-country selection bias³ (Baker and Michie 1995; Bannister and Saunders 1978; Baumgartner et al. 1978; Chao and Rajendran 1993; Gaedeke 1973; Levin et al. 1993; Nagashima 1970; Narayana 1981; Okechuku 1994; Reiersen 1966; Wall and Heslop 1986), with alternative product choice selection affected by product class (Dornoff et al. 1974; Festervand et al. 1985; Gaedeke 1973; Hugstad and Durr 1986; Kaynak and Cavusgil 1983, 1986; Krishnakumar 1947; Nagashima 1970, 1977; Reiersen 1966; Roth and Romeo 1992), for a specific product (Cordell 1991; Gaedeke 1973; Hampton 1977; Hugstad and Durr 1986; Krishnakumar 1974; Schooler and Sunoo 1969), and for a specific brand (Ahmed 1993, 1994, 1995; Gaedeke 1973; Han 1990; Han and Terpstra 1988; Khachaturian and Morganosky 1990; Leclerc et al. 1994; Yapark 1978). Stereotyping has also been found among US (Cattin et al., 1982), Japanese (Nagashima, 1970), Indian (Krishnakumar 1974), Chinese (Zhang, 1996) and Taiwanese (Lin and Sternquist, 1994) respondents. This of course may influence both industrial purchasing decisions and consumers purchasing decisions (Baker and Currie, 1993).

Finally, most researches to date have focused primarily on country of origin effects on product evaluation and nationality differences in the consumption of a product in more developed countries (for further review see Al-Sulaiti and Baker 1997; Baker and Currie 1993; Bilkey and Nes 1982; Ozsomer and Cavusgil 1991; Yaprak and Baughn 1991). To date there are few studies which have examined the impact of country of origin effects on the consumption and evaluation of services (Bruning 1997, 1994; Kaynak and Kucukemiroglu 1993; Kaynak, Kucukemiroglu and Kara 1994; Harrison-Walker 1995; Shaffer, O'Hara 1995 and Wetzels et al. 1996). Most of these researches examined consumers' perceptions towards services in the USA.

Research Objectives

Numerous studies have been conducted since the mid 1960s on how the country of origin (COO) of a product influences consumers' product evaluations in more developed countries (MDCs). Previous studies have revealed that consumers have different perceptions of quality for products "made-in" different sources of origin (Al-sulaiti and Baker 1997; Baker and Michie 1995; Baker and Currie 1993).

However, the literature fails to address the question of whether such effects similarly impact consumers' perceptions of a service provider in less developed countries (LDCs). Therefore, the main objective of this study was to investigate Qatari consumers' perceptions and selections of domestic vs. foreign airlines in the Arabian Gulf region, Qatar. The airlines used in this study were grouped into three categories: Gulf, Arab non-Gulf, and foreign airlines. Three hypotheses were tested in

³ Still in some studies, domestic products were not evaluated as favourably as imports (see Lin and Sternquist 1994; Strutton 1994).

this study:

H1: There is no significant difference between the customers' selection of a Gulf or a foreign airline.

H2: There is no significant difference between the consumers' perceptions of the quality of Gulf and Arab non-Gulf airline services

H3: There is no significant difference between the consumers' perceptions of the quality of Gulf and foreign airline services.

Methodology

A survey of Qatari teachers' perceptions of airlines was conducted during September-October 1996. The questionnaires were hand-delivered by the authors to the headmasters and mistresses who were then asked to distribute them among a random sample of teachers in each school during working hours. After three weeks' waiting time, questionnaires were personally collected. Of the 430 teachers, 380 responses were received, of which 324 were usable questionnaires for final analysis resulting in a high response rate of 75.3%.

In the absence of a clear definition of the population of airline users it was decided to conduct the survey among Qatari teachers for four reasons. First, the lead author had access to this group. Second, by virtue of their occupation and education teachers are likely to have more experience of international airline travel and also be more likely to understand and participate in a survey of this kind (Downs and Kerr 1986; Ferber 1966-67; Green 1996). Third, this population enables access to female respondents which otherwise might be problematical in this region (Al-Hammad 1988; Yavas 1988; Yavas and Alpay 1986; Yavas and Glauser 1985). Fourth, teachers are opinion formers and leaders in "a position to disseminate values to future generations" (Shams 1996, p.152).

Service provider choice was measured by asking the respondents to choose the airline category that they prefer most for international travel out of the three airline categories (Gulf, Arab non-Gulf and foreign). Exactly two thirds of the respondents (66%) had selected Gulf carriers for international travel, while around one third said that they would select foreign carriers for their overseas trip if they were given the option to do so. Of the remaining respondents, nearly 3% had chosen Arab non-Gulf carriers for their foreign trip. Due to this marginal preference for the Arab non-Gulf carriers, it was decided to exclude this category from further analysis and focus instead on the Gulf and foreign carriers.

To obtain data on the respondents' perceptions of various aspects of service quality for each airline category, a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly agree (5) was used. Respondents were asked to indicate their degree of agreement-disagreement with 29 service quality variables influencing their decision in choosing Gulf, Arab non-Gulf and foreign airlines for international travel.

The questionnaire used in this study was carefully translated into Arabic by members of staff from the Arabic literature department at the University of Qatar so

that the “associative value of the English language is not lost in the translation” (Lillis and Narayana 1974; Nagashima 1970). Moreover the English and Arabic drafts of the questionnaire were given to staff from the department of English at the same University to revise the Arabic translated version of the questionnaire and to ensure of its equivalence to the English version.

Analysis Techniques

Paired sample t-test

This t-test was applied to explore the differences between the consumers’ perceptions of the quality of Gulf versus Arab and foreign airline services. It is used to test if two related samples come from populations with the same mean. The related or paired samples often result from cases in which the same person is observed before and after an investigation.

One-sample chi-square test

A one-sample chi-square test is a non-parametric test that uses a comparison between observed (data on a nominal-scaled variable) and expected frequencies to determine whether observed results are in accord with a stated null hypothesis (Baker 1991; Churchill, 1995; Norusis 1990; Parasuraman 1991). This type of test was therefore used to investigate the difference between the customers’ selection of a Gulf or a foreign airline category.

Findings

The hypotheses were tested one by one as shown below.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between the customers’ selection of a Gulf or a foreign airline.

This hypothesis is supported by the results of a one-sample chi-square test. The SPSS output for this test showed that the observed chi-square value was 40.53 and the associated significance level was .0000 (see Table 1).

Table 1

One-sample Chi-square Test for the Difference between the Customers’ Selection of a Gulf or a Foreign Airline

Selection	Cases observed	Expected	Residual
Gulf	214	157.50	56.50
Foreign	101	157.50	-56.50
	315		
Chi-square = 40.53	D.F. = 1	Significance = .0000	

Since the observed significance level was too small, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected (Norusis, 1990). This analysis suggests that there is a significant difference in customers’ selection of a Gulf or a foreign airline. It was found that around 68 per cent of the total respondents preferred Gulf services and the remainder

admitted a preference for foreign services.

One reason for the unexpectedly favourable selection of Gulf airlines may be the consumers' tendency to prefer domestic services. Therefore, preference for domestic services might be due to ethnocentrism and Patriotism. A number of studies on country of origin effects have shown that consumers all over the world generally tend to prefer products or services made or provided by their home-countries to foreign ones. Thus, this finding offers support to the conclusion of Baker and Michie 1995; Baumgartner and Jolibert (1978); Bruning (1997); Han (1988); Darling and Kraft (1977); Diamantopoulos et al. 1995; Gaedeke (1973); Han and Terpstra 1988; Kaynak and Kucukemiroglu (1993); Kaynak, Kucukemiroglu and Kara (1994); Lee, Kim and Miller (1992); McLain and Sternquist (1991); Nagashima (1970); Narayana (1981); Reiersen (1966); Peris et al. (1993); Schweiger et al. (1995) and Shimp and Sharma (1987).

Another reason for the favourable selection of services "provided by Gulf countries" may be that, in the mind of Qatari consumers, the word "Gulf" is connected with predominantly favourable associations at an emotional level. In general, individuals tend to have more favourable attitudes towards countries and regions which are close in a geographic sense and similar in a cultural sense than towards very distant and dissimilar countries (Schweiger et al., 1995). It has been noticed that this also holds for "made-in images". Wang and Lamb (1983) found that respondents tended to buy goods produced in close and culturally similar countries.

In addition, some authors found that similarities between the value system of countries had an impact on "made in images" and preferences for products "made in" certain countries (Schweiger et al., 1995). Therefore the affinity of Qatari consumers with the Gulf in terms of cultural background may be one of the main factors causing the favourable selection of the services "provided by Gulf States" relative to those of foreign countries. Preference for domestic service providers also may be due to the perceived risk in choosing foreign service providers (Gudum and Kavas 1996; Samiee 1994).

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between the consumers' perceptions of the quality of Gulf and Arab non-Gulf airline services.

Since measurements were taken from respondents for the three different types of air carriers, it would be possible to make a direct comparison between the domestic and Arab carriers. Consumers were asked to evaluate the services on 29 selected concepts which contributed to service quality attributes and factors. A paired T-test was performed on each of the 29 quality variables. Table 2 summarises the results of the test. The last column of the Table showed the significance of the differences between the quality of the two airline services. As seen from the Table, statistically significant results were detected for 18 out of 29 items at $P < .05$ level of significance.

Table 2

A Comparison of the Consumers' Perceptions of the Quality of the Domestic
Versus Arab Airline Services

Quality Variables	Gulf Mean	Arab Mean	Dif	t-Value	df	Sig*
Perform service at designated time	2.8276	3.0596	-.2320	-3.67	318	.000
Call customer for any changes	2.6909	3.0032	-.3123	-4.18	316	.000
Give prompt service	2.7217	3.1489	-.4272	-6.69	308	.000
Service is accessible by phone	3.4219	3.0906	.3312	5.62	319	.000
Convenient schedule	3.4537	3.1629	.2907	4.23	312	.000
Polite and friendly cabin staff	3.8994	3.5723	.3270	5.17	317	.000
Handling the problems	2.7906	2.9594	-.1688	-2.93	319	.004
Good airline reputation	3.4606	3.1577	.3028	4.76	316	.000
Excellent safety records	4.0406	3.3844	.6563	11.61	319	.000
Clean and neat Cabin staff	4.1761	3.7516	.4245	8.53	317	.000
Arriving/departing on schedule	1.9561	2.7743	-.8182	-11.57	318	.000
Handle the baggage carefully	3.2648	3.0561	.2087	3.11	320	.002
Serve tasty food	3.5559	3.1087	.4472	6.37	321	.000
Comfortable seats	3.5741	3.1893	.3849	5.69	316	.000
Efficient check-in procedure	3.5844	3.0000	.5844	8.86	319	.000
Excellent In-flight services	3.5831	3.1285	.4545	6.99	318	.000
Special attention for children	3.2671	2.9969	.2702	4.22	321	.000
Have frequent flight	3.8464	3.4671	.3793	6.54	318	.000

Evaluations were done on a 5-point Likert-type scale. 5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree.

* Only values with significant differences at the .05 level or below were reported.

To understand the direction of the significance, column four was reported. It indicated the superiority of the domestic carrier to that of the Arab non-Gulf carrier. This conclusion was consistently significant in thirteen quality variables at $P = .05$ or less.

Whereas the negative sign of the T-value for attributes like calling customers in case of any changes, performing services at the designated time, giving prompt service, efficient handling of problems and arriving and departing on schedule indicated that the difference was to the benefit of the Arab non-Gulf carriers. The differences in the remaining variables were considered statistically insignificant, because they were far above the cut point of .05 per cent at 5 per cent significance level. (Table 1, in the appendix).

Therefore, the above hypothesis is supported by the results of the paired T-test indicating significant differences between the consumers' perceptions of the quality of Gulf and Arab non-Gulf airline services. This

seems reasonable, since most of Arab countries are not highly advanced in terms of technical and managerial know how which may suggest that the amount of technological complexity of goods or services may have a strong impact upon perceived variation in quality. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected.

In an effort to relate the research results to existing literature, it was found that very little work had been done in relation to the comparison of a product/service from an Arab country perspective with products/services from a group of Arab countries in an Arab country market. The only study from which one can find some support to the present research findings was of Jordanian consumers' perceptions of domestic versus foreign products (Ghadir, 1990). The study revealed that the Jordanian consumers viewed their home country products positively.

Ghadir noticed that the "Jordanian product was perceived to be better than the Egyptian product with a significant level of $P < .05$ in seven of sixteen quality variables" (p. 257). In general, the findings with regard to the comparison of domestic products/services with a developing countries' products/services revealed that the domestic product was more favourably perceived in its local market. (Ghadir, 1990).

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between the consumers' perceptions of the quality of Gulf and foreign airline services.

The paired T-test was performed on the 29 quality variables. As seen from Table 7.4, statistically significant results were detected for 25 items at $P < .05$ level of significance (see Table 18, appendix D). Column four in Table 7.4 indicated the superiority of the foreign carrier to that of the Gulf carrier. This conclusion was significant in 23 quality variables at $P = .05$ or less.

The greatest difference between the services of the two groups was related to the following cues: arriving and departing on schedule (-2.0410), calling customers in case of any changes (-1.447), and providing prompt service (-1.2597). The least difference was related to having comfortable seats (-.2194). The mean ratings for having excellent safety records and well-presented cabin staff indicated that the difference is to the benefit of the domestic services.

Thus, H3 is supported by the results of the paired T-test showing significant differences between the consumers' perceptions of the quality of domestic and foreign airline services. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected.

Table 3
A Comparison of the Consumers' Perceptions of the Quality of the Domestic
Versus Foreign Airline Services *

Quality Variables	Gulf Mean	Foreign Mean	Dif	t-Value	df	sig
Perform service right first time	3.1824	3.9748	-.7925	-11.36	317	.000
Perform service at designated time	2.8276	4.0031	-1.1755	-16.29	318	.000
Call customer for any changes	2.6918	3.8365	-1.447	-13.98	317	.000
Give prompt service	2.7370	3.9968	-1.2597	-16.38	307	.000
Knowledgeable/skilled personnel	3.4937	4.1171	-.6234	-9.19	315	.000
Service is accessible by phone	3.4188	3.7781	-.3594	-5.02	319	.000
Waiting time is not extensive	3.0478	3.7962	-.7484	-10.40	313	.000
Have convenient schedule	3.4551	3.7372	-.2821	-3.82	311	.000
Explain the service itself	3.0218	3.8037	-.7819	-11.48	320	.000
Handling the problems	2.7911	3.7310	-.9399	-13.13	315	.000
Have a good airline reputation	3.4574	3.9937	-.5363	-7.05	316	.000
Have excellent safety records	4.0435	3.7205	.3230	4.56	321	.000
Provide individualised attention	3.0906	3.7281	-.6375	-9.04	319	.000
Recognise the regular customer	3.0892	3.6210	-.5318	-8.33	313	.000
Have clean and neat Cabin staff	4.1818	4.0596	.1223	2.22	318	.027
Have good reservation services	3.2764	4.0062	-.7298	-9.92	321	.000
Arriving & departing on schedule	1.9590	4.0000	-2.0410	-25.49	316	.000
Handle the baggage carefully	3.2570	3.9505	-.6935	-9.16	322	.000
Have comfortable seats	3.5705	3.7900	-.2194	-3.12	318	.002
Have excellent In-flight services	3.5719	3.9073	-.3355	-4.62	321	.000
Excellent entertainment program	2.8944	3.6863	-.7919	-10.60	321	.000
Special attention for children	3.2693	3.9721	-.7028	-9.30	322	.000
Convenient flight connections	2.9843	3.8339	-.8495	-12.16	318	.000
Good frequent flyer programs	2.7256	3.4164	-.6909	-9.54	316	.000
29. Use quick route/direct flight	3.1069	3.6509	-.5440	-7.58	317	.000

Evaluations were done on a 5-point Likert-type scale. 5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree.

* Only values with significant differences at the .05 level or below were reported.

These results do not support previous research findings performed in the United States and other developed countries which indicated that there was a bias against foreign product or service in favour of domestic ones (Brown et al. 1987). The literature revealed that UK consumers prefer their home country's products over foreign ones (Baker and Michie, 1995; Bannister and Saunders 1978; Hooley et al. 1988; Peris and Newman 1993), US consumers prefer US products and services (Gaedeke 1973; Johansson et al. 1994; Kaynak and Kucukemiroglu 1993; Kaynak, Kucukemiroglu and Kara

1994; Khachaturian and Morganosky 1990; Levin et al. 1993; Nagashima 1970; Okechuku 1994; Olsen, Granzin and Biswas 1993; Reiersen 1966; Schooler and Wildt 1968; Schooler 1971; White and Cundiff 1978), French consumers are more in favour of products "made in France" (Baumgartner et al. 1978), Japanese consumers favour Japanese products (Lillis and Narayana 1974; Narayana 1981), Mexican consumers buy Mexican products (Bailey and Pineros, 1997), Canadian consumers purchase Canadian goods and services when foreign goods and services are in competition with national goods and services (Bruning 1997; Kaynak and Cavusgil 1983; Heslop and Wall 1985; Wall and Heslop 1986), Polish and Russian consumers prefer their home country's products (Good and Huddleston, 1995), Jordanian consumers prefer Jordanian products (Ghadir, 1990), Spanish consumers prefer home-made products (Peris and Newman, 1993), Turkish managers prefer national suppliers (Gudum and Kavas, 1996), and German prefer domestic products (Diamantopoulos et al. 1995).

Although the research findings with regard to domestic product quality in comparison with foreign product quality were in contradiction with most of the research in this field, it was found to be consistent with other research where consumers rated the foreign products higher than their own country's products (Abdul-Malek 1975; Akaah and Yaprak 1993; Baker and Michie 1995; Bannister and Saunders 1978; Chao 1993; Dornoff et al. 1974; Ghadir 1990; Harrison-Walker 1995; Heslop and Wall 1985; Hooley et al. 1988; Johansson et al. 1985; Khanna 1986; Kochunny et al. 1993; Krishnakumar 1974; Lin and Sternquist 1994; Strutton et al. 1994; Nagashima 1977; Niffenegger et al. 1980; Papadopoulos et al. 1989; Roth and Romeo 1992; Showers and Showers 1993; Tse et al. 1996; Wall and Heslop 1986; White 1979).

One explanation for Qatari consumers higher ratings for foreign services is that they believe that foreign services would give them more quality. This idea is confirmed by the findings of Koruettm, Abourobah and Alusi (1981). Their findings indicated that 100 per cent of their 400 respondents perceived imported products to be superior to national products. Moreover, they also found, interestingly, that 100 per cent would purchase a national product only when the same imported product was not available. It would appear that this belief in a higher level of quality of foreign goods/services is not only found within Qatari society, but also throughout the Gulf and Middle Eastern regions (Al-Hammad 1988; Cavusqil and Amine 1985; Ghadir 1990; Metwally 1993). Cavusqil and Amine (1985) reported: "very often in this region (Middle East), a "made abroad" label is considered synonymous with a guarantee of quality and reliable performance, not always assured with local-made items" (p. 171-72).

Discussion

The findings in this research support the assertion that country of origin affects the intentions of flying with domestic or foreign airlines. It may also be concluded that the domestic carriers had an unfavourable image in comparison to the foreign carriers and a favourable image in comparison with the Arab non-Gulf carriers. This may indicate that the quality of the foreign countries' carriers when compared to the domestic carriers is more appreciated than the quality of the domestic carriers in comparison to the Arab non-Gulf carriers. Hence, this study provides useful information to airline executives of the Gulf, Arab non-Gulf and foreign countries as well as the international business communities in general.

The Limitation of the Study

Despite the importance of the research findings of the present study, the study has some limitations. The following discussion addresses the limitations of this research:

1. It was observed that because of the financial and time limitations, the sample was drawn from only Qatari consumers. If other states of the Gulf had been included, the information gathered would have been more comprehensive, and hence more elaborate analysis could have been carried out.
2. Due to the lack of knowledge of country of origin effects in Middle Eastern countries and particularly in Qatar, the questions asked in the questionnaire were based heavily on western literature and research which has been conducted in the West. As such, some of the questions asked may not have been valid.
3. The respondents' data may not be representative of the population as a whole. Therefore, generalisations should not be made beyond the teaching population.
4. Generalisation beyond the airline service industry is tenuous. For example, in a service industry such as an airline, consumers experience high power and low commitment. They expect to have short-term relationships with the airline cabin service, whereas in other services such as university education services, consumers experience low power and high commitment. They perceive the provider's power as high in relation to their own (Goodwin 1986). In other words, high involvement services such as airline, health care or financial services have different service quality definitions than low involvement services such as fast food or dry cleaning. (Cronin and Taylor, 1997). Therefore, managers and researchers must be very careful when making cross-sectional comparisons between different types of service industries.

Taking account of these limitations, some other areas of further research can be recommended.

Implications for Further Research

The study has focused on investigating consumers' perceptions of airlines in Qatar. There are however, many areas still requiring further exploration and empirical

support. The following areas are suggested for further investigation:

1. Future research is needed to validate this study. This is assumed to be the first study of the consumers' perceptions of airlines and airline selection in Qatar. As the globalisation of the airline industry grows, the airline executive will pay more attention to the perceptions of consumers who live in other countries. Thus, results of this study need to be replicated with larger samples and in different markets in order to establish the validity of the findings.
2. The teachers sample of this study represented a limited segment of airline consumers which may not be representative of the country as a whole. Future research is needed to validate this study on a national level. Moreover, since the business travellers segment is a very important market segment for airlines because most airline revenue comes from this segment (Kaynak et al., 1994), attempts should be made to investigate the decision-making process of companies in terms of their choice of airline for their employees.
5. The investigation of consumers perceptions' could also extend to other services provided by domestic and foreign corporations such as insurance, hotels, financial services, health care, fast food and telephone services.

References: References are available upon request.

Appendix

Table 1

A comparison of the consumers' perception of the quality of domestic airline services versus the quality of Arab airline services*

Quality attributes and factors	Gulf Mean	Arab Mean	Diff-erenc	t-Value	df	2-Tail Sig.
1. Perform the service right the first time	3.1850	3.1066	.0784	1.29	318	.198
2. Perform service at designated time	2.8276	3.0596	-.2320	-3.67	318	.000
3. Call customer in case of any changes	2.6909	3.0032	-.3123	-4.18	316	.000
4. Give prompt service	2.7217	3.1489	-.4272	-6.69	308	.000
5. Knowledgeable & skilled personnel	3.4873	3.4522	.0350	.58	313	.565
6. Service is easily accessible by phone	3.4219	3.0906	.3312	5.62	319	.000
7. Waiting time is not extensive	3.0453	3.0615	-.0162	-.25	308	.801
8. Have convenient schedule	3.4537	3.1629	.2907	4.23	312	.000
9. Have polite and friendly cabin staff	3.8994	3.5723	.3270	5.17	317	.000
10. Explain the service itself	3.0251	3.1129	-.0878	-1.42	318	.158
11. Handling the problems	2.7906	2.9594	-.1688	-2.93	319	.004
12. Have a good airline reputation	3.4606	3.1577	.3028	4.76	316	.000
13. Have excellent safety records	4.0406	3.3844	.6563	11.61	319	.000
14. Provide individualised attention	3.0881	3.0692	.0189	.34	317	.735
15. Recognise the regular customer	3.1019	3.0828	.0191	.36	313	.717
16. Have clean and neat Cabin staff	4.1761	3.7516	.4245	8.53	317	.000
17. Have good reservation services	3.2804	3.1807	.0997	1.53	320	.128
18. Arriving & departing on schedule	1.9561	2.7743	-.8182	-11.57	318	.000
19. Handle the baggage carefully	3.2648	3.0561	.2087	3.11	320	.002
20. Serve tasty food	3.5559	3.1087	.4472	6.37	321	.000
21. Have comfortable seats	3.5741	3.1893	.3849	5.69	316	.000
22. Have efficient check-in procedure	3.5844	3.0000	.5844	8.86	319	.000
23. Have excellent In-flight services	3.5831	3.1285	.4545	6.99	318	.000
24. Excellent entertainment program	2.8903	2.7837	.1066	1.66	318	.097
25. Provide special attention for children	3.2671	2.9969	.2702	4.22	321	.000
26. Have convenient flight connections	2.9812	2.9937	-.0125	-.20	318	.839
27. Have good frequent flyer programs	2.7192	2.6341	.0852	1.40	316	.164
28. Have frequent flight	3.8464	3.4671	.3793	6.54	318	.000
29. Use the quickest route & direct flight	3.1069	3.1006	.0063	.11	317	.713

* Evaluations were done on a 5-point Likert-type scale. 5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree.

Table 2
A comparison of the consumers' perception of the quality of domestic airline services
versus the quality of Foreign airline services*

Quality Variables	Gulf Mean	Foreign Mean	Diff-erence	t-Value	df	2-Tail Sig.
1. Perform the service right the first time	3.1824	3.9748	-.7925	-11.36	317	.000
2. Perform service at designated time	2.8276	4.0031	-1.1755	-16.29	318	.000
3. Call customer in case of any changes	2.6918	3.8365	-1.447	-13.98	317	.000
4. Give prompt service	2.7370	3.9968	-1.2597	-16.38	307	.000
5. Knowledgeable & skilled personnel	3.4937	4.1171	-.6234	-9.19	315	.000
6. Service is easily accessible by phone	3.4188	3.7781	-.3594	-5.02	319	.000
7. Waiting time is not extensive	3.0478	3.7962	-.7484	-10.40	313	.000
8. Have convenient schedule	3.4551	3.7372	-.2821	-3.82	311	.000
9. Have polite and friendly cabin staff	3.9060	3.8934	.0125	.18	318	.857
10. Explain the service itself	3.0218	3.8037	-.7819	-11.48	320	.000
11. Handling the problems	2.7911	3.7310	-.9399	-13.13	315	.000
12. Have a good airline reputation	3.4574	3.9937	-.5363	-7.05	316	.000
13. Have excellent safety records	4.0435	3.7205	.3230	4.56	321	.000
14. Provide individualised attention	3.0906	3.7281	-.6375	-9.04	319	.000
15. Recognise the regular customer	3.0892	3.6210	-.5318	-8.33	313	.000
16. Have clean and neat Cabin staff	4.1818	4.0596	.1223	2.22	318	.027
17. Have good reservation services	3.2764	4.0062	-.7298	-9.92	321	.000
18. Arriving & departing on schedule	1.9590	4.0000	-2.0410	-25.49	316	.000
19. Handle the baggage carefully	3.2570	3.9505	-.6935	-9.16	322	.000
20. Serve tasty food	3.5559	3.4783	.0776	.95	321	.343
21. Have comfortable seats	3.5705	3.7900	-.2194	-3.12	318	.002
22. Have efficient check-in procedure	3.5639	3.6324	-.0685	-1.00	320	.319
23. Have excellent In-flight services	3.5719	3.9073	-.3355	-4.62	321	.000
24. Excellent entertainment program	2.8944	3.6863	-.7919	-10.60	321	.000
25. Provide special attention for children	3.2693	3.9721	-.7028	-9.30	322	.000
26. Have convenient flight connections	2.9843	3.8339	-.8495	-12.16	318	.000
27. Have good frequent flyer programs	2.7256	3.4164	-.6909	-9.54	316	.000
28. Have frequent flight	3.8469	3.9031	-.0563	-.83	319	.406
29. Use the quickest route & direct flight	3.1069	3.6509	-.5440	-7.58	317	.000

* Evaluations were done on a 5-point Likert-type scale. 5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree.