The Impact of Marketing Mix Strategies on Passenger Satisfaction: Rafic Hariri International Airport as a Case Study

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Abstract

This paper investigates the passengers' fulfillment, devotion, and perception of marketing mix strategies. This research aims to explore the impact of marketing mix strategies defined by promotion, price, consumer market, product and distribution on passenger satisfaction. Descriptive analysis is enrolled to represent the variables and data is analyzed by using the SPSS version 25. The population of this study is the passengers at Rafic Hariri Beirut International Airport through a sample size of (405) participants and the study is conducted from January 2022 to March 2022. The results define a positive impact between marketing mix strategies components: the promotion, price, consumer market and product on passenger satisfaction. Findings show a remarkable positive influence on passenger satisfaction by all the components of marketing mix. The study recommended that Rafic Hariri airport should use a variety of communication methods to reach the passengers better.

Keywords: Passenger Satisfaction, Marketing Mix, Distribution, Rafic Hariri Beirut International Airport, Lebanon.

Introduction

In the marketing literature, brand devotion is explained as the recognized perception of how some brands provide better service and quality, with a minimum focus on the value for money^[2]. A lot of effort and energy is cleverly planned to target the need of various consumers. Creativity is the utmost skill looked for in marketers, which makes the owner create and design ideas using different resources that will permit the successful communication of thoughts, concepts, and feelings^[31]. Be that as it may, the overall decrease in client devotion and the tendency to be replaced^[11].

The tourism industry is known to be an agile industry with a high rate of modification in technology, people service, and social return on investment. Even though tourism has been disrupted worldwide by Covid19 and the Lebanese economic crisis locally, its revival was accelerated due to the international business needs of companies and leisure vacations of people. This idea is very clear when tourism was explained as a set of specific events and activities, chosen, and executed outside the regular and known entourage of the clients^[9].

The marketing mix enables the airline company to examine the client behavior at low priced flight passenger^[34]. Marketing mix applied in the airlines refers to a business's methods of motivating people to buy its goods and services^[17]. Good application of marketing mix leads to lower consumer consumption^[15].

The Lebanese government is trying to add a new apartment as a goal to be added to the Rafic Hariri airport that will attract new travel agencies, build new competitive advantage and lead to decrease the prices^[38]. The marketing strategy applied in Beirut Rafic Hariri airport was highly attractive that strongly attract new passengers from new nationalities during the summer of 2023⁵. There is about a 10% decrease of the number of passengers for January 2024 as compared to January 2023^[22].

The purpose of tourist activities may be for various reasons; thus, there are different types of travelers. They are categorized corresponding to the set of activities they perform where they travel and stay. Whether for leisure, business, medical, or educational purposes, tourists may be divided into domestic and international tourists^[8]. In most types of travelers, the resource value and cost have a substantial constructive effect on customer satisfaction^[10]. Covid19 had a huge impact on the activity of tourism, primarily by the addition of the calculation of risk. Tourists are now concerned with safety and cleanliness; they target places that are not over-populated and crowded and countries where the medical industry, treatment plans, and medications are available^[36].

This article intends to broaden the knowledge base of one of the aspects of the tourism industry through the investigation of passengers' perceptions leading to satisfaction and loyalty at the Rafic Hariri Beirut International Airport. The five elements of the marketing mix strategies that are used are: product, price, distribution, promotion, and consumer market. In Lebanon, the main entry points are the airport and seaport, which are critical connection points nationally and internationally. Therefore, discovering the satisfaction of the passengers will provide valuable business development initiatives for airport management.

I think that applying good strategy of marketing mix will provide a competitive price advantage, add new product features that attract new passengers. Therefore, government policy in building new apartment will lead to strengthen the tours activity and increase the passengers' process in Beirut Rafic Hariri Airport.

A- Research Problem and Research Questions

The COVID19 followed by the explosion of Beirut seaport created financial crisis and huge loss in the GDP as well as the GNP including the devaluation of the Lebanese currency by 98% from its purchasing power (100,000.00 compare to 1,500) on the economy which forced many companies and banks to lay off their employees where the rate off the employment has increase dramatically, which forced Rafic Hariri Beirut airport to close down for few month due to the COVID19 and the rate of passengers coming to Lebanon decrease due to the economy that we just mentioned which resulted in a decrease in the number of flights.

Rafic Hariri Beirut airport has limited capability in passengers that can't take added pressure in addition to delayed flights, power and fuel cuts, and long lines of passengers in the darkness^[19].

The explosion of the Beirut port has damaged Rafic Hariri Beirut airport but the flights are still operating. Moreover, due to COVID19 the airport stopped the flights for about a few months and restarted the flights on July 2020^[1].

Hence, the main questions of this marketing mix strategy on passenger satisfaction of this study are the following:

- 1. What is the impact of Product on passenger satisfaction.?
- 2. What is the impact of Price on passenger satisfaction?
- 3. What is the impact of Promotion on passenger satisfaction?
- 4. What is the impact Distribution on passenger satisfaction?

5. What is the impact Consumer market on passenger satisfaction?

B- Research Objectives

The objectives of this article are investigating about important elements of the marketing mix strategies as follows:

- a. Determine the impact of product on passenger satisfaction.
- b. Find out the impact of price on passenger satisfaction.
- c. Determine the impact of promotion on passenger satisfaction.
- d. Identify the impact of distribution on passenger satisfaction.
- e. Find out the impact of consumer market on passenger satisfaction.

C- Research Importance

The importance of this research is to discover marketing points that are important for the satisfaction of the passengers that can be used as marketing tools and providing solutions for best practices. This article with help to find positive and negative point of the marketing mix and passenger satisfaction. Therefore, it is important to study the service and improvement provided of the marketing mix is in the suitable level to satisfy the passengers, and the successful marketing mix as a competitive advantage in the marketplace.

D-Originality of the Research

Most researches investigate marketing strategies for a number of airports including Beirut airport without taking into consideration the passenger satisfaction but this research analyses the marketing mix and satisfaction of the passenger at Rafic Hariri Beirut international airport. Analysing and examining passenger satisfaction is very important for the marketing strategies applied in Rafic Hariri Beirut international airport.

E-Research Hypotheses

The research hypotheses investigate the impact of marketing mix including product, price, promotion, distribution and consumer market on passenger satisfaction in Rafic Hariri Beirut international airport.

Second: Literature Review:

A- Rafic Hariri Beirut International Airport Background:

Beirut Rafic Hariri international airport has a 3-star certification due to hygiene, securities, facilities and food services ^[41].

The hypotheses of this research are as follows:

H1: Product has a positive impact on passenger satisfaction.

- **H2**: Price has a positive impact on passenger satisfaction.
- **H3**: Promotion has a positive impact on passenger satisfaction.
- **H4**: Distribution has a positive impact on passenger satisfaction.

H5: Consumer market has a positive impact on passenger satisfaction.

F- Research Gap

The marketing mix is challenged for being internalized, weak in customer engagement, and missing practical features ^[45]. Several suggestions are provided to enhance services and maintain passengers that could be expanded related to marketing mix variables and customer satisfaction ^[23]. Companies need to boost on social media and to enhance the marketing mix methods in order to achieve more customer satisfaction ^[24].

G-Research Model

The research model describes the impact of the five elements of marketing mix that are the product, price, promotion, distribution and consumer market on passenger satisfaction at Rafic Hariri Beirut airport.

The research model is examined in the figure below:

Figure 1: Marketing Mix and Satisfaction model



Source: ^{[24}, ¹⁴, ^{23]}

Actually, Rafic Hariri Beirut airport provides different services that include health care issues, baggage loosing, refund and tax free, airline lounges, free WIFI internet for public, phone calls paid, rooms for prayers, paid baggage wrapping, facilities for disabilities persons and banking solutions. Therefore, Rafic Hariri Beirut airport offers flight information through time tables, transportation including renting a car, taxi and parking through airport, duty free, coffee, restaurants, hotels, cities and events information and weather forecast ^[7].

Customer satisfaction is the vital technique on business achievement ^[29]. In turn, the key element to achieving customer satisfaction is the relationship between the products or service providers and the customers ^[27].

Researchers often investigate human and psychological traits to discover some rigid qualities and behavior that might be exploited to the benefit of different occupational domains like medical, educational, business, and marketing. Loyalty is one of the qualities that is targeted and serves the purpose. Some researchers argue that loyalty is an identity characteristic rather than a determined selection [37]. and certain consumers have the tendency to be inherently more committed than others. In basic terms, these consumers' loyalty is related to their identity and character qualities rather than the attributes and functionalities of products and services [32].

Several marketing investigators were motivated by the "double-jeopardy" concept that was discussed in scholarly history. Particularly, keeping other aspects constant, the brands that are less known and purchased in fewer quantities have the tendency to attract a smaller number of committed clients ^[13].

On the other hand, service quality performance is studied as well, since it significantly contributes to client perception in addition to satisfaction ^[39]. It was discovered in a study with department stores that client satisfaction and the related purchase activities are impacted by the quality of the service/product provided. These were summarized as the assistance availability, durability of the product, its size and color disposal, and after-sale services. In turn the more satisfied are the clients the more there's a chance to buy again, to propose and recommend to others ^[40].

The marketing mix is considered to be an influential concept that simplifies the management of marketing plans and endeavors to fulfill customer needs and satisfaction^[18]. Product, a component of the marketing mix, is defined as a thing that can be acquired to cover consumer needs^[30]. A product is either tangible or intangible and the latter is labeled as a service. Earlier studies have proved a direct constructive effect between products and services with the customer satisfaction^[4]. The revenue-oriented component of the marketing mix is the price^[33] and price perceptions were found to be related to customer satisfaction [44] and this was discovered in not-so-near studies, due to the latest discoveries that price is the least effective element. The general opinion of the customers is identified with the advertising announcement combinations and the activities that the provider encourages, which is another component of the

marketing mix known as promotion. The techniques used are numerous like individual trading, propaganda networks, and creative marketing methods that are used by the provider for marketing and advertisement. The primary purpose of any advertising activity is summarized as follows: tell the consumers about a product or service, convince them of the decision of buying, and remind them of the value the product/service has which may result in another purchase ^[28]. In addition, the distribution component of the marketing mix offers accessibility to customers and the distribution channels^[21]. Another key component is the consumer market, the client-related functions which can enhance the favorable position of the provider in the market^[25]. Since the buyer is the last network link among all the distribution channel, here it could be debatable if the buyer is the consumer or buying on behalf of the real consumer, it is important that he/she has enough purchaser education. These include buying at the personal valuation of the quality, making sure that enough data/labeling is available, and deciding on the right product/service purchase^[12].

Digital distribution stresses on applying software devices, laptops, cellular phone, email, applications and websites^[20]. The digital distribution channels are the main item in utilizing technology that have a direct role on performance^[26]. Digital distribution plays an important role on automated product and application that are developed under channels and digital platform^[42].

Third: Methodology

A- Study Design

The study is conducted among passengers at Rafic Hariri Beirut International Airport during January 2022 and March 2022. Included in the study were passengers aged 18 years and above and passengers willing to participate to fill the questionnaire.

B- Study Passenger's Population

This study targeted 405 passengers at Rafic Hariri Beirut International Airport between January 2022 and March 2022. Based on Slovin Formula, n=N/(1+Ne2), 400 passengers were sufficient to have a representative sample. (N represents the population and e represents the **p-value** = 0.05).

After applying the Slovin formula, it can be defined that the population is equal to 25000 passengers and the sample is equal to 400 passengers.

C- Data Collection

A questionnaire was built using two articles: ^[3] and ^[6]. They were adopted to reach the study objectives. The questionnaire is divided into 2 parts, the first part of the questionnaire includes demographic issues including the characteristics of the airport passengers. The second part, composed of 41 items gathers the marketing mix aspects, the loyalty and satisfaction of the passengers, measured on a Likert scale.

An Electronic Survey form was designed and the survey link was shared with passengers to access the study questions. The researcher targeted passengers at Rafic Hariri Beirut International Airport and conducted interviews with the targeted population.

D- Ethical Considerations

The dignity of all of our participants will be prioritized and fully respected, and they will not be subject to any harm. The privacy of all participants will be completely protected with ensured anonymity of all individuals participating in the research. Honesty and transparency are our priority in all of our interviews with each participant, without any misleading **Fourth- Results**

In this section an investigation was done about the marketing mix components including promotion, price, consumer market, product, distribution and

A-Perception of Marketing and Satisfaction

The Satisfaction score was assessed by adding the scores of the 4 items. The average score was 11.4 over 20. The median score was 12 over 20 with a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 20.

information. Informed consent will be obtained before the participation of any volunteer.

E- Statistical Analysis

Data is analyzed by using the SPSS version 25. As a first step, descriptive analysis was enrolled to represent the variables. The categorical variables were presented by the frequency and percentage. Therefore, the continuous variables were defined by mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum. For the second step, Perception of Marketing and Satisfaction scores were computed by adding the coding of the answers. A reliability test will be done to validate the scores. In addition, tests were conducted to assess the correlation between the scores and the secondary variables. A normality test will be done to assess the normality distribution of the scores. The significance level was set at 5%

passenger satisfaction on 405 passengers of the Rafic Hariri international Airport in Beirut Lebanon between January-March 2022

Perception of Marketing is assessed by adding the scores of the 29 items of the 5 components (product, price, promotion and advertising, distribution, and consumerism). The average score was 85.5 over 145. The median score was 87 over 145 with a minimum of 29 and a maximum of 145.

| | Product | Price | Promotion / Advertising | Distribution | Consumer market / consumerism | Perception on Marketing | Satisfaction |
|-------------------|---------|-------|----------------------------|--------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------|
| N | 405 | 405 | 405 | 405 | 405 | 405 | 405 |
| Mean | 17.58 | 18.13 | 20.77 | 17.33 | 11.74 | 85.54 | 11.41 |
| Median | 18.00 | 18.00 | 21.00 | 18.00 | 12.00 | 87.00 | 12.00 |
| Std. Deviation | 4.936 | 5.266 | 5.856 | 5.352 | 3.658 | 20.223 | 3.667 |
| Minimum | 6 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 4 | 29 | 4 |
| Maximum | 30 | 30 | 35 | 30 | 20 | 145 | 20 |

Table 1. Perception on Marketing and Satisfaction Scores

A- Passengers' characteristics and Perception of Marketing

There is no statistically significant difference between Perception of Marketing and passengers' demographic characteristics noting the results as follows: sex (p = 0.497), age (p = 0.898), education (p = 0.758), and aim of the visit (p = 0.920) (table 2).

| | | N | Total | Std. Deviation | Minimum | Maximum | P.value |
|-----|------------|-----|-------|-------------------|---------|---------|---------|
| Sex | Male | 235 | 84.96 | 20.51 | 29 | 145 | 0.497 |
| | Female | 170 | 86.35 | 19.85 | 29 | 145 | |
| Age | ≤ 30 years | 285 | 85.46 | 18.86 | 29 | 145 | 0.000 |
| | > 30 years | 120 | 85.74 | 23.23 | 29 | 145 | 0.898 |

Table 2. Demographic Factors and Perception on Marketing

| Education | Less than high school | 6 | 92.67 | 9.18 | 81 | 105 | 0.758 |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----|-------|-------|----|-----|-------|
| | Secondary | 32 | 86.22 | 24.07 | 29 | 145 | |
| | University | 139 | 85.06 | 17.41 | 29 | 145 | |
| | Master | 158 | 84.65 | 21.53 | 29 | 145 | |
| | PhD | 70 | 87.60 | 21.35 | 29 | 145 | |
| | Business | 80 | 84.34 | 23.64 | 29 | 145 | 0.920 |
| | Visiting family | 115 | 86.98 | 20.85 | 29 | 145 | |
| Aim of the visit | Tourism | 159 | 85.31 | 18.64 | 29 | 145 | |
| | Healthcare | 46 | 84.87 | 18.91 | 29 | 116 | |
| | Education | 5 | 85.40 | 6.84 | 77 | 96 | |

B- Structural validity

The Pearson correlation is investigated by applying the SPSS software therefore the Pearson results are defined as follows: r = 0.1 has a small effect, r = 0.3 has a medium impact, r - 0.5 had a large impact ^[16].

The results define the correlation coefficient of each dimension with the total of dimensions. Therefore, the all the results are above 0.76 indicating a high effect.

Table 3: Correlations

| Correlation | | | | |
|-----------------|---------------------|--|--|--|
| Variables | Pearson Correlation | | | |
| Product | .791 | | | |
| Price | .789 | | | |
| Promotion | .817 | | | |
| Distribution | .791 | | | |
| Consumer market | .760 | | | |
| Satisfaction | .774 | | | |

Sig. (2-tailed) = .000, N= 405

C- Analysis of the Correlation with Passenger Satisfaction

The results of the table 4 provide as follows:

- 1- The correlation R= 0.468 suggests a medium positive relationship between product and passenger satisfaction.
- 2- The correlation R= 0.513 suggests a strong positive relationship between price and passenger satisfaction.
- 3- The correlation R= 0.496 suggests a medium positive relationship between promotion and passenger satisfaction.
- 4- The correlation R= 0.584 suggests a strong positive relationship between distribution and passenger satisfaction.
- 5- The correlation R= 0.560 suggests a strong positive relationship between consumer market and passenger satisfaction.

| Table 4: Con | relations | Matrix |
|--------------|-----------|--------|
|--------------|-----------|--------|

| Variables | Satisfaction |
|-----------------|--------------|
| Product | .468 |
| Price | .513 |
| Promotion | .496 |
| Distribution | .584 |
| Consumer market | .560 |

Sig. (2-tailed) = .000, N= 405

D-Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient

The purpose of the test in table below is to investigate the reliability of all the questions in the questionnaire of this research. The results of the coefficient values are defined as good if below 0.5 unacceptable, between 0.5 - 0.6 poor, between 0.6 - 0.7 acceptable, between 0.7 - 0.8 good, between 0.8 - 0.9 very good, higher than 0.9 excellent ^[43]. The results below define that all the Cronbach's alpha results of all the questions in the survey are reliable providing a result equal to 0.961 and it be concluded that the reliability of the research is achieved.

Table 5: Reliability Statistics

| Cronbach's Alpha | Number of Items |
|------------------|-----------------|
| .961 | 33 |

E-KMO and Bartlett's Test

KMO = 0.936 is greater than 0.5 that define the KMO result is acceptable and we don't have to add more questions to the questionnaire. Sig = 0.000 is lower than 0.05 accepted result. It is

defined that the sample used in the research is adequate and the data used are suitable for the factor analysis.

Table 6: KMO and Bartlett's Test

| Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy | | .936 |
|---|--------------------|-----------|
| Bartlett's Test of Sphericity | Approx. Chi-Square | 11039.437 |
| | Df | 528 |
| | Sig. | .000 |

F-Communalities Test

The communalities test is prepared to investigate questions that have weak correlation below 0.3 therefore, all the questions in the questionnaire are over 0.3 and there no need to delete any question.

| | Initial |
|---|---------|
| Product [Products quality are advanced] | .673 |
| Product [Products quality are satisfying] | .707 |
| Product [Products will destroy quickly] | .625 |
| Product [Products are imperfect.] | .724 |
| Product [Organization's don't stress on product performance] | .664 |
| Product [Quality products are yearly ameliorated.] | .638 |
| Price [Products are expensive.] | .709 |
| Price [Products could be cheaper and profitable.] | .756 |
| Price [Products prices are suitable.] | .610 |
| Price [Competition among organizations lets prices suitable.] | .674 |
| Price [Products prices changing are unexplained] | .655 |
| Price [I am satisfied with the product price] | .665 |
| Promotion [Products promotion is very helpful.] | .616 |
| Promotion [Products promotion is disturbing] | .716 |
| Promotion [Products promotion provides wrong signs.] | .673 |
| Promotion [Elimination of products promotion provides wrong signs.] | .690 |
| Promotion [I like products promotion.] | .612 |
| Promotion [Products promotion should be adjusted.] | .757 |
| Promotion [Products promotion don't provide suitable information.] | .700 |
| (Digital Distribution) [Products boarding is suitable and helpful.] | .706 |
| (Digital Distribution) [Products Email is suitable and helpful.] | .740 |
| (Digital Distribution) [Products SMS is suitable and helpful.] | .692 |
| (Digital Distribution) [Products application is suitable and helpful.] | .797 |
| (Digital Distribution) [Products website is suitable and helpful.] | .677 |
| (Digital Distribution) [Products social media network is suitable and helpful.] | .779 |
| Consumer market [Organizations apply the policy "customer is always right".] | .670 |
| Consumer market [Organizations apply customer awareness.] | .783 |
| Consumer market consumerism [Organizations put their responsibilities to customer.] | .669 |
| Consumer market consumerism [Organizations try to be profitable.] | .674 |
| Satisfaction [Product quality is satisfied.] | .709 |
| Satisfaction [Product price is satisfied.] | .774 |
| Satisfaction [Product promotion are seen by customers.] | .724 |
| Satisfaction [Product selling conditions are suitable.] | .738 |

Conclusion and Recommendations

It is found from the study of satisfaction of the passengers to the mix marketing of Rafic Hariri International Airport that the level of satisfaction is at a medium level. Considering each aspect, it is found that in the services of the "personnel and the placing", are at the medium level of satisfaction. It is shown that the passengers are not satisfied with the services of the personnel. That the satisfaction in using the services at Rafic Hariri International Airport depends on the services render in various aspects, such as, there are security officers at the baggage check point. The officers at the airport must communicate efficiently and perform the services with a smile, providing fast and convenient services, and the personnel at the airport must keep an open mind, listen to passenger's opinion and suggestions. That if the passengers have received satisfactory services, will shorten the time having to spend on services, saving time on other procedure at the airport and receiving correct information. Today, with the suitable place of airport business, being a tourist city, procedure of work and operation, leading to marketing the services expected by the passengers or those who use the services. To be considered are the facts of organizations, location where it is accessible by the passengers. With the growth and advancement of technology which makes it easier for the passengers in receiving the information through website of the airport and many ways of communicating with the passengers. Today, social network has become very popularly used, many passengers have been using this service more as it is fast and convenient such as Facebook, Line, etc. Therefore, Rafic Hariri airport must use the variety communication ways to reach the passengers better. Such as, the passengers can ask any questions via airport Facebook, or the Rafic Hariri airport can post any information, updated news, regulations which makes it easier to access and more convenient.

This is in consistent with the study on what factor effects the satisfaction of using the facilities and services of Rafic Hariri airport. The factor concerning personnel, has an impact on the satisfaction of using the services at the airport which could be due to the reason that the passengers or the users have limited time to spend at the airport and when the airport personnel provide the services with a smile, fast and convenient system, together with the proficient communication skill of the personnel at the airport, in respond to the expected want and desire of the service users at the airport.

Future Studies

Marketing mix tactics could additionally need to address how to promote things to Artificial intelligence agencies who choose options for the customers ^[35]. Empowering the function of the 7Ps on consumer retention about making decision, market professionals, and marketing directors and enhancing the financial performance of tourism businesses ^[14].

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أثر استراتيجيات المزيج التسويقي على رضا المسافرين: مطار رفيق الحريرى الدولى كحالة دراسة

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الخلاصة:

تبحث هذه الورقة في مدى رضا المسافرين وتفانيهم وتصورهم لاستراتيجيات المزيج التسويقي, و يهدف هذا البحث إلى استكشاف تأثير استراتيجيات المزيج التسويقي على رضا المسافرين الذي يتم تحديد أبعاده بالترويج والسعر والسوق الاستهلاكية والمنتج والتوزيع. تم إتباع منهجية التحليل الوصفي في دراسة متغيرات هذا البحث وتم تحليل البيانات من خلال إستخدام برنامج SPSS VERSION 25. تكون مجتمع هذه الدراسة من مسافرين مطار رفيق الحريري بيروت الدولي و تم أخذ عينة ملائمة حجمها (405) مشاركاً حيث أمتدت الدراسة من كانون الثاني 2022 إلى آذار 2022. وقد حددت النتائج تأثيراً إيجابياً بين مكونات استراتيجيات المزيج التسويقي، والسعر ، والمستهلك، والسوق، والمنتج على رضا المسافرين. وأظهرت وجود تأثير إيجابي ملحوظ على رضا المسافرين بجميع مكونات المزيج التسويقي كما أوصت بضرورة قيام مطار رفيق الحريري بإستخدام وسائل الاتصال المتنوعة للوصول إلى المسافرين بشكل أفضل.

الكلمات المفتاحية: رضا المسافرين، المزيج التسويقي، التوزيع, مطار رفيق الحريري الدولي بيروت لبنان