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IS ‘CHEAP’ TRULY ‘EXPENSIVE’? EVALUATING THE EFFECTS OF LOW-COST CARRIERS ON EUROPEAN TOURISM

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BUSINESS
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I dedicate this research to the almighty God and my twin sister, Ruth.

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Resumo

O número ascendente das companhias aéreas de baixo custo (também conhecidas por *Low Cost Carrieres* ou LCC) transformou profundamente o panorama do turismo europeu. Ao oferecer tarifas aéreas de baixo custo e maior acessibilidade a vários destinos, as LCCs aumentam a atividade turística em todo o Continente europeu. Consequentemente, a indústria do turismo tem sofrido uma mudança radical e os turistas estão cada vez mais motivados a explorar vários destinos na Europa. No entanto, a investigação do papel das LCC no setor do turismo europeu ainda é limitada. Neste contexto, esta Dissertação pretende abordar a lacuna existente na literatura, bem como evidenciar o impactado das LCCs no turismo aprofundando os efeitos das LCC no turismo europeu. Através da análise qualitativa, este estudo centra-se em dois aspetos específicos alavancados nas perceções de 25 turistas europeus: a escolha do destino e as motivações dos turistas. Com base na análise de conceitos através do software qualitativo Leximancer, são identificados temas-chave relacionados com a intenção de utilizar as transportadoras de baixo custo e o turismo europeu. Os resultados reforçam a importância de considerar as perspetivas dos turistas ao avaliar as duas indústrias dinâmicas: aviação e turismo.

Palavras-chave: Aviação, Low-Cost Carriers (LCCs), Europa, escolha do destino, motivações de viagem.

JEL Classification

L93: Air Transportation

Z32: Tourism and Development

Abstract

The rise of low-cost carriers (LCCs) has profoundly transformed the landscape of European tourism. By offering affordable airfares and increased accessibility to various destinations, LCCs have facilitated a surge in tourism activities across the European continent. Consequently, the tourism industry has witnessed a notable shift, with tourists now more inclined to explore multiple destinations within Europe. However, research on the LCCs' role in shaping tourism in the European context remains limited. Hence, the present dissertation aims to address the gap in the literature, as well as highlight how tourism is impacted by LCC's operations. In this sense, this study investigates the effects of LCCs on European tourism. Employing a qualitative analysis, this study focuses on two specific aspects: tourists' destination choices and tourists' travel motivations, leveraging on perceptions of 25 European tourists. Based on the concept analysis using the qualitative Leximancer software, key themes related to the interplay between Low-cost carriers and European tourism are identified. The findings reinforce the importance of considering tourists' perspectives when evaluating two dynamic industries: aviation and tourism.

Keywords: Aviation, Low-Cost Carriers (LCCs), Europe, destination choice, travel motivations.

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Glossary of Abbreviations

ASA – Air Services Agreement

ATAG – Air Transport Action Group

ATC – Air Traffic Control

B2C – Business-to-Consumer

CAA – Civil Aviation Act

EASA – European Aviation Safety Agency/Authority

EC – European Commission EC

ECAA – European Common Aviation Area

EU – European Union

FSNCs – Full-Service Network Carriers

GT – Grounded Theory Analysis

HR – Human Resources

IATA – International Air Transport Association

ICAO – International Civil Aviation Organization

LCCs – Low-Cost Carriers

MRO – Maintenance Repair Operations

OPO – Porto Airport

RPKs – Revenue Passenger Kilometres

RQ – Research Question

UAE – United Arab Emirates

UK – United Kingdom

US – United States

VFR – Visiting Friends and Relatives

CHAPTER ONE

1 Introduction

Mobility is a key defining feature of contemporary society which interconnects the world, regardless of the uncertainties arising from issues such as globalisation and the COVID-19 pandemic. The liberalisation of air transport in Europe in the late 20th century contributed to the easing of several travel restrictions that pre-existed, such as flight fares and routes (Wolf et al., 2016). Consequently, a novel era of air travel services emerged, centred on a competitive market process. It culminated in a situation in which decisions regarding air travel were made based on a mutually beneficial relationship between demand and supply. It further brought about the rise and expansion of airlines that provided shuttle services at cheaper fares, typically referred to as 'low-cost carriers' (LCCs) or budget airlines (Huang, 2023). The main focus of these airline companies is usually to offer a value proposition of "affordability" to their target market, as well as a wide range of destination choices (Jain et al., 2022). In Europe, there has been an upsurge in mobility, especially air travel, mainly due to the increased range of aircraft frequencies and destinations, which is mostly attributed to the presence of these LCCs (Costa & De Almeida, 2018).

According to Statista Research Department (2023), since 2017, European LCCs have represented around 33% of the worldwide air travel sector, and it is projected that the size of the low-cost travel market will surpass 254 billion U.S. dollars by 2027. The report also adds that throughout 2020 and early 2021, the market share of European LCCs settled at approximately 30 per cent after experiencing significant volatility. In September 2022, these LCCs accounted for around 33.7 per cent of the total number of flights in Europe (Statista Research Department, 2023). ANAC (2023) annual data reports also show that the highest number of seats flown by LCCs within Europe in 2023 was from flights departing from Portugal, totalling about 4.2 million seats, representing about 61% of total LCCs market share globally, depicting Portugal as a country within Europe, with the highest concentration of LCCs operations in the last year.

Spasojevic et al. (2018) suggest that the causal relationship between LCCs and tourism is an area that has been widely debated and has increased interest among researchers focusing on studying the analysis of LCCs and their influence on tourism. However, based on the researcher of this study, there are very scarce empirical studies that specifically investigate the multifaceted impacts of budget airlines on tourism in Europe. Prior studies by Alamdari and Fagan (2005), for example, solely investigated areas of correlation between LCCs and tourism destination development. Recent literature contributions by Chiambaretto and Combe (2023)

only emphasize the cost-benefit analysis of LCCs. Álvarez-Díaz et al. (2019) highlight the impacts of LCCs, however, they focus on a comparative study of the European cities whilst Costa & De Almeida, (2018) only analyse the evolution of LCC air traffic at OPO Airport, assessing the economic impact of LCCs on airports' area of influence. Therefore, this study will significantly contribute towards filling the research gap on the implications of LCCs on the tourism industry in Europe. It will also hopefully provide different perspectives and valuable insights that can be instrumental in formulating effective development strategies and forecast trends in the global tourism sector, as well as in aviation management. Overall, LCCs represent an essential field that requires extensive research expertise to facilitate the growth of tourism not only in Europe but also globally.

According to Halpern and Mwesiumo (2021), the tourism industry is an experience-based sector whose service quality is mainly influenced by mobility or the action of travel. The main objective of this research is therefore to investigate the aspects of tourism impacted by the operations of LCCs in Europe.

Taking the research gaps and objective into consideration, this study seeks to address the following research questions:

***RQ1**: How have LCCs influenced the destination choice of tourists?*

***RQ2:** What are the tourists' travel motivations for choosing LCCs?*

Overall, the attainment of a better understanding of the effects of LCCs on tourism, through this research study can be extremely beneficial, both in terms of theoretical literature knowledge and practical applications. This understanding can also help shed light on crucial aspects including tourist behaviour, travel motivations, and destination management in the tourism and aviation industry. Therefore, the aforementioned components render this research study relevant and imperative, and the outcomes of this research will also be impactful to all stakeholders in the aviation field and the broader tourism industry and hopefully transcend the notion of LCCs being solely "cheap". Again, although this study primarily examines LCCs, the networks of relationships presented in this paper may also pertain to the other 'traditional' airlines. The key aspect, however, is to ascertain whether the increasing desire and propensity of tourists to travel by LCCs has an impact on tourism aspects, particularly in Europe.

1.1 Dissertation structure

The research thesis paper is organised into six chapters.

Chapter 1 outlines the framework of the thesis work. It spells out the research introduction, including the present situation in terms of knowledge and research work, defines the importance of the study, as well as the research questions and objectives. The second chapter analyses relevant literature work, as well as an examination of previous research conducted around this field of study, aviation and tourism, in line with the objective of the study. Chapter 3 of the study explores the research methodology. It explores the adopted research design, data collection procedures, as well as tools for analysis. Chapter 4 of this study presents the data analysis, including the results. This chapter provides more detailed information on the data analysis process and the obtained results. Chapter 5 discusses the findings, expounding on them by using literature from secondary data sources. The final section of the study, which is the sixth chapter, attempts to provide conclusive affirmation of the study. It provides a detailed summary of the study's implications, contributions, observations, and limitations, as well as suggestions and recommendations for future studies.

CHAPTER TWO

2 Literature Review

This chapter provides a comprehensive critical review of pertinent literature on LCCs and tourism. The review discussed here delves into the different aspects of the connection between LCCs and tourism, shedding light on the dynamics of these sectors specifically focusing on destination choice and travel motivation.

2.1 Aviation and Tourism

Aviation and tourism sectors have an inextricable, symbiotic relationship that cannot be overstated (Papatheodorou, 2021; Duval, 2013). While these two industries are said to be mutually dependent (Duval, 2013), they are both dynamic and complex, with each sector having a profound impact on the other (Spasojević et al., 2017). While certain aspects of tourism, such as domestic tourism and 'staycations', may not require air travel due to short distances or specific preferences for coach, rail, and cruise trips (Papatheodorou, 2002), their interplay remains essential for global connectivity, economic development in tourist destinations, and cultural exchange. According to Spasojević et al., 2017, the key elements of aviation encompass airport infrastructure, air travel, reliable and secure services provided by airlines, and global air travel networks, which are crucial in facilitating tourism. The demand for air transport is primarily of derived nature, from other activities, such as tourism. Most passengers do not fly only for the pleasure of flying; rather, they fly to reach their destinations for purposes such as leisure, business, VFR and other purposes. ATAG (2020) states that about 1.9 billion foreign tourists participated in air travel in 2019 (during the pre-COVID-19 era) making air transport a primary mode of transport for tourists.

2.1.1 Contributions of Aviation and Tourism

Aviation has had a significant economic impact on tourism by directly generating approximately 44.8 million employment opportunities worldwide in sectors related to aviation and tourism, including airlines, restaurants, hotels, and tourist sites (ATAG, 2020). It also contributed approximately $961 billion to the global GDP in 2019, as reported by ATAG (2020), highlighting its crucial role in destination development. Aspects of accessibility, fares, connectivity, travel time, and promotion of tourism destinations provided by airlines also influence the demand or choice of destination for tourists (Morley, 2003).

Studies conducted in Southern Italy (Donzelli, 2010) and Korea (Chung & Whang, 2011) suggest that airline businesses, particularly LCCs, typically stimulate tourism demand for specific destinations. This demand drives the growth of tourism infrastructure, including

airports, accommodation facilities, and other attractions. Similarly, the presence of increased passenger traffic at Milan Bergamo Airport in Northern Italy demonstrates the significant economic impacts brought about by LCCs which benefit not only Bergamo but also the surrounding cities of Italy. According to Bieger & Wittmer (2006), tourism tends to foster the growth of aviation enterprises by opening up opportunities for novel tourist destinations. Lohmann & Duval (2014) state that tourism also encourages the emergence of destinations that serve as hubs, stopovers, or gateways. Moreover, they also report that tourism destinations make substantial investments in the establishment of new routes or developing local airports which boosts air transport activities in these regions.

2.1.2 Co-relation between Aviation and Tourism

As stated by Spasojević et al. (2017), tourism destinations and airlines both require resilience, agility, and operational flexibility to progress during periods of unpredictability in the global economy. For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic period lockdown, both the aviation and tourism sectors were heavily affected as they directly rely on each other. Table 2.1 displays the civil aviation services and sectors according to ICAO (2019). Papatheodorou, (2021) proposes an additional column which illustrates the connection of tourism and aviation services by employing a five-point proximity scale. The report indicates that commercial airline operations have a strong connection to tourism. Various sorts of visitors, such as those travelling for business, leisure, and other purposes (represented by 'B', 'L', and 'O'), directly contribute to the client base of airports and airlines. In this study, Papatheodorou (2021) depicts pleasure flying as a component of general aviation and considers it a special instance of leisure tourism. Table 2.1 below also demonstrates a significant correlation between several aviation services and tourism, highlighting their crucial role in facilitating tourism growth and promoting connectivity. Papatheodorou (2021) suggests that flight delays in air transport might have a detrimental impact or negative repercussions on the tourism experience and the overall tourism industry operations. From the table, he argues that all the other aspects and services related to civil aviation have limited or indirect significance for tourism.

Sectors	Services	Relationship with tourism
Commercial air transport	Scheduled passenger transport	5 (B,L,0)
	Scheduled freight and mail transport	2
	Charter passenger transport	5 (L, 0)
	Charter freight and mail transport	2
	On demand commercial business aviation/air taxi	5 (B)
	Other on demand air transport (e.g., air ambulance)	1
General aviation	Aerial work, e.g., aerial spreading and spraying, aerial photography, aerial advertisement, etc.	1
	Instructional flying	1
	Pleasure flying	5 (L)
	Other flying	1
Airport	Aircraft related service	1
	Passenger related service	5 (B,L,0)
	Cargo handling	3
	Airline related real estate services (e.g., terminal rental)	2
	Other real estate services (e.g., MICE facilities)	5 (B)
	Car parking - airport owned	5 (B,L,0)
	Utility recharges	1
	Airport concessions (e.g. retail, duty-free shops)	5 (B, L, 0)
Air navigation	Enroute services	2
	Approach and aerodrome control	3
	Air traffic management	3
	Communications, navigation, and surveillance	1
	Aeronautical information services	1
Maintenance and overhaul	Aircraft maintenance	1
	Aircraft repair	1
Regulatory/public administration functions	Certification of aircraft and aviation licensing	1
	Aero politics, economic aviation policy	5 (B,L, 0)
	Legal and other administrative services	3
Aviation training	Pilot training	1
	Aviation professional training	1

Note: A five-point proximity scale has been used, where 5 corresponds to a very close and 1 to a very remote relationship. B stands for Business; L for Leisure; and O for Other types of tourism.

Table 2.1: Relationship between tourism and civil aviation sector services

Source: ICAO (2019) and Papatheodorou (2021).

2.2 Impact of air transport on tourism industry

Air transport acts not only as a catalyst for tourism growth but also as a critical enabler, offering opportunities and challenges. Air travel and tourism both exhibit significant cyclical patterns and are extremely sensitive to fluctuations in the environmental, economic, political and social, environments (Papatheodorou, 2002).

2.2.1 Positive impacts of air transport on tourism

The advent of commercial air travel in the 20th century marked a new era in tourism, enabling rapid global mobility and contributing significantly to destination development. Aviation liberalization, aviation regulatory regimes, policies in air transport, and 'open skies' agreements underpin the development of air travel (Dobruszkes & Mondou, 2013; Zhang & Findlay, 2014). This potentially influences the extent of tourism destinations operated by air carriers and determines spatial patterns of tourist travel as well as competition (Forsyth, 2006). According to Spasojević et al. (2017) airline liberalisation fostered strategic collaborations between DMOs, airline firms, and also with other key stakeholders in the tourism sector such as car rental companies, hotels, and tour operators. The accessibility and efficiency of air travel directly influence a destination's tourism appeal, enhancing the chances of visitors to the area. By connecting various parts of the world, air travel allows tourists to explore distant locations, thereby fostering cultural exchange and global tourism (Spasojević et al., 2017). The expansion of airline routes, particularly by LCCs has also made previously remote or less accessible destinations more reachable (Dobruszkes, 2013), opening up new markets for tourism globally. This accessibility has been beneficial and impactful not only for leisure travel but also for other types of tourism such as business, medical, and educational tourism.

According to different authors, the growth of air transport has led to an increase in demand for tourism, which has spurred further development in the aviation sector. Carvalho and Medeiros (2020) highlight that the interdependence between these two sectors has a substantial impact on national, regional and even global economies. Some of the notable impacts of air transport on tourism include the enhancement of accessibility brought about by the establishment of newly constructed airports and the development of direct airline routes. This contributed to an increase in tourism in remote and underserved regions, hence strengthening their tourism industry (Papatheodorou, 2004). The rise of new airline business models, in this case, the LCCs has also enhanced affordability (Silva et al., 2020) and interconnectivity by enabling air routes to connect various parts of the world at affordable fares, promoting multi-destination inbound and outbound tourism. Air transport has also impacted the tourism market globally, growing revenue

for both airlines and destinations (Khan et al., 2017). The creation of numerous employment opportunities in the tourism industry, necessitated by the aviation sector, as evidenced by ATAG (2020), is a key contribution which results in income generation and better living standards. LCCs have had a significant impact on particular destinations, extending beyond just boosting tourism. Local airports where the LCCs operate have witnessed a substantial rise in both the number of flights and the volume of passengers, leading to a surge in economic activity in adjacent urban areas and attracting substantial new investments. An example is the Billund Airport in Denmark. Passenger numbers in this airport increased by approximately 185% between 2006 and 2008 and from 2.8 million in 2012 to 3.8 million in 2019, resulting from the growth of LCCs operations (Ebejer, 2021). Currently, the airport offers connections to an extensive number of European destinations, which enhances the accessibility of Billund, Aarhus, and other cities in Jutland, Denmark (Ebejer, 2021). The improved connectivity has also upgraded the status of the famous Billund Legoland from a local tourist attraction to an international one. Consequently, substantial investments have been made to develop new tourist attractions in both Billund and Aarhus. Additionally, the need for infrastructural development such as better airports, tourism facilities and amenities also enhances tourism experiences, contributing to overall economic development.

One of the social and cultural impacts escalated by the aviation industry is cultural exchange which brings people together from different backgrounds. Air transport also enhances global understanding and tolerance by enabling tourists to be exposed to different cultures in different destinations (Khan et al., 2017).

2.2.2 Negative impacts of air transport on tourism

Nevertheless, while Forsyth (2006;2010) suggests that there is a strong reciprocal relationship between tourism and air transport, Papatheodorou (2004) contends that this relationship may contribute to a destination becoming a victim of its own triumph as a result of inefficient management and/or surpassing it carrying capacity due to tourism actions. First, the most obvious are the issues of carbon emissions and climate change which have a major impact on tourism destinations globally (Duval, 2013). According to ATAG (2020), the aviation industry accounts for 12% of global carbon emissions from all transport sectors, exacerbating the carbon footprint of the tourism sector. Additionally, components of aviation such as airports and air traffic generate significant noise pollution (Bieger & Wittmer, 2006), adversely affecting destinations and livelihoods, particularly in areas near airports or under flight paths. Another relevant point is that numerous local and national authorities across Europe negotiate and

provide financial incentives to LCCs to establish new direct routes from their airports (Ebejer, 2021). The increase in the number of routes results to an influx of tourists. This can be beneficial for a destination but is contingent upon a balanced approach as unsustainable control can quickly result in over-tourism. This can strain local infrastructure, resources, and community life, as evidenced in the case of Malta.

Besculides et al. (2002) also argue that tourism development, driven by increased air connectivity, can lead to gentrification and changes in the community structure. Regions heavily reliant on tourism facilitated by air travel may also face economic vulnerabilities and the impacts of unforeseen events like pandemics or natural disasters. Furthermore, based on IATA (2024) report, the overall worldwide air passenger traffic for the entire year 2023 reached 94.1% of the levels recorded in 2019 pre-pandemic, as assessed in RPKs. In December 2023, the overall amount of passenger traffic increased by 25.3% in comparison to December 2022, reaching about 97.5% of the level recorded in December 2019 (IATA, 2024). Due to the substantial effect on the tourism industry, IATA further predicts that air travel is likely to recover to pre-COVID-19 levels by the end of 2024, with the assumption that the pandemic is effectively managed and doesn't re-occur (Gössling, et al., 2020).

As both the aviation and tourism sectors evolve, a balanced approach with a focus on sustainable practices and technological innovation is imperative to addressing the challenges and maximizing the benefits of this relationship. Debbage and Alkaabi (2016) emphasize that management efforts have been made to address various aspects, such as implementing policies to optimize the efficiency of airline operations through airline operations' economies of scale (denoted by frequency, seat capacity or aircraft size) and establishing various types of ASAs, such as open skies, plurilateral, bilateral or multilateral (ICAO, 2004). These play a key role in shaping the accessibility of destinations and the management of tourism influx, highlighting the complexity of balancing growth with sustainable practices and regulatory frameworks. Conversely, these policies may hinder or limit popular tourist destinations from allowing airlines to bring in tourists in a bid to curb mass tourism.

2.3 Low-Cost Carriers vs Full-Service Network Carriers

LCCs, commonly referred to as 'budget airlines' are airline companies that offer basic air transportation services at reduced prices and with no frills, as defined by Oliveira (2008). The LCC models can be differentiated from the Full-Service Network Carriers (FSNCs), often referred to as traditional carriers, in various aspects, as outlined in Table 2.2.

Variables	LCCs	FSNCs
Network configuration	Point-to-Point (PP)	Hub-and-spoke (HS), multi-hub-and-spoke (MHS)
Fares	Unbundled	Bundled fares
Operational costs	Low	High
Code sharing	No	Can provide
Turnaround time	Quick (usually 25 mins)	Could be more than 1 hour
Frequent flyer programs	None/less extensive	Comprehensive with benefits
Alliance membership	None	Can be a member
Aircraft type	single-type	Diverse fleet types
Flight duration	Short-haul	Long-haul
Frequencies	More	Less
Operational/support services	Usually outsourced	In-house
Ancillary services (Inflight meals, seats, baggage e.t.c)	Available at a cost	Available at no cost
Airports Type	Regional and/or Secondary and/or primary airports	Primary and/or Secondary airports
Economies of density (Measured by aircraft utilisation)	High	Low
Class of cabin service	Single-cabin; usually economy	Multiple; ranging from First class to Economy class
Tickets distribution channel	Internet and call centres (their own or outsourced)	Internet, but mostly rely on travel agents and their own sales offices (GDS)

Table 2.2: Characteristics of LCCs vs FSNCs

Source: Author's own elaboration from Mason and Morrison (2008) and Oliveira (2008).

LCCs tend to prioritise cost efficiency and affordability, while FSNCs emphasize service diversity, network reach, and customer experience. Both shape the airline industry by offering diverse options to travellers and contributing to the global tourism sector's growth.

2.4 Evolution of European Low-Cost Carriers

The emergence of LCCs in Europe can be attributed to the liberalization of air transport in 1978 (Dobruszkes, 2006). The process of economic liberalization in an industry can be described as the lifting of formal laws that restrict entry into the sector. This allows potential new players to freely operate in the market, at their own risks (Moses & Savage, 1989). Liberalization has been deemed a crucial element contributing to the development of air transport, competition, and the trends of tourism demand in Europe. The LCC business model was initially pioneered by Pacific South-West and later adopted by Southwest Airlines in the US in 1971 (Graham, 2013). The LCC concept, which had been successful in the US, was subsequently introduced in Europe during the 20th century. Ryanair and EasyJet were the first airlines to embrace this business model in Europe (Dobruszkes, 2006). This novel business approach prioritized cost minimization, enabling individuals who were previously unable to afford air travel to now have the opportunity to do so at a price equivalent to that of a pair of jeans (Avogadro et al., 2021). Subsequently, the strategy was adopted by carriers such as AirAsia, and expanded to Asia, Latin America, and other countries, taking into account the specific market conditions of each locality. Not all European LCCs adhered to an identical framework. JetBlue and WestJet provided a somewhat higher number of amenities, while other airlines adhered to a more stringent no-frills approach. Mason and Morrison (2008) explain that before liberalization, there were concerns about the new airlines prioritizing major routes which would impact the traditional carriers, and that the aspect of cost-cutting practices by these models could compromise safety. None of these fears materialized.

2.4.1 Market Penetration and Impacts of European Low-Cost Carriers

Dobruszkes (2013) asserts that LCCs are regarded as a primary catalyst for the growth of the European airline network. These airlines have established new flight paths and developed air transportation markets that were previously non-existent. Consequently, numerous airlines operating on short-haul flights have shifted their approach from being bold, luxurious, and formal to providing a more casual, laid-back, and simplistic service. In this novel approach, the main product is offered at a subsidized cost, while additional services, also referred to as 'frills', are available at an extra fee (Fageda et al., 2015). The business models of LCCs have diverse origins. Low-cost routes in Europe seem to have unlimited availability, benefiting both ‘mature’ and emerging destinations by attracting a greater percentage of tourists utilising LCCs (Clavé et al., 2015). In Dobruszkes (2006) analysis, it is clarified that certain LCC companies are derived from FSNC (e.g. Snowflake being a subsidiary of SAS). Some have also originated

from charter airlines that have expanded their operations, such as Monarch Scheduled. Others have emerged from tour operator companies, for instance, Hapag Lloyd Express which is fully owned by TUI. Additionally, there are FSNCs (like as Ryanair) and regional operators (like Flybe) that have transitioned into LCCs in order to enhance their competitiveness. Moreover, certain entities were initially established as LCCs, such as easyJet. Other airline businesses are said to have implemented the practice of leasing aircraft and employing a "hit and run" approach to function as LCCs in hot spots and prime destinations (Papatheodorou, 2002). Notable European LCCs include Ryanair, Flybe, Wizz Air, easyJet, Air Europa, Vueling, Norwegian Air, Transavia, and Blue Air, Jet2.com among others.

The timing of the liberalisation of the aviation sector in Europe coincided with the emergence of the Internet as a platform for consumer commerce. This boosted the market penetration of European LCCs. It made them more influential and popular. The introduction of LCCs also played a significant role in revitalising underutilised regional airports. According to Francis et al. (2004), almost 200 airports in Europe handled fewer than one million passengers annually, making them underutilised prior to LCCs' introduction. Consequently, LCCs have also aided in the modernization and revitalization of airports that were previously primarily maintained for strategic purposes. The rise of the web also allowed LCCs to connect directly with their customers through a B2C model, where reservations were made directly on the LCCs' website. For example, EasyJet sells 95% of its seats through its website (Dobruszkes, 2006). Button et al. (2011) claim that in as much as the LCCs business model was a success, towards the end of the twentieth century, these carriers encountered significant obstacles. These included factors such as the stock market's volatility, the repercussions of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, pandemics, and the surge in the price of jet fuel in 2007. Furthermore, it is also important to note that not all low-cost carriers achieved the same level of profitability as the most popular ones in Europe, such as Ryanair and easyJet. Many new LCCs experienced bankruptcies and market exits, as documented by Button et al. (2011). Table 2.3 provides a concise overview of the entry and exit of European LCCs from 1995 to 2022. The data presented in the table demonstrates that the European LCCs industry has undergone significant growth.

Overview of the entry and exit of European LCCs	Cumulative count
Total number of airlines entering the LCC sector after 1995	109
Number of airlines registered in EU as at July 2022	40
Cumulative count of departures by LCCS in Europe from 1995 to 2022	69
Cumulative count of LCCs with lifespan of less than a year	30
Mean period of existence before ceasing operations (between 1995-2022)	3.4 years

Table 2.3: Entry, exit and market duration of the European LCCs sector (1995-2022)

*Excludes airlines that existed for less than one year. Source: (Aerotime, 2022; Mason & Morrison 2008)

Table 2.4 provides a comprehensive analysis of the distribution of LCC entries based on the countries of origin. The significant rise in the entry of European LCCs can be linked to the liberalization measures that created favourable conditions for this growth.

Airline country of origin	No. of airlines entering European LCC sector	Airline country of origin	No. of airlines entering European LCC sector
Albania	4	Ireland	4
Austria	3	Italy	13
Belgium	2	Lithuania	1
Bosnia & Herzegovina	1	The Netherland	3
Bulgaria	2	Norway	2
Croatia	1	Poland	3
Czech Republic	3	Portugal	1
Denmark	3	Romania	1
France	6	Slovakia	1
Germany	12	Spain	2
Gibraltar	1	Sweden	10
Greece	2	Switzerland	3
Hungary	2	Turkey	3
Iceland	1	UK	19

Table 2.4: Entry into the European LCC sector by country of origin (1995-2022)

Source: (Aerotime, 2022; Mason & Morrison 2008)

2.5 Low-Cost Carriers and tourists' travel motivation

What makes tourists travel? Dann (1977) states that tourists consider a range of factors and perspectives while selecting their travel destination. A theory by Dann (1977) suggests two overarching elements that influence a tourist's decision and the incentive to travel: push factors and pull factors. "Pull" elements in tourism encompass the extrinsic motivational features, such as the 3S of tourism (Sea, Sun, Sand), while the "push" factors refer to intrinsic motivations, such as nostalgia or the need to escape from familiar or daily routines. Fodness (1994) supports this theory, asserting that travel motivation plays a significant role and acts as a variable that influences tourist behaviour in selecting a destination. Fodness (1994) explains a basic motivation theory that outlines the dynamic process by which push factors generate a need for travel. Crompton (1979) further asserts that within the tourist sector, individuals are mostly driven to travel by pull factors. This author acknowledges that while it is feasible to describe the "who," "where," "when," and "how" aspects of tourist behaviours and travel motivations, it becomes challenging to address the question of "why." In their study, Pearce and Caltabiano (1983) utilised Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory to deduce a five-fold categorization of travel motivations based on tourists' experiences. Their results were positive. It can also be said that tourism marketers commonly utilise push and pull factors to generate travel motivation, particularly during service quality assessment, destination image development, destination positioning as well as in product development (in this case, the introduction of LCCs).

Existing research on the influence of LCCs on tourist travel motivation has yielded contrasting findings. Some studies indicate that LCCs have a positive effect on travel demand, while others suggest that LCCs pose a threat to the market share of FSNCs. There is limited research documenting the correlation between LCCs and the motivation for tourist travel. This poses an interesting enquiry regarding the extent to which LCCs truly contribute to the stimulation of travel motivation in the tourism industry. A study conducted by Chung and Whang (2011) examined the influence of LCCs on tourism demand in Jeju, an Island in Korea. The study specifically investigated whether LCCs contributed to the creation of new tourism demand and/or increased the number of tourists visiting the island. The multivariate regression analysis revealed that LCCs had generated additional demand for the existing tourists' numbers to the Island, indicating an increase in travel motivation due to the presence of LCCs. Additional investigation into the influence of LCCs on tourists' travel motivation has produced varied results. Donzelli (2010) and Graham and Dennis (2010) argue that LCCs positively impact tourists' motivation to travel, the aviation market as well as the local economy.

According to a survey conducted by Chung and Whang (2011), the results indicated that more than half of LCC travellers (59%) are either new consumers or individuals who typically would not engage in tourism activities. Additionally, 71% of passengers who flew with LCCs expressed that they would not have purchased a ticket if it were not for the LCCs, as they find the fares of FSCNs to be overly expensive (Chung & Whang, 2011). Donzelli (2010) also contends that LCCs in Southern Italy create additional tourism demand and stimulate travel motivation. Moreover, in a chain analysis conducted by Clavé et al. (2015), the findings show that the category of travellers referred to as "low-cost loyal tourists" had a significant presence (90.8%), indicating that the presence of low-cost carriers strongly impacted their travel choices. On the other hand, in the same report, the "destination loyal tourists" group, comprising 8.7% of the respondents, indicated that low-cost carriers had minimal impact on their choice of destination since they would have visited regardless of the availability of such carriers.

Conversely, there has been significant doubt over the introduction of LCCs into the aviation sector and its subsequent influence on the tourism business. According to the UKCAA (2006), the consistent number of air travellers in recent years can be attributed to the LCCs grabbing market share that was previously for the FSNCs. This suggests that the LCCs introduced competition specifically to the FSNCs, resulting in a shift of the current demand away from the FSNCs. The UKCAA analysis further asserts that LCCs mostly cater to consumers in middle and higher-income brackets, enabling them to afford extra trips (that they may not have considered otherwise), rather than attracting new low-income passenger segments. This is also consistent with current studies indicating affluent travellers have a higher propensity to utilise LCCs compared to FSNCs (Graham and Dennis, 2010). Forsyth (2006) further adds that the effectiveness of LCCs in increasing tourists' motivation to travel greatly relies on their financial structure, pricing strategy and selection of airports and routes. He attributes this phenomenon to the fact that certain LCCs terminate their operations within a short operating period due to their inability to identify or 'motivate' a niche market, (such as budget-conscious passengers). Additionally, other authors contend that LCCs have minimal influence on the motivation for tourism travel. This is said to be due to their tendency to primarily serve 'remote' locations and airports as most tourists, instead, choose to fly with FSNCs to the 'usual tourism hotspots' that are conveniently accessible through major airports where FSNCs operate.

Overall, LCCs have had a profound impact on tourist travel motivations. They have democratized air travel, enabling more people to travel for a variety of reasons, whether for leisure, experience, cultural engagement, or personal reasons. The affordability and flexibility offered by LCCs can be said to not only influence where people travel but also how often and why they do so (Eugenio-Martin & Inchausti-Sintes, 2016). As the tourism sector continues to evolve, the role of LCCs in shaping travel motivations and behaviours remains a critical factor.

CHAPTER THREE

3 Methodology

This chapter provides a detailed description of the methodology used in the study, which includes an explanation of the research methods and techniques applied, as well as the population, data collection, and analysis methods utilised.

3.1 Research Approach and Design

The key objective of this dissertation study is to examine tourists' perspectives on the effects of LCCs on tourism in Europe. This research focuses on the geographical region of Europe. The study area was selected due to Europe's extensive network of LCCs (see Table 2.4), the thriving tourism industry, and the growing number of air transport passengers in the previous year as shown in Figure 3.1.

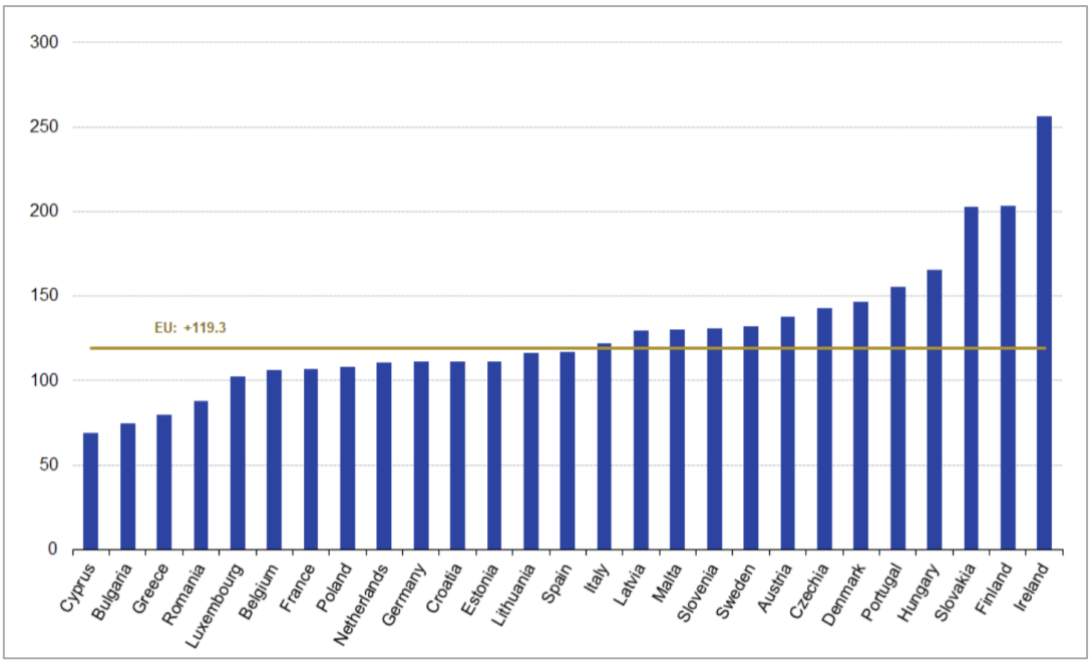


Figure 3.1: Air Passenger Transport 2022 % change from 2021

Source: Eurostat (2023) (online data code: avia_paoc)

Research design encompasses the objective of explaining, discovering, describing, or evaluating a phenomenon of interest (Saunders et al, 2003). The researcher deemed that employing a qualitative technique would be the most appropriate methodology to find out the perspectives of tourists on the different aspects of tourism impacted by the operations of European LCCs. This approach was also advantageous in this study as it is said to be able to effectively comprehend, interpret and analyse participant-reported data without diluting or compromising its depth or richness (Yin, 2016). The figure illustrates a visualisation framework of the research design of this study.

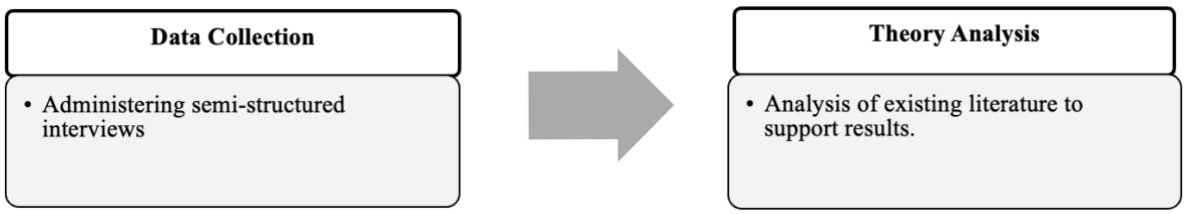


Figure 3.2: Visualization of the Qualitative research design

Source: (Author own elaboration)

While conducting this research study, adherence to ethical principles and procedures were ensured as spelt out in the consent guidelines (presented in Annexe B). Participants were entirely anonymous and referred to in this study as "Respondent (numerical code)". Respect for the interviewees' rights, interests, values and dignity and also upholding ethical factors like diversity, health, privacy and equality during the interview sessions were observed. All participants consented and acknowledged guidelines governing the interview session before the start of the interviewing process, authorizing video and audio recordings (presented in Annexe B). Additionally, demographic variables were collected for analysis purposes only. Data was collected transparently and truthfully, without any manipulation to influence the results. All possible conflicts of interest were openly disclosed, and impartiality was upheld throughout the research process.

3.2 Data Collection

A combination of secondary data sources and semi-structured interviews reframed from previous literature were used to collect data for this study (presented in Annexe A). This study employed a two-phase research data collection strategy to successfully address the research questions. In the first phase, the researcher opted for the utilization of exploratory semi-structured interviews due to their ability to cover a wide topic area and foster adaptability, ease, and rapport (Creswell & Miller, 2000). For the topics related to the research objective and research questions, the semi-structured interviews employed open-ended questions which allowed the researcher to explore in-depth insights, opinions, perspectives, and experiences of the interviewees. It also provided flexibility to delve deeper into relevant areas that emerged during the conversation, therefore maximizing the richness of information obtained by the researcher. However, in the demographic section of the interviews, some of the questions were closed-ended.

To obtain a full overview, the interview questions were divided into 3 topics (presented in Annexe A), encompassing significant aspects that sought to provide evidence as well as answer the research questions. These topics covered included: 1. Demographical questions used to

gather specific, straightforward information about the participants. 2. Aspects of tourists' behaviour: focusing on LCCs and tourists' destination choices. From this topic, the information gathered was critical in analysing trends and patterns in tourist behaviour. The data helped to determine whether LCCs had any contribution to tourists' decision-making regarding their choice of destination. 3. Tourists' motivation factors for choosing LCCs. This topic was not only central to answering the second research question but also contributed to understanding why tourists choose LCCs over other forms of transportation.

Interviewees were contacted online on Zoom. The interviews were conducted in English language and lasted approximately 20 minutes to half an hour for each participant. For the second phase, the utilization of secondary data obtained from websites and reputable literature sources, mostly presented in Chapter 2 of this dissertation was used to complement the data gathered from the interviews. This approach ensured that the study's conclusions were grounded in the actual experiences and perceptions of tourists, thereby enhancing the validity and applicability of this research.

3.2.1 Sampling

This study adopted both purposive and snowballing sampling methods. Purposive sampling necessitated the researcher to employ discretion in selecting populations likely to yield the most profound understanding of the research questions (Saunders et al., 2003). Snowball sampling also known as the "chain method", characterized by networking and referral, enabled the researcher to begin with a small number of initial interviewees who met the research criteria and these participants then recommended other contacts who fit the criteria, creating a chain of referrals (Leighton et al., 2021). Woodley & Lockard (2016) argue that, despite criticisms, snowball sampling is cost-effective and efficient in accessing hard-to-reach populations and those unwilling to reveal their identities or who are geographically inaccessible to the researcher (Marcus et al., 2016).

A sample size should be neither too small nor too large (Kvale, 1996; Sandelowski, 1995). Therefore, a sample size of 25 respondents was determined to be adequate based on established guidelines for qualitative research, which suggests that this sample size can be sufficient for in-depth exploratory studies where the focus is on information power as well as understanding specific phenomena rather than generalizability (Guest et al., 2006). The researcher also determined that they had reached a 'theoretical saturation point' whereby new interviews failed to provide additional insights or new information beyond what had already been gathered, as guided by the saturation concept of the GT analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). The data gathered from the sample size therefore enabled the researcher to tap into real-world perspectives and

scenarios, making the findings more relevant, accurate, and reflective of current trends and theories in tourist behaviour.

3.2.2 Target Population

The target population of this study was European LCCs passengers, deemed as 'tourists'. To ensure accurate targeting, interviewees were selected according to specific eligibility criteria. These criteria entailed that passengers were above the age of eighteen, must have had recent flight experiences on European LCCs and engaged in tourism activities during their trip(s). Adhering to this enabled the researcher to gather viable information as interviewees with limited exposure to LCCs would have had difficulties in providing accurate responses to these inquiries. A total of 25 participants were part of the interview process (see Table 3.1).

Interviewee ID	Gender	Age	Nationality	Occupation
Respondent 1	Female	18-24	Indonesian	Student
Respondent 2	Female	18-24	Ghanaian	Student
Respondent 3	Male	35-44	Ghanaian	Animator
Respondent 4	Male	25-34	Nigerian	Travel Agent/Student
Respondent 5	Prefer not to say	25-34	Ghanaian	Artist/Filmmaker/Researcher
Respondent 6	Male	25-34	Indian	Student
Respondent 7	Female	18-24	Italian	Student
Respondent 8	Female	25-34	Kazakhstani	Student
Respondent 9	Male	25-34	Argentinian	IT Recruiter
Respondent 10	Female	18-24	British	Electrical Engineer
Respondent 11	Female	18-24	Serbian	Student
Respondent 12	Female	25-34	British	HR
Respondent 13	Male	25-34	Israeli	Student
Respondent 14	Female	25-34	Vietnam	Student
Respondent 15	Female	25-34	Dutch	Student
Respondent 16	Female	18-24	German	Student
Respondent 17	Female	25-34	Nigerian	Student
Respondent 18	Male	25-34	British	Technical Specialist
Respondent 19	Female	18-24	Indonesian	Student
Respondent 20	Female	25-34	Russian	Student
Respondent 21	Male	25-34	Kenyan	Student
Respondent 22	Female	35-44	Kenyan/Portuguese	Tech
Respondent 23	Male	45-54	German/Brazilian	Engineer
Respondent 24	Male	25-34	Bangladeshi	University Lecturer
Respondent 25	Male	25-34	German	Student

Table 3.1: Demographic characteristics of the interviewees

Source: Author, based on interviewees' data

From this sample, perceptions from a total of 17 different nationalities from Europe (7) and other continents (18) were accounted for in the analysis. Regarding the age variables, the participants with ages between 25-34 years old were the dominant group, followed by 18-24. Further, about gender, this study included responses from 14 female, 10 male individuals and 1 individual who preferred not to say their gender. All interviewees were from different occupations, with a large number of them (16) being students.

Additionally, as reported in Table 3.2, all 25 respondents had first-hand travel experiences with LCCs. Most of the respondents, 44%, reported having taken more than 15 trips with LCCs in the past, while only 8% reported having taken less than 5 trips with LCCs.

Interviewee ID	**Trips taken with LCCs within EU**	**Budget willing to spend/allocate towards flight ticket expenses**	**Recent travel experience (Airline used, destination, reason for travel)**
Respondent 1	5-9 trips	Dependent on travel distance, destination, luggage, trip urgency	Ryanair, Germany, VFR
Respondent 2	5-9 trips	No budget; cheapest amount available at booking time	Brussels Airlines, Netherlands, VFR
Respondent 3	5-9 trips	Dependent on travel distance, mostly 20 euros for one way	Ryanair, Belgium, Business
Respondent 4	5-9 trips	Between 30-70 for a return trip	Ryanair, Denmark, Education
Respondent 5	10-14 trips	Dependent on distance, destination. Less than 20 pre-covid for one way; post-covid between 50-100 euros	Ryanair, EasyJet, Vueling, Barcelona, Sweden, Leisure
Respondent 6	5-9 trips	35 euros for one-way, cheapest amount available at the time	Ryanair, UK, Education
Respondent 7	10-14 trips	Between 150-180 euros	Ryanair, Lisbon, VFR & Education
Respondent 8	More than 15	Depends on the destination, between 200-300 for a return ticket	Wizz air, SAS, Jet Air, Sweden, Leisure, Concerts, VFR
Respondent 9	5-9 trips	No more than 190 euros for return journey	EasyJet, Ryanair, TAP, Madrid, Madeira Island, Leisure
Respondent 10	More than 15	Maximum 300 euros for return ticket	Ryanair, EasyJet, Wizz air, Berlin, Glasgow, Poland, Leisure
Respondent 11	More than 15	Depends on time of booking, urgency of travel	Wizz air, Portugal, Education
Respondent 12	10-14 trips	Depends on the destination, normally 15-30 euros return journey	Ryanair, UK, Germany

Interviewee ID	Trips taken with LCCs within EU	Budget willing to spend/allocate towards flight ticket expenses	Recent travel experience (Airline used, destination, reason for travel)
Respondent 13	More than 15	Under 50 euros for one way ticket	Wizz air, Ryanair, Austria, VFR
Respondent 14	More than 15	Between 50-60 return journey	Ryanair, Italy, Leisure, VFR, Business
Respondent 15	More than 15	Below 150 euros for return trip	Transavia, Netherlands, Education
Respondent 16	5-9 trips	Between 100 and 200 return journey	EasyJet, Malta, VFR
Respondent 17	1-4 trips	Between 40-70 euros return journey	Ryanair, Spain, Leisure
Respondent 18	More than 15	Dependent on the destination, Cheapest amount available at booking time, Airline reputation	City hopper, Norwegian, Denmark, Glasgow, Amsterdam, Business
Respondent 19	1-4 trips	Below 100 euros	Ryanair, Spain, Portugal, Leisure
Respondent 20	10-14 trips	Dependent on the destination, less than 100 euros one way, less than 200 euros for return	EasyJet, London, Portugal, Education
Respondent 21	More than 15	No budget	Ryanair, Porto, Spain, Education
Respondent 22	More than 15	Dependent on the destination	EasyJet, Morocco, Leisure & Business
Respondent 23	More than 15	Dependent on offers/discounts at the time of booking	Ryanair, Spain -Ibiza, Leisure
Respondent 24	10-14 trips	Dependent on the destination, time of flight	Ryanair, Germany, Glasgow, Education
Respondent 25	More than 15	Between 50-100 euros one way	Ryanair, Portugal, Frankfurt, VFR

Table 3.2: LCCs Travel Experience

Source: Author, based on interviewees' data

Regarding information on whether the tourists had a range of budget that they would normally be willing to spend on flight tickets, 11 participants reported that they were always willing to spend less than 100 euros on a return ticket and 5 participants reported they would allocate up to 300 euros for their return flight tickets. However, most of the respondents reported that their budget was dependent on different factors such as destination, travel distance, urgency of trip, luggage, airline reputation, cheapest amount, discounts or offers available at the time of booking. 2 respondents reported having no budget. Moreover, Ryanair was cited among the most popular LCCs for travels to different destinations within Europe as well as to the UK and

Africa (Morocco). Leisure and VFR were reported as most of the tourists' main reasons for travel, with others travelling for education, business and to attend concerts.

3.3 Data analysis

The data gathered was analysed using Leximancer 5.0 software. Leximancer is a natural language text data analysis software that uses statistical algorithms based on Bayesian algebra to perform a detailed analysis of qualitative data and presents findings through concept maps, network clouds and concept thesauruses (Leximancer, 2021). Firstly, the interviews were transcribed, and transcriptions were carefully reviewed for corrections, before being summarized in MS Excel sheet. Next, the data was uploaded on the Leximancer software which analysed the data by facilitating the identification of key concepts and fundamental ideas based on word associations derived from the extensive lexical data gathered. It was crucial at this point for the researcher to ensure that the key concepts identified were related to answering the research questions:- aspects of LCCs, destination choice and tourist travel motivations. Further, the Leximancer software was used to code the data as well as conduct semantic and relational analyses of text corpuses to confirm the key concepts, cluster them into themes, and determine how they relate to one another, with the most prominent concept designated as the theme name within a cluster (Smith & Humphreys, 2006). This allowed for a more systematic understanding of the textual content. Finally, the results were presented on a visual concept map where concepts are clustered based on their relationships and co-occurrence frequencies, facilitating interpretation and analysis (Leximancer, 2021).

CHAPTER FOUR

4 Results

4.1 Overview

From the 25 interview responses gathered two phases of Leximancer-driven analyses were conducted focusing on two dimensions of tourists' perceptions regarding the role of LCCs on tourism: (1) LCCs and destination choice, (2) LCCs and travel motivation in line with the fulfilment of the research objectives and the study's goals. The initial phase of the Leximancer analysis was aimed at identifying the primary themes by generating concept seeds and thesaurus and then grouping conceptually related ideas extracted from the data into 'themes,' (Leximancer, 2021) visually represented as coloured circles in a concept map (Figure 4.1). Further, the auto-generated concepts (represented by grey dots in Figure 4.1) were merged, for instance, budget airlines/low-cost, cheap/affordable, and tourist/traveller, destination/destinations among others. During the presentation of the results on the concept map, the output was adjusted to display 100% visible concepts, 54% theme size, and zero degrees of rotation to enhance the clarity of the visual presentation (Figure 4.1).

4.2. Effects of LCCs: destination choice and travel motivation

The overall results generated by Leximancer 5.0 analysis generated 6 themes represented as coloured circles and related concepts presented as small grey dots on the concept map (see Figure 4.1). Notably, from Figure 4.1, the analysis revealed that out of the six themes, the most dominant in connectivity was the "low-cost" (55%). This theme also shared the most boundaries with the other themes, revealing a close relationship with them. The second dominant theme was "destination" (52%) which was also associated with a greater number of concepts. Other themes identified included: “flight” (37%), “places” (27%), “tourism” (10%) and “money” (9%). All the themes combined represented the tourists’ perception of LCCs on the aspects of destination choice and travel motivations in line with the research’s objectives. Additionally, a second phase of Leximancer analysis was conducted, structured as a tags’ association analysis. The objective of this stage of the analysis was aimed at revealing the associations or relationships between the themes and the variables pertinent to the research questions, namely destination choice and travel motivation (refer to Figure 4.1).

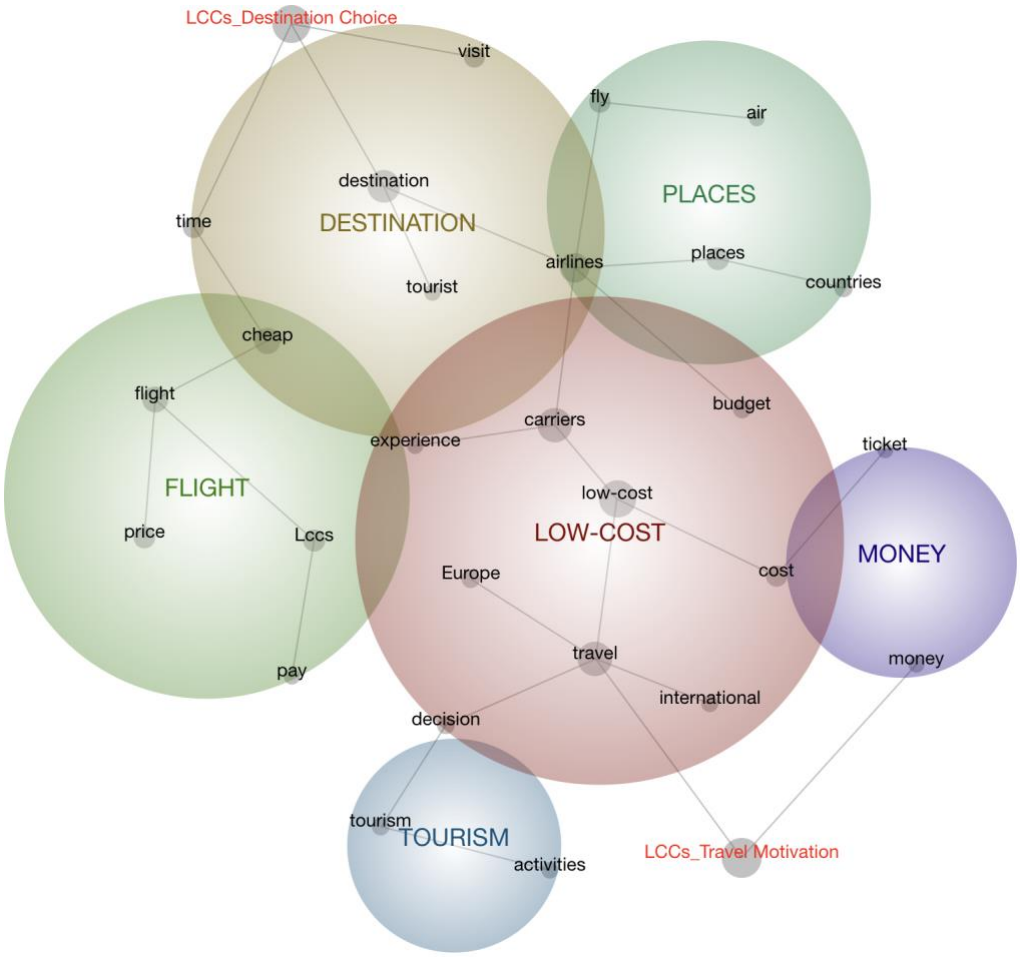


Figure 4.1: Concept Map view of Effects of LCCs on Tourists Destination Choice and Travel Motivation

Source: Output analysis by Leximancer software

From the concept map, it can also be deduced that the themes "low-cost" and "money" are closely associated with the tag "LCCs and Travel Motivation" while the "destination" theme is close to the tag "LCCs and Destination Choice." Overall, the themes and their associated concepts as well as the tags contributed to answering the research questions by determining the correlation of the dataset.

4.3. Content analysis

In addition to providing a summary of significant themes and concepts, Leximancer 5.0 software was also utilised to ascertain the correlation between various concepts (Wu et al., 2014). This was particularly useful in understanding how different concepts were interconnected within the different themes (Figure 4.1). The size of a concept's dot reflected its level of connectivity within the concept map. The frequency of coding a concept in the text, together with other ideas on the map, is directly proportional to the size of the concept dot (Leximancer, 2021). A concept analysis, as summarised in Table 4.1, displays the six themes

identified, with their respective hits, connectivity and concepts. Further, Annexe C shows some of the comments by tourists regarding their perceptions relating to the different themes.

Theme	Hits	Connectivity	Concepts
Low-cost	375	3889.00	Low-cost, travel, carriers, cost, Europe, budget, decision, international, experience.
Destination	419	2760.00	Destination, airlines, cheap, time, visit, tourist.
Flight	273	1325.00	Flight, LCCs, price, pay.
Places	199	999.00	Places, fly, countries, air.
Tourism	41	298.00	Tourism, activities.
Money	59	210.00	Money, ticket.

Table 4.1: Theme summary

Source: Output analysis by Leximancer software

4.4. Frequency analysis

In the Leximancer concept map (Figure 4.1), the proximity of themes within the concept map reflected their frequency of mention within the same context (Leximancer, 2021). Table 4.2 below displays the name-like and word-like concept rankings in terms of count and percentage relevance in the dataset analysed. It also shows the tag variable. From the table, among the top seven highest-ranked word-like concepts within the themes were “travel,” “low-cost,” “destination,” “carriers,” “airlines” and “cheap.” When describing their motivations for using the LCCs, tourists most often used the words “travel” and “low-cost.” The analysis also revealed that LCCs influenced the decision of some of the tourists who mentioned that they would travel to a “destination” mainly because these “carriers” or “airlines” offered “cheap” “flight(s)” to these routes. More details are presented in Annexe C.

Name-like	**Count**	**Relevance**
LCCs	76	22%
Europe	41	12%
Word-like	**Count**	**Relevance**
Travel	199	56%
Low-cost	195	55%
Destination	185	52%
Carriers	163	46%
Airlines	153	43%
Cheap	133	38%
Flight	131	37%
Places	94	27%
Price	90	25%
Time	84	24%
Fly	78	22%
Cost	71	20%
Visit	69	20%
Countries	49	14%
Budget	44	12%
Tourism	36	10%
Decision	33	9%
Money	33	9%
Experience	27	8%
Pay	26	7%
Ticket	26	7%
International	25	7%
Activities	24	7%
Tourist	23	7%
Air	19	5%
Tag variable	**Count**	**Relevance**
LCCs and Travel Motivation	353	100%
LCCs and Destination Choice	353	100%

Table 4.2: Ranked concepts

Source: Output analysis by Leximancer software

CHAPTER FIVE

5 Discussion

The objective of this study was to examine aspects of tourism impacted by LCCs in Europe. This chapter discusses the tourists' perceptions and their corresponding attributes based on the 6 major themes analysed in the concept map (refer to Figure 4.1).

5.1 Low-Cost Carriers and Destination Choice

Three themes: "destination," "places" and "flight" were identified in the narratives of tourists relating to answering the first research question.

Of the three, "destination" is ranked as the strongest theme relating to how the LCCs have influenced tourists' destination choices. This theme has close connectivity with "low-cost," "places" and "flight." The present study found that tourists' perceptions regarding LCCs were that they influenced destination choices by impacting travel decision-making processes, which enhances the likelihood of impulsive travel decisions. A tourist commented, *"For sure, I think […] low-cost carriers offer people to make impulsive decisions to visit these locations."* Our findings also confirmed a reciprocal relationship between the "airlines" and the destinations, which is also supported in the literature review (Forsyth, 2006;2010). This finding explained that the dynamic pricing by the "airlines" acts as a valuable response to the fluctuations in tourism demand, encouraging tourists' destination choices, during different "time(s)", especially the off-peak seasons. However, one of the tourists said: *"I mean it's like a double-edged sword kind of relationship because in some cases the tourist destinations get […] all the positive impacts […], but then at the same time […] it can also lead to […] negative impacts."* This is consistent with studies by Khan et al. (2017). From further responses, tourists add that, in as much as LCCs influence "tourist" choices to "visit" certain destinations (Morley, 2003), there are potential positive impacts resulting from it like job opportunities (ATAG, 2020), economic income (Khan et al., 2017), cultural exchange (Spasojević et al., 2017) and also negative impacts such as cases of mass tourism or overcrowding at the destinations. The study's findings further reveal that even though there might be 'tempting deals' by the LCCs, most tourists typically would not revisit the same "destination" more than once. Moreover, from the results, this study also agrees with the findings of the chain analysis conducted by Clavé et al. (2015; pp. 213-218) whereby the "destination-loyal tourists" reported minimal impacts of LCCs on their destination choice. One participant commented: *"I don't think they are promoting the tourist destinations as such."* implying that these airlines may not have any influence on their destination choice. A "destination-loyal tourist" further stated: *"[…] most of the European*

tourist destinations are built on a historical experience or historical artefacts that people want to see." Suggesting this as a reason contributing towards their decision to choose to visit these destinations, more than just the fact that the LCCs offer "cheap" fares and 'tempting deals.'

"Flight" theme ranked as the second dominant theme in answering this research question. This theme emphasizes the study's findings on how in as much as LCCs influence tourists' destination choices by offering affordable flight prices, also referred to in the literature by Avogadro et al. (2021) as a price equivalent to that of a pair of jeans, most of the tourists prioritize push and pull factors (Dann, 1977) over costs when making choices on destinations to visit. From the findings, tourists give high value to comfort and convenience (Fageda et al., 2015). A respondent said: *"[…] Yeah, definitely, I do have a willingness to pay more for my comfort."* The respondents also emphasized that LCCs may not necessarily influence their destination choices because their considerations when booking a "flight" are not primarily focused on "price" but rather on convenience and 'bucket-list'. Typical comments on this theme mention that tourists are willing to "pay" extra to go to their preferred destination. A participant stated: *"[…] if I am interested in some destination and they do not have a budget airline, but that destination is […] in my bucket list I would just find a way to go […] even if I like, have to pay higher fare."* However, this theme also yielded contrasting findings, with some tourists stating that their choice of destination is always influenced by the LCCs. A respondent stated: *"If not for the LCCs, I would have never travelled to some destinations"* Most of the other respondents also implied that they would always prefer getting an affordable deal for their travels. A student commented:*"[…]I always want the cheapest price and best deal […]."* Tourists further revealed that they would rather avoid the extra fees or frills (Fageda et al., 2015) on the flight and instead spend more at a destination. This finding also aligns with the chain analysis results by Clavé et al. (2015), who indicated that the presence of LCCs strongly impacted tourists' travel choices, referring to such tourists as low-cost loyal tourists.

The "place" theme explored how factors such as route availability (Dobruszkes, 2013), good connections, cost and curiosity about new "places" or destinations provided by the LCCs shaped the tourists' destination choices. Typical comments on this theme mention that LCCs influence tourists' destination choices whereby curious tourists who always seek to "fly" to remote destinations (Francis et al., 2004) benefit from the LCCs' offers and accessibility to both popular destinations as well as remote places. A respondent commented: *"I mostly fly Wizz Air or Ryanair just because they have good connections in the places where I want to fly to […] fly from […]*

and the main reason is the budget." The tourists also believe that the LCCs enable them to discover new destinations (Donzelli, 2010) and interesting "places" through their new routes and marketing strategies. The findings cited Ryanair and Wizz Air as among the LCCs popularly known for operations in remote places. Tourists also acknowledge that LCCs have influenced their destination choices, adding that despite having places they want to visit, they choose to explore affordable destination options offered by these "airlines" first. A lady noted: *"[…] maybe the country that I really want to go I'm yet to go, but due to the other places being affordable, I might want to go there first."* This finding questions Khan et al. (2017) argument on whether this kind of tourism may contribute to a destination becoming a victim of its own triumph. In contrast, some of this theme's concepts spell out some of the limitations in LCCs' influencing destination choices. For instance, comments relating to the concept of "countries" note the absence and/or limited operations of these airlines' operations in some "countries." For instance, a respondent from Russia commented: "[…] only Wizz air fly to Russia […] the rest […] flew to Estonia and Finland […] closer countries." Other limitations cited included the distance of the "places," with tourists stating that they may opt for a more expensive flight on FSNCs instead of LCCs for longer journeys. A tourist went on to say that: *"[…] for me, […] nowadays I tend to buy the more expensive one because it's a longer journey."*

5.2 LCCs and Tourists' Travel Motivation

The results from the concept map show that the three themes of "low-cost," "travel/tourism," and "money" represent narratives of tourists relating to answering the second research question. As expected, "Low-cost" is ranked as the strongest theme relating to the tourists' travel motivations for choosing LCCs. This theme is closely associated with all the other themes identified in this study. From the analysis of tourists' perceptions in this study, as well as in the literature review, LCCs have increased the accessibility of international travel, within Europe, acting as a catalyst for the growth of the European airline network (Dobruszkes, 2013). A respondent stated: *"So, […] influenced my decision to travel internationally […] in Europe."* From the findings, the main tourists' travel motivations for choosing LCCs were summarized as cost, budget, desire to travel and experience, and legal protections in cases of disruptions. Tourists described several concepts on the influence of "low cost" on their motivations to make "international" travels, particularly in "Europe." Most of the comments on this theme highlighted the importance of "budget" considerations in travel planning and how the affordability offered by LCCs allows for additional leisure activities during trips. An HR commented: *"[…] whenever you want to travel, you think about budget […] is a really important thing. I would love to save a few pennies on the tickets […] use them to have a full*

touristic experience at the destination." A student also suggested that: *" […] the low-cost carrier […] offering you a nice pricing […] and, […] I can spend that extra amount […] in my leisure part, or activities at the destination."* Additionally, the findings suggest a novel niche of the LCCs' customers which can be collectively summarized as *"budget-conscious travellers":* described as tourists with limited funds. A gentleman commented: *"LCCs have expanded my appeal for international travel, […] even though, I'm a teacher at the university but […] my stipend is not too much."* From the findings, it can be deduced further that these "carriers" have expanded the ability of people to travel abroad despite financial constraints. This aligns with study results by Chung and Whang (2011) which indicate that more than half of LCC travellers (59%) are either new consumers or individuals who typically would not engage in tourism activities due to finances. The present results further support the literature reviewed by Silva et al. (2020), Chung and Whang (2011) and Morley (2003) regarding LCCs' customer spending behaviours. Further, comments on this theme mention the significance of other factors relating to tourists' travel motivation beyond "cost", such as the overall "travel" "experience." A Kenyan-Portuguese respondent summarized that: *"I mean, […] for Europe, […] it doesn't matter how I get there, what matters is how and what I […] experience in that country."* Additionally, tourists report that LCCs motivate them to travel given the legal protections provided by these carriers within Europe in case of flight delays or cancellations which makes them more reliable. A respondent noted that: *"[…] the low-cost carriers have a certain way of operating […] the law in Europe […] covers you just in case there's a delay or […] a last-minute cancellation, […]."* This is also described first in the literature by Papatheodorou (2021), that flight delays in air transport might have a detrimental impact on the tourism experience and the overall motivation for travel.

From the findings, the "tourism" theme suggests that when choosing to travel by LCCs, tourists are not primarily motivated by the desire to participate in tourism activities. One tourist commented: "[…] LCCs do not really influence my decision to travel or engage in tourism activities […] but […] it affects me in the way that I know that I have options to go […] somewhere else. Another tourist commented: *"LCCs do not influence my decisions to engage in tourism activities because there are many ways to get mobility to a tourism destination in Europe such as train, bus, driving […]."* This aligns with study results by Chung and Whang (2011) which indicate that most LCC travellers are individuals who typically would not engage in tourism activities. Typical comments on this theme discuss how LCCs impact tourists' motivations regarding travel and participation in "tourism" "activities." Tourists express that to

them, motivations for choosing LCCs are primarily driven by practical considerations. A respondent noted that: *"[…] if […] there is a concert or […] an event […] then I will buy the ticket […] so basically […] visiting friends and […] going for a concert…but it's never necessarily because of me wanting to see a place."* This outcome is consistent with the literature reviewed in this study relating to studies by Pearce and Caltabiano (1983). From the comments, the findings further suggest that tourists prioritize factors such as accommodation availability and affordability within a destination. A student commented: *" I may not go there because of LCCs, but if I […] know that OK, I have somewhere to sleep, […] and then I have to take care of food or […] transport within the destination, which may be affordable to me, then yeah, I'll travel there instead. […] they have a bit of influence on me engaging in tourism activities, but not so much."* Another tourist added that: *"[…] when I make trips it's not just about the ticket but also, I consider the accommodation expenses too."* The findings further reveal that tourists' travel motivations for choosing LCCs are also never because they want to participate in tourism activities, but just to get from point A (origin) to point B (destination). A respondent noted: *"I think […] no, these airlines do not influence my decision to engage in tourism activities."* Moreover, the mentions in this theme also state that even though the LCCs offer marketing for specific activities in tourism destinations and/or price promotions, tourists are never motivated to choose the LCCs to engage in tourism activities mainly because this leads to crowded tourist destinations which impact the quality of tourism experience. A tourist commented: *"LCC promotions engage more people than usual, and it would be crowded and I wouldn't go there because of this fact […] usually I'm trying like to avoid […] promotions and then keep it low season to face less people as possible"* Another tourist also added that: *"[…] I think if the flight tickets are too cheap then I don't think the destination really offers […] high-quality tourism."* The comments further explain that cheap fares by LCCs may deter tourists from having a good quality tourism experience when exploring new places, therefore preferring to avoid peak seasons and/or LCCs' marketing techniques.

The last theme identified associated with RQ2 is "money." This theme entailed the respondents' narratives demonstrating that saving money, practicalities and availability are key factors motivating tourists' choice of LCCs for travel. A respondent commented: *"[…] whenever I am in a dilemma of where to go, I always choose a place that I can go with the cheapest ticket."* Although most comments on this theme mention that the tourists' primary motivation for choosing LCCs is price, some also point to instances where the extra fees or frills (Fageda et al., 2015) on LCCs significantly impacted the "cost" of a ticket. A student explained that: *"[…]*

I add my bag […] it's like Oh my God, now it's like 200 euros ticket because I have 3 big carry bags." Some of the respondents' comments also highlight the aspect of priority boarding offered by LCCs as a motivation for choosing LCCs for their travels, expressing frustration when this is not acknowledged. A British electrical engineer sadly expressed that: *"I flew from Luton to Pula in Croatia […] I had a priority ticket […] priority queue before everybody else…on the Croatian side, they didn't appreciate that or acknowledge that!"* Additionally, as reported in the literature review and supported by this study, tourists cited scenarios of spontaneous trips made possible and/or motivated by LCCs' affordable "ticket" prices (Silva et al., 2020). One tourist stated: *"So […] I went to Sevilla, Spain on a whim just because I saw […] a return ticket for 20 euros…it was on sale."* Another tourist commented: *"I travelled to Estonia […] because I got a cheap flight […]. A destination I never even knew existed!"* The findings in this study also reflect on the *"budget-conscious travellers*" who emphasize that their travel motivation for choosing LCCs is the importance of saving "money." A respondent noted that: *"[…] as I'm currently a full-time student, I want to save as much as money."* However, some tourists also revealed that their travel motivations are guided by their availability (Eugenio-Martin & Inchausti-Sintes, 2016) and not entirely cost considerations.

CHAPTER 6

6 Conclusions

6.1 Main conclusions

The analysis presented in this study fulfils the research's objective. It reviews literature on LCCs and tourism aspects including ‘destination choices’ and ‘travel motivations.’ The study utilizes 6 themes presented in the concept map analysis (Figure 4.1) to enhance understanding of European tourists' perceptions and corresponding attributes.

Based on the findings, the analysis identified three main themes: "destination," "flight," and "place," each shedding light on different perspectives towards addressing the first RQ. The primary theme of "destination" emerged as the most prominent, suggesting that LCCs have a favourable impact on tourists' destination choices. Similarly, this theme unveiled a dynamic relationship between LCCs and tourist destinations, supporting that LCCs have a significant influence on the choices made by tourists when selecting their destinations. However, in contrast, the findings also indicate that tourists did not concur with the idea of revisiting the same destination more than once for tourism purposes. Additionally, they affirmed that their decision to visit a tourism destination is not entirely influenced by LCCs. Instead, they prioritise other factors when making destination choices. Some are willing to incur additional costs to tour their desired destinations, if necessary. The "flight" theme introduced the niche of 'budget-conscious tourists,' highlighting the impact of LCCs' economical flight prices on tourists' destination choices. Lastly, the "place" theme summarized how the variables of LCCs shape tourists' destination choices. This outcome is consistent with prior studies conducted by Forsyth (2006), which asserts that the influence of LCCs on expanding visitors' choices for a destination greatly relies on their selection of airports and routes. However, various limitations associated with LCCs’ operations (outlined in the preceding chapter) may influence tourists’ destination choices. This RQ findings therefore conclude that, while LCCs influence the tourists' destination selections, it is evident that these carriers do not entirely shape tourists’ choices of destinations.

Regarding the second RQ, the analysis indicates the theme of "low-cost" as the strongest. This suggests that tourists' travel motivations for choosing LCCs go beyond the notion of being 'cheap.' Based on the study’s results, it is essential to capitalize on, as well as target the niche market of low-cost loyal tourists (Clavé et al., 2015). These findings share a similar view with prior analysis by the UKCAA (2006), suggesting that LCCs mostly cater to consumers in middle and higher-income brackets, rather than attracting new low-income passenger segments.

Concerning the "tourism" theme revealed in this RQ, tourists' motivations for opting for LCCs were portrayed as mostly practical (see Table 3.2). Aligning to prior studies by Chung and Whang (2011), tourists expressed that LCCs had a minimal influence on their travel motivations. Their decisions to fly with LCCs were not primarily driven by the desire to engage in tourism activities. Instead, they prioritize factors like the affordability of the destination. With this, LCCs should implement tactics, such as developing affordable travel packages that encompass a wide range of tourism amenities. The "money" theme further emphasizes the importance of cost-saving in tourists' motivations for choosing LCCs for their travels, as previously discussed by Eugenio-Martin & Inchausti-Sintes (2016). It sums up that while price is often regarded as the primary driving factor towards choosing LCCs, practicalities, convenience and availability of tourists also play a significant role. In summary, these findings emphasize studies by Graham and Dennis, (2010), which suggest that affluent travellers have a higher propensity to choose LCCs rather than FSNCs for their travels.

To conclude, although this present dissertation study's findings underscore the significant effects of LCCs on the various aspects of European tourism, the big question still lingers, is *'cheap' truly 'expensive'?*

6.2 Theoretical contributions

Very little has been written regarding the effects of LCCs on European tourism. This present study therefore contributes to the scarce literature in three ways. First, by providing empirical evidence through its findings, it explains the relationship between aviation and tourism through a novel angle of consumer-oriented perspective, by specifically focusing on tourists' perceptions. Recent studies on this subject have mostly focused on the business-oriented perspective (e.g. Huang, 2023; Chiambaretto & Combe, 2023). This study therefore extends these prior studies. Secondly, the results of this study emphasize the significant niches of the tourist segments: *'low-cost loyal'* and *'destination loyal'* thereby contributing accordingly to existing research. Consequently, previous research (e.g. Jain et al., 2022) suggested that tourists' motivations for choosing LCCs are often primarily driven by them being 'cheap.' This study challenges these arguments, demonstrating that there are other more practical considerations that tourists are often guided by when choosing LCCs. Lastly, this research expands upon the aforementioned studies, which mostly focused on the affordability element, by offering novel insights on previously unexamined variables related to the effects of LCCs on European tourism.

6.3 Practical contributions

The findings of this study are imperative in providing strategic and tactical insights for managers, marketers, decision-makers and analysts in the tourism and aviation industries. These sectors are required to remain agile in the fast-changing global marketplace (Spasojević et al., 2017). Therefore, this present study emphasizes the importance of understanding and prioritizing tourists' behaviours and motivations. It spells out that these stakeholders should maximize customers' perceptions when establishing and implementing strategies. In practice, airlines should prioritise efforts on effective disruption management, and customer loyalty and convenience in addition to affordability, to ensure a better tourism experience. Moreover, as proven by the study findings, European tourism stakeholders need to capitalize on the economic benefits resulting from the mutually beneficial relationship between the LCCs and tourist destinations (Duval, 2013). Additionally, one of the study's most important managerial implications is that to manage any potential resultant negative consequences, there is a need for tourism players to formulate sustainable strategies that ensure a balance between the LCCs' operations and the tourist destinations. Implementing these will enhance overall tourism development, significant for businesses' success and sustainability (Lohmann & Duval, 2014). Overall, the findings of this study are deemed pertinent and imperative for all relevant stakeholders in the tourism and aviation sectors. Considering this, this study should serve as a guide for formulating aviation and tourism strategies in Europe at large.

6.4 Limitations and suggestions for future research

Despite its contributions, the present study has limitations that warrant consideration. The first drawback was that it focused solely on tourists' perceptions in Europe, limiting the generalizability of the findings. Secondly, the formulation and administration of the interview questions exclusively in English limited participation to only individuals who are proficient in English. This limitation is particularly relevant in Europe, where English is often not spoken as a first language in most countries. Regarding suggestions for future research, given the salient concepts in the field of tourism studies identified by this present study, it proposes that future researchers on similar topics or fields employ longitudinal studies, which could offer more accurate insights into the long-term effects of LCC operations and identify trends in tourism dynamics and correlation. Additionally, another area that merits future research could be exploring topics currently under-researched such as Total Quality Management (TQM) in the tourism and aviation industry.

6.5 Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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ANNEXES

Annexe A: Guideline for Interview Questions

This interview follows a semi-structured approach. These questions are designed to elicit detailed, thoughtful responses that can provide valuable insights into the dynamics between LCCs and the tourism industry as a whole. Two primary topics are established, but the sequence of questions can be adjusted. Additionally, there is a provision for personalised follow-up inquiries to provide further clarification or delve into the subject matter more deeply. The scheduled duration for the interview is half an hour.

Topic 1: Demographical Questions:

Could you please introduce yourself:

i. Which age group do you belong to?

[ ] 18-24 years **[ ]** 25-34 years **[ ]** 35-44 years **[ ]** 45-54 years **[ ]** 55 or older

ii. What gender are you?

[ ] Female **[ ]** Male **[ ]** Non-binary **[ ]** Prefer not to say

iii. How many trips have you taken with low-cost carriers within Europe, in the past?

[ ] 1-4 **[ ]** 5-9 **[ ]** 10-14 **[ ]** More than 15

iv. What is your nationality?

v. What is your occupation?

vi. When planning or reflecting on your trips, what specific amount or range do you typically allocate or are you willing to spend on travel expenses?

vii. Tell me about your recent travel (reason for travel, airline used, destination)

Topic 2: LCCs and Tourists Destination Choice

Issue of Interest ***(Based on the literature review)***	**Source**	**Reframed Question**
How have LCCs' strategies of expanding capacity on their existing network and launching new routes influenced the tourism market?	(Dobruszkes, 2013; Francis et al., 2004)	Has flying with LCCs enabled you to visit destinations that you otherwise might not have considered? Can you share any specific experiences?
Have LCCs generated new tourism travel demand?	(Chung & Whang, 2011; Donzelli, 2010)	In your travel experience, has the availability of LCCs created interest in travelling to a new destination (s)?
Does the affordability offered by LCCs play a role in	(Eugenio-Martin & Inchausti-Sintes, 2016)	Can you share your thoughts on whether the affordability of LCCs has influenced your decision-making

attracting new tourists to certain destinations?		process to travel to certain destinations?
"Low-cost loyal tourists" or "Destination loyal tourists"? Does LCCs encourage repeat tourism through their affordable fares, discounts, or marketing?	(Clavé et al., 2015; Lohmann & Duval, 2014; Morley, 2003)	Have LCCs influenced you to visit the same destinations more than once? Can you share any specific instance (s)?
The relationship between LCCs and tourism may contribute to a destination becoming a victim of its own triumph.	(Papatheodorou, 2004; Khan et al., 2017)	Do you believe that the relationship between LCCs and tourist destinations can be understood as a reciprocal relationship? How?

Topic 3: LCCs Vs Tourists' Travel Motivations

Issue of Interest ***(Based on literature review)***	**Source**	**Reframed Question**
Do low-cost carriers' operation affect the spending behaviour of tourists?	(Silva et al., 2020; Morley, 2003)	Can you comment on whether cost is a significant factor in you choosing to book LCCs for your travels?
Does the flexibility offered by LCCs influence how often people travel?	(Eugenio-Martin & Inchausti-Sintes, 2016)	Do you feel that the availability of LCCs travel options has affected the frequency of your trips? How so?
Who are the niche market for LCCs?	(Forsyth, 2006; Morley, 2003; Fageda et al., 2015)	What is your opinion on the main driving factors for you to choose LCCs over FSCNs?
Can LCCs be categorized under push and pull factors in aspects of tourist travel motivations?	(Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1977)	To what extent do you feel LCCs influence your decision to travel and/or engage in tourism activities?
How have LCCs impacted tourists and key global tourism market stakeholders?	(Spasojević et al., 2017; Carvalho & Medeiros, 2020)	Do you perceive that LCCs have expanded your appeal of international travel? How?

Annexe B: Consent form for interviews

THE IMPACT OF LOW-COST CARRIERS ON THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

Master thesis by Naomi Apiyo Okoth, submitted in partial fulfilment of requirements for the Master (MSc) in Erasmus Mundus in Tourism Development & Culture (EMJMD)

Thank you for agreeing to share your valuable time and insights with me. You are invited to participate in an interview for a research study titled: Impact of Low-Cost Carriers (Budget Airlines) on the tourism industry. The purpose of this interview is to gain your perspectives and opinions on how LCCs impact the different aspects of tourism. The interview will last approximately 20-30 minutes, and it will be recorded for accuracy and reference purposes only.

Guidelines:

- I confirm that I am over 18 years old.
- I confirm that I am aware of and fine with my interview getting digitally recorded.
- I understand that all information is confidential and will be solely used for the Master's Dissertation and accessed by the researcher only.
- I acknowledge that my real identity will be anonymous throughout the research study.
- I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.
- I can withdraw during the interview at any point
- In the event of feeling uncomfortable replying to a question during the interview, I may refuse to answer it with no justification being given.
- The purpose of the interview was explained to me.
- I had the opportunity to clarify any doubts or questions.

Do you acknowledge and consent to these guidelines?

If you have any further questions, you can contact me anytime through my email:

naoho1@iscte-iul.pt

Annexe C: Comments relating to the themes and concepts

Theme	Comments
Low-cost	1) So, yes, before that, it influenced my decision to travel international now. Well, if you're in Europe . 2) First of all, whenever you want to travel, you think about budget and budget is a really important thing and then you fill the figure find out that yeah, the low cost carrier is offering you a really nice pricing. Which you can go for it and, uh, you know, you, I can spend that extra amount of saving money in my leisure part, which I can experience anything else like parasailing or anything, any activities or something like that. 3) LCCs have expanded my appeal for international travel, because, for example, I'm a student so I don't have, I mean like I'm a teacher at the university but in Europe , I come here for study purposes. So I was paid uh my stipend not too much. 4) Yeah. I mean, I think for Europe , the cost is always the biggest thing when planning a travel, because it doesn't matter how I get there. What matters is how, what I go and experience in that country. 5) So yeah, I would say yes because even now as much as the taxes are much higher whenever I find a cheaper flight, then I wanna go for that for sure and you know, make my travel more just because of that cost for sure 100% for for European flights, you know. I would say Yes and no to whether the LCCs have expanded my appeal for international travels, because the low-cost carriers have a certain way of operating and also just because of how you know, within Europe , the the law in Europe that cover, you know, covers you just in case there's a delay or like a um you know, a last minute cancellation, there's this law that covers you.
Destination	1) So when the demand is higher, they increase their fares and when the demand is lower, they decrease the fare. So when the demand is lower, definitely that might be not a tourist festival or fest time, you know, like uh off-season time in that tourist destination. 2) But usually, I don't visit the same destination twice. Well, that's interesting but maybe not as much because some tourist destination are built on like especially in most of European tourist destination are built on a historical experience or historical artifacts that people want to see. 3) For sure, I think the mutually benefits and even the tourist destinations probably will stand to benefit more because these low-cost carriers offer people to make impulsive decisions to visit these locations. And it's something that I've seen a couple of people taken out to just decide that. 4) Like, I mean it's like a double-edged sword kind of relationship because in some cases the tourist destinations get visitors and then it gets all the positive impacts of tourism like job opportunities, economic income, cultural exchange, like you name it, all the positive impacts, but then at the same time like, because like these visitors, the big amount of visitors that this low-cost airlines can bring, actually it can also lead to mass tourism and it will also bring . like negative impacts. 5) I don't think they are promoting the tourist destinations as such.
Flight	1) Um, and I add all the things that I need and if the price is reasonable, then I would go for it. When I add all the stuff, it's a bit annoying because you have to go through the process of adding all this stuff to get the actual price that you're gonna pay.

	2)	You don't want to pay extra or 100 or ? 200 to go to from A. To B so. You always want the cheapest price and best deal so.
	3)	You need to pay and then go. So, it is like something which is I think we all like a craziest thing like it's not must be, you know the things are good.
	4)	Here until and unless. Yeah, definitely. I do have a willing to pay more for my comfort.
	5)	So I always have to pay for that. It can either be another hand luggage or checked in luggage.
Places	1)	It is only associates with the capital and maybe bigger city. But when I look at the map of Ryanair or even like wizz air where they fly um quite frequently on like daily basis, I see that they have, oh, some sports that I've never heard before and I'm getting interested about this place and then somehow algorithms work really well.
	2)	I mostly fly wizz air or Ryanair just because they have good connections in the place where I want to fly to or where I fly from. And the main reason is the budget.
	3)	Even I at this scene, a lot of Russia because low cost Airlines International , except Wizz air didn't fly to Russia . They flew to Estonia and Finland , especially closer countries.
	4)	Yes. So for me, yeah. Uh for then I fly to my home country which is 10 hours nowadays I tend to buy for the more expensive one because it's a longer journey.
	5)	So maybe the country that I really want to go I? m yet to go. But due to the other places being affordable, I might want to go there first.
Tourism	1)	I guess LCCs do not really influence my decision to travel or engage in tourism activities because it's not really to the point where I would feel crazy about going somewhere with LCCs for the sake of tourism. But I would say that it affects me in the way that I know that I have options to go like visiting my friends who live somewhere else.
	2)	Also, I know that if I want to do something like say there is a concert or there is like an event that I would love to go then I will buy the ticket so it's not I mean OK so basically, it's still tourism activities because you're visiting your friends and then you are like let's say going for a concert. But it's never necessarily because of me wanting to see a place.
	3)	I may not go there, but if I go to a destination and I know that OK, I have somewhere to sleep, then I take away the accommodation and then if I have to take care of food or any other thing else like transport within the destination, which maybe affordable to me, then yeah, I'll travel there instead. Oh. Yeah . So yeah, so they have a bit of influence on me engaging in tourism activities, but not so much.
	4)	I think maybe I would think about if they make me want to participate in tourism, but. No. these airlines do not influence my decision to engage in tourism activities.
	5)	And plus, uh, it will, like, engage more people than usually and it would be crowded and I wouldn't go there because of this fact, like, too many people than usual. But if they are not doing anything just putting it ok, we have this, I know flight to Ibiza , then I will take the one but usually I'm trying like to like avoid a little bit promotions and then keep it low season to face less people as possible.

Money	1) And then I go ahead and I add my back. It's like Oh my God , now it's like 200 euros ticket because I have 3 big carry bags. 2) I flew from Luton to Pula in Croatia and I had a priority ticket so you know the priority queue before everybody else. And on the Croatian side, they didn't appreciate that or acknowledge that. 3) So I've ever done that and one of them was like um I went to Sevilla on a whim just because I saw a ticket that was a return ticket for ? 20. So and it was on sale. 4) So definitely it made my mind and yeah, I go with that. So, the first thing is definitely, as I'm currently full-time student, I want to save as much as money. 5) And uh yeah, like uh it helps me to save my money as well. So why not. It can be definitely, but like I can say like it also depends on my availability.