

# INFLUENCE OF ETHNOCENTRISM AND PATRIOTISM ON COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: SELECTING AN AIRLINE IN THE ARABIAN GULF REGION

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## ABSTRACT

**This paper examines the country of origin effects of airline services in Qatar, a country on the west coast of the Arabian Gulf. The study focuses on consumers' patriotic feelings, their quality perceptions, and perceived price of air service as provided by domestic vs. foreign airlines. Results, based on an analysis of 324 responses, found that the majority of respondents had strong positive patriotic feelings towards domestic carriers. The more ethnocentric the consumer, the more inclined they were to choose a domestic airline. Foreign airlines were perceived to provide better value and were seen as more favorable in general. Though Gulf services were perceived to charge higher prices, price was not found to be significantly related to patriotic feelings.**

## INTRODUCTION

*"In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful, There are those who, on being told: 'Your enemy has mustered a great force against you and so fear them.'"*

Saddam Hussein, President of Iraq, January 17, 2003

*"It would have been a source, fellow citizens, of much gratification if our last communications from Europe had enabled me to inform you that the belligerent nations, whose disregard of neutral rights has been so destructive to our commerce, had become awakened to the duty and true policy of revoking their unrighteous edicts... ...I carry with me the consolation of a firm persuasion that Heaven has in store for our beloved country long ages to come of prosperity and happiness."*

Thomas Jefferson, President of the United States of America, November 8, 1808

National pride. Patriotism. Loyalty. Every country's citizens express these feelings to differing degrees. Each country has their days of national remembrance or celebration; a day to celebrate independence, victories, and symbolic days set aside for all citizens to mark a specifically notable event.

Patriotism is "the love for or devotion to one's country" (Merriam-Webster 1994). During days of national celebration, citizens show their pride, passion, and fervor for the remembrance, but those same individuals often forget that patriotism is something that must be constantly nurtured (Graham 1998). When the songs, speeches, parades, and

fireworks have ended that is when patriotism begins to dim. In one's daily life, does patriotism play a role in the choices one makes? Particularly, does patriotism influence consumers' choices in the products they will select?

This paper examines country of origin effects on perceptions of quality, price and patriotic feelings. Specifically, do quality, price and patriotic feelings make a significant difference in the selection of an airline that is either domestic or foreign? First, the authors review previous research on the topic of country of origin. Second, the country of Qatar, and the variables of quality, price, and patriotic feelings will be discussed. Third, the research hypotheses and methodology will be presented. Finally, the authors provide results and conclusions.

## **COUNTRY OF ORIGIN**

Previous research has shown that the country of origin of products can play a significant role in consumers' choices. Country of origin effects is among the many factors which are believed to impact upon international competitiveness. 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). Others have defined the product's country of origin as "the country of manufacture or assembly" (Bilkey and Nes, 1982; Cattin et al., 1982; Han and Terpstra, 1988; Lee and Schaninger, 1996; Papadopoulos, 1993; White, 1979).

Han (1989) examined the role of country image in consumer evaluations of TV sets and automobiles. The results of the study suggested that country image can be used by consumers in product evaluations as a halo construct and/or as a summary construct. As a halo construct, country image is used to consider products that consumers know little about. As a summary construct, consumers become familiar with a country's products, and country image may summarize consumers' beliefs toward product attributes which directly affects their attitudes toward the brand.

Han (1990) argued that country image, a consumer's general perceptions of quality for products made in a given country, may be conceptualized as a consumer halo. According to Han (1990), the halo hypothesis suggested that consumers may consider not buying an unfamiliar foreign brand simply because they may make unfavorable inferences about the quality of the brand from their lack of familiarity with products from the country. Additionally, country of origin images were affected by the consumer's perception of similarity between his or her own country's and the origin country's political and cultural climate and beliefs systems.

Levin et al. (1993) investigated American consumers' attitudes toward "Buy America First" and preferences for American and Japanese cars. The subjects showed a strong preference for cars made by American companies over cars made by Japanese companies and an even stronger preference for companies that employ mostly American workers. The results also indicated that attitudes towards "Buy America First" appeared to represent a form of nationalism separate from perceptions of quality and seemed to be an overriding factor in preference rankings, especially when the composition of the work force was mainly American.

Thus, "one unique cue affecting pre-purchase intentions may be nationalistic feelings which, as we have seen, may dominate other perceptions based on country of origin" (Levin et al., 1993, p. 628). Similar findings were revealed by Olsen, Granzin and Biswas (1993). Their study explored the possible influences on US consumers' willingness to choose American-made over imported products.

## **VARIABLES**

In this research, the authors examine the choice selection of consumers in Qatar based upon three variables: patriotic feelings, quality, and price. The product chosen for testing their choice was airlines: Gulf (named as "domestic"), and foreign airlines (named as "foreign"). Specifically, the researchers examine the choice of airlines by Qatari consumers. In this section, a brief overview of Qatar and its people will be given followed by an explanation of each of the three variables.

### **Qatar**

Qatar is situated half-way along the west coast of the Arabian Gulf, east of the Arabian Peninsula. Qatar is a peninsula that extends northward covering an area of 11, 437 square kilometers (Al-Sulaiti, 1993). The present population is estimated at 817,052 inhabitants (Central Intelligence Agency, 2003) most of whom reside in Doha (about 60%), while the rest live in other towns and villages (World Population Profile 1996). The country's ethnic composition is Arab 40%, Pakistani 18%, Indian 18%, Iranian 10%, other 14% (Central Intelligence Agency, 2003), thus making it one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the Middle East.

The Al-Thani family has been ruling Qatar since the mid 19th century. Previously, it was under the rule of the Ottoman Empire. However, from the beginning of the 20th century close relations developed between Qatar and Great Britain, as a result of which a treaty was signed in 1916 that provided for Qatar to become a British protectorate. Its foreign affairs were under the control of Britain until independence was achieved on the September 3, 1971. The declaration of independence was made by His Highness Sheikh Khalifa Bin Hamad Al-Thani (Al-Marzooki, 1994). In 1972, His Highness Sheikh Khalifa Bin Hamad Al-Thani assumed leadership of the country supported by the ruling family, the Qatari people and the armed forces. Following independence, the state of Qatar joined the Arab League, the United Nations Organization and other international organizations. On June 27, 1995, His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani

assumed the Emireship over the state of Qatar supported by the ruling family, the Qatari people and the armed forces (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 1997).

Although English is widely spoken, Arabic is the official language and all correspondence with government organizations is normally in Arabic. The people of Qatar follow the religion of Islam. It is a faith as well as a way of life for them, and the Holy Quran is the main source of all of their laws, ethical codes and social norms. All of the country's holidays and festivities have religious significance, with the exception of Qatar Independence Day on September 3.

As in most countries, Independence Day is a time of special celebration; in Qatar there are three days of special celebration. Businesses shut down and the government decorates the buildings and streets with lights and other decorations (Al-Hayek 2003). The celebration starts on September 1 with people doing traditional dancing in the streets.

### **Airlines Service**

The airline industry has experienced significant acceptance and growth through the past few decades. During the turbulent 1970s and the early part of the 1980s, marketing was a comparatively unimportant activity among airline companies around the world, due to stringent industry regulations. After deregulation in 1978, airlines had to begin to differentiate themselves from their competitors through service and price. By the 1990's, three conditions characterized air transport: exceptional growth, intense competition, and vulnerability (Vellas and Becherel, 1995). The 1991 Persian Gulf War was followed by four years of losses for the airline industry (Travel Industry Association 2003). The aftermath of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on America have continued to plague the industry (Al-Hayek, 2003; Ascent Pacific, 2003). Airlines are just now beginning to recover from the economic downturn and the costs of absorbing excess capacity (Sparaco, 2003).

Globally, there are over 700 airlines (Travel & Tourism Analyst, 1992). Two countries provide 30 per cent of the world's international services: the United States (20 per cent) and the United Kingdom (10 per cent).

The high price of fuel and the competitive nature of the airline industry have caused many airlines to find ways to cut over-head costs (Gourdin, 1988). One strategy has been for some airlines to eliminate or at least stream-line services delivered. Airlines then turned to the reduction or elimination of a number of customer services that had been expected by the flying public in the past. Services such as frequent flyer programs, checked baggage, in-flight meals, movies, and free drinks were either eliminated or reduced (Lieber, 2002). The result was a reduction in service quality as airlines continued to emphasize low fares at the expense of service delivered.

Though this had resulted in an increasing number of consumers voicing their irritation and dissatisfaction with the quality of service currently being provided by airlines, things are improving. A Gallup poll conducted for the American Society for Quality Control surveyed 1,005 consumers and found that the percentage of passengers

who experienced unsatisfactory airline services almost doubled from 1985 to 1988 (Fried, 1980). However, in the post September 11 period, American air travelers are more satisfied with America's commercial airlines than they have been in recent years, according to the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI).

### **Patriotic Feelings**

Reiersen (1966) was one of the first to conduct country of origin bias research, investigating whether or not consumers' preconceived notions of foreign products are national stereotypes rather than opinions about specific products. The results indicated a clear evidence of stereotyping. Respondents rated products "made in US" the highest, therefore, the study suggested, that while consumers have preconceived notions about foreign products, attitudes are really national stereotypes rather than opinions about specific products.

Nagashima (1970) found that Japanese businessmen evaluated products "made in" Germany the highest followed by UK, US, Japan and France. In his follow up study, Nagashima (1977) reported that images of Japanese, West German and French products had improved and that of UK products had deteriorated. Thus, the findings of these studies suggested that, in addition to varying among customers in different nations, national stereotypes change over time.

Etzet and Walker (1974) examined the level of congruence between national product stereotypes and attitudes toward specific types of products. Products tested were autos, cameras, and mechanical toys from three different countries, namely, Germany, Japan and the US. The results revealed a significant difference between consumers' perceptions of foreign national product stereotypes and images of specific products from that country for all but one situation (German products vs. German autos).

Industrial buyers were examined to see if they allowed national stereotypes to influence their evaluation of industrial products and their perceptions of product quality based on country of origin (White and Cundiff, 1978). Their results indicated that there were statistically significant differences in the perception of quality depending on where they were made. Attitudes to US manufactured products in selected European countries, namely, West Germany, France, Italy, and England were examined (White, 1979). The results indicated that US purchasing managers in general had stereotyped attitudes towards the countries tested.

Country of origin stereotypes seem to be highly affected by ethnocentrism (Hooley et al., 1988; Lee et al., 1992; Stoltman et al., 1991). Consumer patriotism does effect cognitive evaluations of goods, but effects purchase intent to a greater degree (Han and Terpstra, 1988). For example US consumers prefer US products (Gaedeke, 1973; Johansson et al., 1994; Levin et al., 1993; Nagashima, 1970; Olsen et al., 1993; Reiersen, 1966), French consumers are more in favor to products "Made in France" (Baumgartner and Jolibert, 1978). Canadian consumers are willing to purchase Canadian products that are higher in price but equal in quality to imported products (Wall and Heslop, 1986). Turkish managers purchase products "made in Turkey" (Gudum and JKavas, 1996). Polish and

Russian consumers prefer their home country's products (Good and Huddleston, 1995). Spanish consumers prefer home-made products (Peris et al., 1993), Mexican consumers buy Mexican products (Bailey and Pineres, 1997). UK consumers prefer their home country's products over foreign ones (Baker and Michie, 1995; Bannister and Saunders, 1978; Hooley et al., 1988; Peris et al., 1993) and European consumers in general tend to prefer products "Made in Europe" to imported products (Schweiger et al., 1995).

Due to the lack of empirical testing of consumer behavior in Qatar, the convention, suggests that hypotheses are best phrased as null hypotheses (Good and Huddleston, 1995; Murray and Schlacter, 1997). To investigate consumers' patriotic feelings and their selection of domestic versus foreign airline services, the following hypotheses are tested:

H1: There is no significant difference in customers' patriotic feelings and their selection of a Gulf or a foreign airline

H2: There is no significant relationship between the customers' patriotic feelings and their selection of Qatar Airways

### **Quality**

For many companies, the delivery of high service quality became a marketing priority of the 1980s (Zeithaml et al., 1988). Especially for airline carriers, the delivery of high service quality becomes a marketing requisite in the 1990s, as competitive pressures increase. In other industries, evidence is mounting that effective investment in high service quality results in cost savings, improved profitability and market share (Cina, 1990; Daniel 1992; Shycon, 1992); and increases customer loyalty (Ostrowski et al., 1993).

The quality of services is much more difficult to measure, inspect, and control than the quality of manufactured goods (Gummesson, 1993). It is impossible for management to be present during every service delivery, and so it must depend heavily on employees to complete the customer interaction satisfactorily. Otherwise, the firm's customer base could be eroding without their knowledge, because dissatisfaction spreads very fast by word-of-mouth (Bitran and Lojo, 1993). Service quality is a measure of how well the delivered service level matches consumer expectations (Donaldson and Runciman, 1995). This quality depends on the size and direction of the gap between expected and perceived service (Bolton and Drew, 1997). In the airline industry the providers, the baggage handlers, employees at the ticket counter, flight attendants and so on, are the main deliverers of the service.

In evaluating consumers' perceptions of airlines in the United States, respondents who used domestic airlines had more favorable attitudes towards domestic airlines than those who did not use a domestic airline (Kaynak et al., 1994). Those who used both domestic and foreign airlines demonstrated no differences between them. Further, the reliability of the airline, past satisfactory experience with the airline and low price of the ticket were the three most important reasons for choosing an airline for foreign destinations (Kaynak et al., 1994).

In an investigation of the effects of country of origin on purchasing managers' product perceptions in terms of perceived quality, purchase value, and product profiles: country of design, country of assembly, brand name, price, and warranty were examined as variables of interest (Ahmed et al., 1994). Canada and Mexico were selected as country of design and assembly along with a hire country (Japan for computer system and fax machine, Germany for ball-point pens). The results indicated that developed countries were evaluated better in general than newly industrializing countries (e.g., Mexico) as locations for the design and assembly of industrial products. However, newly industrializing countries were better evaluated as locations for the assembly of industrial products than as countries of design.

In another study, when consumers were asked to assign price and quality to the woman's sweater based upon the country of origin as the only cue of difference, perceived quality but not price was significantly influenced (Lin and Sternquist, 1994).

To investigate consumers' patriotic feelings and their perceptions of the quality of the Gulf airlines, the following hypothesis is tested:

H3: There is no significant relationship between the customers' patriotic feelings and their perceptions of the quality of the Gulf airlines

### **Price**

Consumers want to get from A to B but at the same time they also want to go at a time that is convenient, in a manner they find acceptable, and at a price that represents good value. Each consumer has a particular mix convenience, price and quality that will suit him or her best.

Airlines provide different packages of service so that consumers can chose a particular mix of comfort, convenience and price to satisfy their demand. For airline customers this means making a choice between airlines, between ticket types, between different routes, between different types of departure and possible different airports and between different levels of comfort, service and convenience.

Since deregulation of the U.S. commercial airline industry in 1978, the amount of change affecting the industry has been profound. From a customer viewpoint, whether the change has been for the better is still a hotly debated question. Benefits to the customer have come in areas of choice of airline and lower prices but there has been a price to pay as routes have disappeared and airlines have become bankrupted (Hodges, 1987).

In previous research examining price and the country of origin effects, three brand names and three levels of price and service on consumers' perceptions of the purchase value of an automobile in two consuming countries, namely Canada and Belgium were studied (Ahmed and d'Astous, 1993). The results indicated that the effect of price on perceptions of purchase value was not significant. In addition, the brand name was a more important

informational cue than "made-in" for Belgian consumers, but not for Canadian consumers.

In the study done by Ahmed et al. (1994) examining the preferences of purchasing managers, mentioned earlier, results showed that purchase managers were more influenced by price than by country of design or country of assembly specially when considering the purchase value of ball-point pens.

To investigate consumers' patriotic feelings and their perceptions of the price of the Gulf airlines, the following hypothesis is tested:

H4: There is no significant relationship between the customers' patriotic feelings and their perceptions of the price of the Gulf airlines

## **METHODOLOGY**

Based upon the success of previous researchers (El-Omari, 1991; Ghadir, 1990; Kaynak et al., 1994; Lovelock et al., 1976; Niffenegger et al., 1980; Papadopoulos et al., 1987; Shams, 1996; Stover and Stone, 1974) it was decided that personal delivery (and collection) of a self-administered questionnaire would provide the most suitable form of data collection. Lovelock et al. (1976) recommended personal delivery and collection of self-administered questionnaires as being particularly appropriate for conducting detailed surveys of consumer attitudes and behavior patterns as was the case in this study. The personal drop-off and pick-up method of data collection was found to be more appropriate for this study not only because it allowed respondents the opportunity to fill out their questionnaires at a convenient time (Niffenegger et al., 1980), but also because it gave high response rates as the consumer might have felt obliged to answer the questionnaire as promised (Kaynak, Kucukemiroglu, and Kara, 1994; Papadopoulos, 1987). In addition respondents were not subjected to interviewer bias because it was self-administered (Faria and Dickinson, 1996).

Questionnaires translated into Arabic were hand-delivered by the researcher to headmasters and mistresses who were then asked to distribute them as randomly as possible among teachers in 100 schools in order to determine their perceptions and selections of Gulf vs. foreign airlines. In the cover letter, a request was made to the respondent to answer all the questions. After three weeks' waiting time, questionnaires were personally collected. Of the 430 teachers, 380 responses received, of which 324 were usable questionnaires for final analysis resulting in a response rate of 75.3%.

The questionnaire that was 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 its equivalence to the English version.

## **FINDINGS**

### **General Findings**

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they had ever had experience with any Gulf, Arab non-Gulf or foreign carriers. Results showed more than half of the respondents (56%) had experience with Gulf, Arab non-Gulf and foreign carriers whereas 45% had experienced some combination of the three types of carriers.

Results indicated that of the 35 airlines selected for the study, the respondents had flown with 23 of them. In addition, some other airlines that were not included in the 35 airlines selected had also been experienced by some of the respondents, namely, American Airlines, Bulgarian, Continental, Delta, Indonesian, Royal Thai, UK and USairline. Approximately three quarters (75%) of the respondents had used Gulfair, one fifth (20%) Qatar Airways, 15% Emirates, 7% Saudia, and 5% and 4.0% had used British Airways and Egypt Air respectively.

A clear majority (84%) of the carriers used by respondents for overseas travel during the last year were Gulf carriers, 5% were Arab non-Gulf and around 11% were foreign (for the purpose of this study, Arab non-Gulf and foreign carriers were considered as "foreign"). Surprisingly, most of the respondents had used the Gulf airline services for their travel either locally or world-wide. This may undoubtedly affect the significance of any statistical results that might be carried out on the data because of the possible bias arising from this skewed distribution. Therefore, this source of potential bias was considered as a limitation in this study

A clear majority (82.4) of the surveyed consumers paid for their international flight ticket with cash while approximately one fifth (17.6) paid by using other methods of payments. Personal funds were the most widely used source of funding for international flights. This was used by almost 89% of the surveyed sample whereas 8% used only employer funds with the remaining 3% using a combination of both personal and employer funds.

The six most important factors respondents considered in selecting one airline over another for foreign travel were: Halal food (83.6%), on-time arrivals & departures (77.8%), physical safety (76.2%), prompt contacting of customer in case of any changes (72.8%), no alcohol served (70%) and assuring the customer that a problem will be dealt with (66.9%). As a note: Halal, meaning allowed or lawful is an indication that the food is in keeping with the obligatory diet guidelines of Muslims.

### **Hypothesized findings**

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant effect of customers' patriotic feelings on their selection of a Gulf or a foreign airline.

This hypothesis is explored by the results of the independent sample T-test. Results revealed no significant difference in the customers' patriotic feelings and their selection of a Gulf or a foreign airline (Gulf selection mean = 4.08, foreign selection mean = 4.05). This difference however, was not statistically significant because the P-value was .738 which is far above the cut-off point of .05 per cent at 5 per cent significance level. The null hypothesis is therefore accepted. This could be explained by the fact that most of the surveyed consumers tended to hold strong patriotic emotions and more than 65% of the total respondents preferred a Gulf carrier over a foreign one.

Earlier findings as reported in the established literature indicated that consumers who showed strong ethnocentric tendencies were less likely to prefer the foreign product or service offered over the national one (Bruning, 1997; McLain and Sternquist, 1991; Stoltman et al., 1991).

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between the customers' patriotic feelings and their selection of Qatar Airways.

This hypothesis is explored by the results of the Spearman rank correlation coefficient. A Spearman rank correlation coefficient is appropriate for measuring the relationship between two ordinal variables (Baker, 1991; Buttle, 1997; De Vaus, 1996; Hair et al., 1998; Norusis, 1996; Parasuraman, 1991; Triola and Franklin, 1994). The correlation coefficient showed a positive value of .1227 indicating a positive relationship between the customers' patriotic feelings and their selection of Qatar Airways. This relationship however was statistically significant with a P-value of 0.034 which is below the cut-off point at 5 per cent significance level. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected. This analysis confirmed that there was a significant association between patriotic feelings and the consumers' preference of their own country's airline, i.e., the stronger the patriotic feelings the more consumers select a domestic carrier. Thus, the findings support empirical and theoretical research which argue that patriotism has a positive effect on consumers' attitudes towards products produced inside the home country (Baker and Michie, 1995; Darling and Kraft, 1977; Gaedeke, 1973; Han and Terpstra, 1988; Lee et al., 1992; McLain and Sternquist, 1991; Nagashima, 1970; Narayana, 1981; Peris et al., 1993; Schweiger et al., 1995; Shimp and Sharma, 1987). Therefore, further research should consider patriotism as a determinant factor in airline selection.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant relationship between the customers' patriotic feelings and their perceptions of the quality of the Gulf airlines.

To reduce the list of criteria to the basic dimensions consumers use in evaluating the Gulf services, the data were subject to factor analysis (principal component with varimax rotation). Several items were deleted as either having low loadings or weak correlations with other statements (Parasuraman, 1991; Sharma et al., 1995). To determine the number of factors, the researcher followed the criterion of preserving those whose eigenvalues were greater than one (Kaiser,

1960). According to Hair et al. (1995) eigenvalue specification is one of the most popular criteria for addressing the number of factors question.

Consequently, the 29 quality variables (attributes and factors) of the Gulf services were condensed into five factors by adding the variables with a loading of .5 or higher on the individual factors and dividing by the number of variables loading on the respective factor (Lascu and Giese, 1995). Moreover, it can be seen that the percentage of total variance explained by these factors was acceptable (68.4 per cent). See Hair et al. (1995).

Table 1: Factors and Loadings

Quality Variable of Gulf airline		Loadings
<b>Factor 1: (eigenvalue = 4.1: % of variance=31.4)</b>		
Performance	Perform service at designated time	.83
	Perform the service right the firsttime	.81
	Good airline reputation	.68
	Have knowledgeable and skilled personnel	.60
	Arriving and departing on schedule	.57
<b>Factor 2: (eigenvalue = 1.55: % of variance = 11.9)</b>		
	Added value: Provide special attention for children	.83
	Have excellent entertainment program	.74
	Have good frequent flyer programs	.66
<b>Factor 3: (eigenvalue = 1.17: % of variance = 9.0)</b>		
	Accessibility: Service is easily accessible by phone	.86
	Waiting time is not extensive	.73
	Have good reservation service	.55
<b>Factor 4: (eigenvalue = 1.1: % of variance = 8.4)</b>		
	Food tasty: Serve tasty food	.84
<b>Factor 5: (eigenvalue = 1.003% of variance = 7.7)</b>		
	Frequent flights: Have frequent flight	.89

As Table 1 illustrates, the first factor reflected performance of a service at a designated time (.83), performance of a service "right the first time" (.81), good airline reputation (.68), having knowledgeable and skilled personnel (.60) and arriving and departing on schedule (.57). This factor accounted for 31.4 per cent of the total variance. According to Hair et al. (1995) a variable with higher loading influences to a greater extent the name or label selected to represent a factor. Hair et al. (1995) believed that naming or labeling factors "is not very scientific and is based on the subjective opinion of the analyst. Different analysts in many cases will no doubt assign different names to the same results because of the difference in their background and training" (Hair et al., 1995, p. 398). Therefore, this factor may be labeled as a performance factor.

The second factor included issues of providing special attention for children (.83), having excellent entertainment programs (.74), and having good frequent flyer program (.66) which together accounted for 11.9 per cent of the total variance. This factor may be labeled as an added value factor.

The third factor accounted for 9 per cent of the total variance which included easily accessible service by phone (.86), short waiting time (.73) and having a good reservation service (.55). This factor may be labeled as an accessibility factor.

Only one criterion loaded on the fourth factor. This factor involved the issue of serving tasty food, which accounted for 8.4 per cent of the total variance. Likewise, only one criterion loaded on factor five. It produced 7.7 per cent of the total variance and was concerned with the availability of frequent flights.

Churchill (1995a) describes Cronbach's Alpha as the recommended measure of the internal consistency of a set of items. Hair et al. (1995) and subsequent authors all report coefficient alphas as evidence of the internal consistency of both individual factors and the total scale. This approach has been duplicated in the present study where the internal reliability of the 29 items was high (alpha = .91) and the internal reliability for each factor was: performance (.79), added value (.69), and accessibility (.65)

A Spearman rank correlation coefficient test was then conducted to test the relationship between consumers' patriotic feelings and the new measure of perceptions towards the quality of the Gulf services (Table 2). A Patriotic variable was related significantly ( $p < .05$ ) with only one variable of Gulf quality services, that or food tasty. The correlation coefficient showed a positive value of .1191 indicating a positive relationship between the consumers' patriotic feelings and their perception towards good food from the Gulf airlines. This relationship was statistically significant with a P-value of .040 which is below the cut-off point of .05 percent at 5 per cent significance level. The null hypothesis is therefore partially rejected.

This analysis confirmed that a significant association existed between ethnocentric consumers and their perception towards the food tasty of Gulf airlines. This may indicate that the more the feelings of the consumers tended towards patriotism, the better their perception was of the food served by Gulf airlines. Again, this could be explained by the fact that Gulf airlines provide firstly "Halal" food (i.e., Meat must be slaughtered according to Islamic customs), and secondly food prepared in a similar way to the consumers' country of origin.

Table 2: Spearman Correlation Coefficient for the Relationship between Consumers' Patriotic Feelings and their Perceptions of the Quality of Gulf Airline

Quality variable	Patriotic Feelings	
	Correlation	Significance

Performance	.0376	.529
Added-value	.0097	.868
Accessibility	-.0807	.173
Food tasty	.1191	.040*
Frequent flight	.0092	.875

\* = significant at less or equal .05

Hypothesis 4: There is no significant relationship between the customers' patriotic feelings and their perceptions of the price of the Gulf airlines.

This hypothesis is explored by the result of the Spearman rank correlation coefficient. The correlation coefficient showed negative values of -.0485 and -.0150 for price in general and value for money respectively. From the correlation in Table 7.15, although one could observe an inverse relationship, the patriotic feelings were not associated with any of the price variables at a significant level of  $p < .05$ . The null hypothesis is therefore accepted. This finding confirmed that there was no significant relationship between the consumers' patriotic feelings and their perception towards the price of Gulf airlines.

In an effort to relate the research results to existing literature, it is noticeable that Ghadir's (1990) findings contradict this study's findings since he found that the Jordanian consumers' perceptions of the price variables of their home-made product were significantly associated with most of the patriotic variables ( $P < .05$ ).

Table 3: Spearman Correlation Coefficient for the Relationship between Consumers' Patriotic Feelings and their Perceptions of the Price of Gulf Airlines

Price variable	Patriotic feelings Correlation	Significance
Price in general	-.0570	.327
Value for money	-.0112	.847

\*=significant at .05

## CONCLUSION

The findings suggested that the majority of the surveyed consumers tended to hold strong patriotic feelings towards the Gulf carriers. Approximately two thirds (65%) of the total respondents preferred a Gulf carrier over a foreign one. It was also found that patriotism had a positive effect on the Qatari consumers' attitudes towards Qatar Airways in particular. It was noticed that the more ethnocentric they were the more they selected their own country's services and rejected the foreign services.

The responses of the consumers' general perceptions of the quality of domestic and foreign airline services indicate some difference in consumers' perceptions of the

quality of the airlines. It can be concluded that the domestic airlines had an unfavorable image in comparison to the foreign carriers.

On the other hand, respondents were asked to show their perceptions in general towards the price and the level of quality in relation to value for money of each of the three categories of airlines. The results indicated that the Gulf services were perceived to offer higher prices. Foreign services were perceived to provide more value for money. This is primarily a matter of perception since the majority of the respondents have had no direct experience of foreign and Arab non-Gulf airline services. Based on their perceptions it seems that they have very favorable attitude towards foreign airlines. Thus, this supports Baker's (1996) argument that perceptions can be formed even in the absence of actual experience with an object. This might mean that if the opportunity occurs for consumers to fly foreign airlines, we would predict that they would behave/act in conformance with their perceptions or attitudes which are favorable.

The affinity of Qatari consumers with the Gulf in terms of cultural background may be the main factor causing the favorable selection of the services "provided by Gulf States" relative to those of foreign countries.

Significant differences were found between the Qatari consumers' perceptions toward the quality and the price of the Gulf and foreign services in terms of their selection of an airline category. It was found that the quality of Gulf services was perceived more favorably by those who selected the Gulf carrier than the foreign one. On the other hand, the Qatari consumers who selected the foreign airline category perceived the Gulf to offer less value for money than the foreign services.

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