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Original Research Article

Mergers, Acquisitions and Post-Acquisition Value Creation in Saudi Arabia's Aviation Hospitality Sector

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Abstract: Acquisitions can expand the capabilities and geographic reach of aviation hospitality groups, but transaction completion does not establish value creation. In Saudi Arabia, expanding aviation activity and tourism-related investment make the distinction important. This paper develops a sector-specific framework linking acquisition strategy, diligence, integration and verified financial outcomes. A targeted integrative review combines accessible peer-reviewed research with official Saudi aviation indicators, governance material and accounting guidance. The analysis identifies five interdependent mechanisms: preservation of commercial rights, continuity of service delivery, integration of information and controls, disciplined synergy implementation and evaluation of incremental cash flows. A sourced graph illustrates the market context without attributing national passenger growth to acquisition performance. Analytical tables distinguish evidence, proposed indicators and implementation responsibilities. The conceptual framework requires management to compare realized benefits with integration costs, operating disruption and a documented standalone baseline. Its contribution is to connect acquisition economics with the contract, workforce and service dependencies of airport lounges, catering and related hospitality operations. It does not report a new transaction sample, confidential employer results or an empirically estimated acquisition effect. The proposed approach can support board and finance decisions while generating testable propositions for future research. Sustainable value creation depends on the combined business producing benefits beyond those expected without the transaction, subject to appropriate risk, capital and governance assessment.

Keywords: Mergers and Acquisitions, Post-Acquisition Integration, Value Creation, Saudi Arabia, Aviation Hospitality, Vision 2030.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Mergers and acquisitions change who controls a business, but the economic consequences depend on what the combined organization subsequently does. An acquisition can provide access to customers, locations, operational capability or specialist staff. It can also introduce liabilities, integration costs and competing management priorities. For aviation hospitality, these effects are closely connected to contracts and service delivery. The research problem is how to distinguish a credible acquisition thesis from value that has actually been created after closing.

Saudi Arabia provides a relevant setting because aviation and tourism development are connected with wider economic diversification. Vision 2030 identifies tourism, private-sector

participation and advanced capital markets among its priorities. These priorities create strategic context rather than a guarantee of transaction success. A company still needs to establish how acquired capabilities improve its economics and how additional commitments will be managed. An attractive national growth narrative cannot substitute for evidence about the target or the combined business.

Aviation hospitality includes airport lounge operation, catering and related passenger-service activities. It overlaps with conventional hospitality but has distinctive operating dependencies. Airport access, airline agreements, concession arrangements and service standards can shape the commercial opportunity. The value of an acquired business may therefore depend on rights and relationships that require attention during ownership changes. A purchase of physical assets alone may not preserve the conditions necessary for the expected revenue, service performance or customer retention.

This paper proposes a framework that follows the acquisition thesis through diligence, transition, integration and verification. It addresses how boards and finance leaders can connect operational changes to financial outcomes without mistaking accounting consolidation for economic improvement. The scope is conceptual and evidence-informed. The analysis develops conceptual relationships between acquisition decisions, integration processes and financial outcomes rather than evaluating an individual transaction. It draws on published research and official sources without using confidential company records.

1.1 Aim and Research Questions

The aim is to explain how acquisition-led growth can produce verifiable post-acquisition value in Saudi aviation hospitality. Four objectives guide the study: identify sector-specific diligence and integration dependencies; distinguish expected synergies from realized benefits; develop a framework for financial and operational verification; and formulate propositions for future empirical research. The paper is intended to support strategic finance, transaction oversight and operational integration rather than predict the approval or success of a particular deal.

Three questions organize the analysis. First, which characteristics of aviation hospitality influence the relationship between acquisition strategy and realized value? Second, how should integration outcomes be measured when national demand, contract changes and accounting effects also influence reported performance? Third, what governance and evidence practices can support reliable evaluation of benefits after closing? These questions emphasize mechanisms and measurement, recognizing that different acquisitions may pursue different strategic objectives and require different integration choices.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Acquisition Performance and Integration

Hospitality acquisition research supports attention to the management of combined resources. Canina, Kim and Ma identify lodging as an important setting for acquisition research while noting limitations in the evidence base. Their discussion motivates investigation of integration practices, but airport services should not be equated directly with hotels. Differences in concession rights, customer concentration and operating access can alter the meaning of strategic fit. The present framework retains that distinction when adapting hospitality concepts to aviation-related activities.

Steigenberger synthesizes integration research through a framework involving context, interventions and stakeholder processes. This supports treating integration as an organizational process rather than a simple administrative merger. The practical implication proposed here is to identify which dependencies must be coordinated and which capabilities should retain autonomy. Standardization may improve some functions while disrupting others. An integration plan should therefore explain why particular activities are combined, sequenced or preserved instead of assuming that complete uniformity maximizes value.

Recent research also connects cultural differences, employee resistance and integration controls. Smeulders, Dekker and Van den Abbeele show why human responses deserve attention alongside task coordination. Their findings do not justify a universal prescription for integration speed. For the present study, the relevant mechanism is that employees' interpretation of change can influence cooperation and service continuity. Organizational communication and control design should therefore be evaluated together rather than treating staff concerns as separate from financial execution.

Hossain reviews acquisition literature across motives, financing, valuation and performance themes. The breadth of these themes illustrates why transaction evaluation cannot be reduced to one post-closing indicator. Li and Singal similarly identify mixed findings and gaps in hospitality governance research. Together, these sources support a differentiated framework that separates strategic intent, implementation and outcomes. The proposed contribution is not a new estimate of acquisition returns, but a way to make the links among those stages observable.

Table 1: Selected evidence and transfer boundaries

Source	Contribution	Limit for this paper
Canina *et al.,*	Connects hospitality M&A with combined-resource management.	Lodging differs from airport services.
Steigenberger	Synthesizes contextual and organizational integration mechanisms.	Does not establish a Saudi-sector effect.
Smeulders *et al*.,	Examines resistance and integration controls.	Controls and speed require contextual assessment.
Hossain	Reviews motives, valuation and performance themes.	Broad synthesis is not transaction-specific proof.
Li and Singal	Identifies governance gaps and mixed hospitality findings.	Structural indicators cannot certify effectiveness.

Source: author synthesis of selected research. No new transaction dataset is reported.

2.2 Saudi Context and Vision 2030

Official indicators show expansion in Saudi airport activity during the selected historical period. GACA reports 88.5 million passenger movements in 2022 and 111.7 million in 2023. Official Vision 2030 program reporting states that the 2024 total surpassed 128 million. Figure 1 uses 128.0 million as a conservative plotting reference, not an exact total. These data describe passenger movements rather than unique travelers and should not be interpreted as the number of paying hospitality customers.

The growth provides context for acquisition opportunities and operating demands. It may increase the attractiveness of locations, capabilities or relationships that support passenger services. However, the conversion of traffic into commercial benefit depends on the operator's agreements, eligibility rules, pricing and costs. A lounge business can face capacity constraints even when traffic rises. A catering operator can experience higher activity without proportionate margin improvement. National demand therefore belongs in acquisition scenario analysis, not in the numerator of claimed transaction synergies.

The Saudi setting also requires attention to regulatory and contractual assessment. The General Authority for Competition publishes economic concentration guidance. Whether a transaction requires notification and how it should proceed depend on its circumstances and applicable requirements. This paper does not calculate filing thresholds or give a clearance opinion. Transaction advisers should assess those matters. Expected integration actions must remain consistent with the lawful transaction process and should not presume that ownership or operational control can change before required steps are completed.

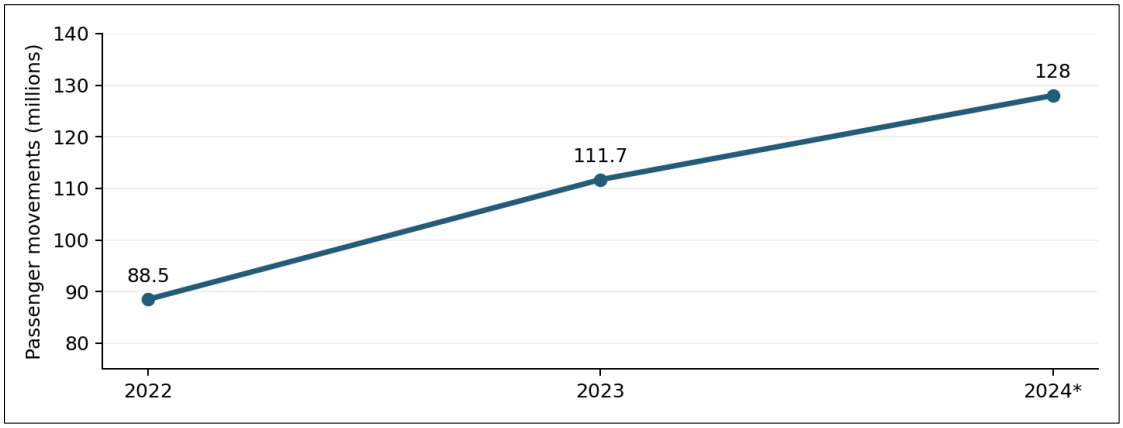


Figure 1: Saudi airport passenger movements in 2022–2024

Sources: GACA and official Vision 2030 program reporting. *2024 traffic surpassed 128 million; 128.0 is a rounded *plotting reference. Demand context only, not an acquisition-effect estimate.*

2.3 Acquisition Thesis and Strategic Fit

An acquisition thesis should identify what becomes possible because of ownership combination. Proposed benefits may include complementary service capability, access to locations, shared procurement, improved asset use or a stronger commercial offering. Each benefit requires an identifiable mechanism. A statement that the target supports Vision 2030 may establish relevance but does not demonstrate incremental value. The proposed framework asks what the acquirer cannot obtain as effectively through organic expansion,

contracting or another arrangement, and why acquisition is preferred.

Strategic fit should be tested at operational level. Two businesses may serve the same passenger ecosystem while using different delivery processes, customer agreements or staffing arrangements. Their similarities may create opportunities, but differences can also provide the capability being acquired. The integration plan should distinguish duplication from complementarity. Eliminating an apparently redundant function may damage a target's customer relationship or local expertise. The proposed approach evaluates activities by their role in the value thesis rather than by organizational labels alone.

Valuation should separate standalone performance from combination benefits. The target's expected cash flows without the acquisition establish one reference; benefits requiring the combined organization establish another. Integration costs, timing and execution risks then affect what the buyer can reasonably pay. The paper does not assign a discount rate, premium or valuation multiple because the study does not analyse transaction-level data. Its analytical recommendation is to document the assumptions that create the valuation difference and identify which management actions are necessary to realize them.

Downside analysis should test whether the thesis survives less favorable conditions. Relevant scenarios may include delayed contract renewal, lower demand conversion, cost escalation or slower integration. Scenarios should connect assumptions to operational responses and funding requirements. A model that changes revenue while leaving all capacity and cost commitments unchanged may provide limited insight. Boards should examine whether proposed mitigation actions are feasible and whether the acquisition still creates value when benefits arrive later than the transaction case assumes.

2.4 Commercial and Operational Due Diligence

Commercial diligence should examine the rights supporting expected revenue. Material contracts need analysis of duration, renewal, termination, service obligations and any ownership-change provisions. This paper does not assert that every agreement contains the same clauses or requires the same consent. It proposes that legal interpretation and commercial assumptions be linked before valuation conclusions are accepted. Where uncertainty remains, it should affect the acquisition case rather than disappear into a generic integration risk statement.

Customer concentration requires specificity. A target can possess multiple locations while depending heavily on a limited set of counterparties. Location count does not establish revenue diversification. Diligence should map who pays, what activity drives billing and which contracts share commercial or operational dependencies. The proposed analysis would connect customer-level exposures to scenarios, collections and renewal risk. It would also distinguish expansion of the combined group from reduction of concentration, since the two outcomes need not occur together.

Operational diligence should assess capacity, service reliability and the resources required to maintain performance. Facilities, equipment, procurement and staffing should be examined against contract obligations and expected growth. The acquisition may require investment that is absent from a headline earnings measure. A proposed capital review should distinguish maintenance needed to preserve existing performance from expansion needed to achieve the acquisition thesis. This distinction helps prevent required spending from being incorrectly described as an optional future improvement.

Service quality is an economic dependency, not merely a reputational consideration. Staff capability and operational coordination can affect customer retention, penalties and contract renewal. Diligence should investigate incident history and how issues are escalated, while respecting confidentiality and applicable access rules. The proposed framework asks whether reported service performance is reproducible and whether weaknesses can be addressed without disrupting operations. It does not assign incident frequencies or financial impacts to any employer or target.

2.5 Financial Diligence and Accounting

Financial diligence should connect reported earnings to cash generation and recurring obligations. Relevant analysis includes collection patterns, working capital needs, maintenance expenditure and the treatment of unusual items. The objective is to identify the economics available to the buyer, not simply restate audited figures. Proposed adjustments should have supporting evidence and avoid excluding normal costs merely because they reduce the acquisition case. Management expectations should remain distinguishable from verified historical information and adviser judgments.

Accounting for the transaction is a separate issue. IFRS 3 sets principles for recognizing and measuring acquired assets, liabilities and goodwill in qualifying business combinations. Those accounting

outcomes do not establish that the buyer has created value. Consolidated revenue can increase because a new business enters the reporting boundary. An investment case therefore needs a bridge that separates reporting changes from operating improvement. Acquisition classification and treatment require professional assessment of the specific arrangement.

Goodwill provides another distinction. IAS 36 addresses impairment and requires assessment of acquired goodwill through the relevant cash-generating units. A recognized goodwill balance is not a confirmed synergy asset or proof of strategic success. Equally, the absence of an impairment charge does not demonstrate that every original benefit was achieved. The proposed managerial framework tracks the acquisition thesis directly rather than using a single accounting event as the complete measure of post-acquisition performance.

Underlying contracts also influence financial interpretation. IFRS 15 establishes principles for revenue from customer contracts, while IFRS 16 addresses lease accounting. Aviation hospitality businesses may have different arrangements requiring distinct judgments. Diligence should therefore examine the accounting and economic treatment of material agreements, including cash commitments. Comparison of earnings measures should remain consistent across entities and periods. The framework does not assume that every airport concession is a lease or that all service arrangements follow identical revenue recognition patterns.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Review Design

The study uses a targeted integrative review with documentary analysis. Snyder explains the methodological role of literature reviews and the need to match design to purpose. An integrative approach is appropriate because acquisition value creation spans strategy, organizational integration, accounting, commercial contracting and governance. The paper does not claim a comprehensive systematic review, a meta-analysis or a completed search of subscription databases. It reports no fabricated screening totals, survey responses or transaction observations.

3.2 Data Sources and Search Strategy

Source discovery used public searches directed toward publisher platforms, institutional research repositories and official authorities. Search combinations included mergers and acquisitions, post-acquisition integration, hospitality, value creation, cultural differences, integration controls, Saudi aviation and business combinations. Retrieved material included accessible articles, abstracts, publication metadata and official documents. Searches were completed in October 2026. Recent relevant studies were combined with established work where necessary to explain integration mechanisms or the hospitality research context.

3.3 Eligibility and Evidence Assessment

Inclusion required identifiable authorship or issuing authority and direct relevance to the research questions. Academic studies informed mechanisms and boundaries of inference; Saudi documents supplied institutional context; accounting guidance established reporting distinctions. Commercial claims about guaranteed synergies or transaction success were excluded. Evidence was assessed for sector, research design, access depth and relevance. Where only an abstract was available, interpretation was restricted to its visible findings rather than implying a complete appraisal of the underlying analysis.

3.4 Thematic Analysis

The synthesis organized evidence into strategic fit, commercial continuity, human and task integration, information reliability, synergy execution and outcome verification. These themes were then examined against aviation hospitality's operating characteristics. Tables separate published observations from proposed managerial instruments. The framework and propositions are analytical contributions rather than validated models. The graph reproduces historical national passenger indicators and is explicitly limited to demand context. It does not measure a target's revenue, acquisition premium or post-deal return.

3.5 Credibility and Limitations

This method has an important boundary: association in prior research cannot establish that a proposed practice causes better results in Saudi aviation hospitality. International studies may involve different ownership structures, service models or institutions. The paper therefore uses them to identify mechanisms for local investigation. Company-level validation would require consented records, appropriate sampling and a documented empirical design. None of those additional data collection activities is represented as completed in this manuscript.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Integration Governance and Service Continuity

Integration governance should translate the transaction thesis into accountable work. A proposed steering structure would assign decision rights, identify dependencies and escalate material issues to the appropriate executive or board body. Financial tracking should be connected to operational

implementation rather than maintained in isolation. The structure need not create excessive committees. Its purpose is to make responsibilities and evidence requirements clear when different businesses, advisers and functional teams must coordinate decisions under time pressure.

The distinction between human and task integration is important. Foundational research by Birkinshaw, Bresman and Håkanson examines their interaction in value creation. Applied to aviation hospitality, the proposed implication is to protect service knowledge while changing systems and processes. Payroll, rosters, supplier continuity and customer-facing responsibilities should have explicit transition ownership. A transaction can meet its administrative timetable while losing the staff cooperation needed to deliver the anticipated operational benefits.

Integration speed should be selected by function and risk. Some changes may be necessary immediately to establish financial oversight, while others should follow testing and consultation. Rapid system migration can create data problems; prolonged incompatible processes can also impose cost and control weaknesses. The framework proposes decision criteria based on service continuity, information reliability and the acquisition thesis. It does not assume that faster integration is always better or that preserving autonomy is always safer.

Staff retention should focus on capability, not only headcount. The target may rely on employees with knowledge of airport processes, customer expectations or equipment. Replacement cost alone can understate the consequences of departure. The proposed approach identifies critical roles and makes retention decisions consistent with service requirements and fair employment practices. Communication should explain confirmed changes and unresolved matters accurately. Unsupported assurances can undermine cooperation when later decisions contradict the initial message.

4.2 Systems Controls and Working Capital

Information integration requires a controlled transition from target records to group reporting. Chart-of-account mapping, customer definitions, contract data and intercompany transactions should be reconciled. Migration should include ownership of exceptions and verification of opening balances. An ERP implementation is not itself a synergy. Its value depends on the information and operating improvements it enables, net of cost and disruption. The proposed framework therefore tracks both implementation completion and demonstrated use of reliable information.

Operational systems deserve the same scrutiny. Lounge-access, service activity and billing records may originate in different applications. Combining financial reports without checking those interfaces can increase confidence in incomplete information. The proposed integration diagnostic examines how activity becomes invoices, receivables and recognized revenue. It also requires a plan for failures during transition. Manual workarounds should have documented controls rather than become an unrecorded source of recurring errors after formal integration is declared complete.

Working capital can affect realized value. A target may generate earnings while requiring substantial cash to fund collections, inventory and supplier terms. Integration plans should track whether changes improve cash availability or simply transfer financing pressure between entities. Proposed treasury controls include visibility of account access, payment authority and cash forecasts. Benefits should be assessed at group level without overlooking legal restrictions or obligations affecting particular subsidiaries. No liquidity saving is assumed without supporting records.

Procurement integration should evaluate price, reliability and service compatibility together. Combining purchases may create negotiating opportunities, but lower prices can be offset by unsuitable specifications, longer lead times or supplier dependence. A proposed savings register should compare equivalent purchases and identify changes in volume or quality. It should also distinguish contractually agreed reductions from realized invoice-level benefits. This prevents management from attributing market price changes or altered product specifications entirely to acquisition synergy.

4.3 Synergy Implementation and Value Verification

Synergies should be managed as hypotheses with owners, milestones and verification methods. Cost benefits might arise from procurement, shared services or asset utilization; revenue benefits might arise from broader offerings or customer access. Each requires an explanation of the action that creates the benefit. A synergy register should identify prerequisites, timing, implementation expenditure and risks. It should remain connected to the approved acquisition case while recording revisions transparently when new information changes what is achievable.

The verification baseline is central. Actual performance should be compared with a documented estimate of what the businesses would have produced without the transaction. This

counterfactual cannot be observed directly, so assumptions must remain visible. National passenger growth, price changes and unrelated projects can influence results. A proposed benefit bridge separates those effects where evidence permits. Uncertainty should be acknowledged rather than forcing every favorable movement into the synergy category and every unfavorable movement into an external explanation.

Value creation should also consider cash and capital commitments. Additional operating earnings may require investment, higher working capital or recurring support costs. The relevant comparison is incremental benefit after these requirements, with timing and risk assessed consistently. This paper proposes discounted incremental cash-flow analysis as a decision tool, but supplies no numerical model result. Inputs would need verified transaction and operating data. A positive accounting movement alone is insufficient to establish that the purchase price and subsequent investment were justified.

Integration costs should not disappear after closing. Technology migration, professional support, staff measures, facility changes and temporary operating inefficiency can affect the investment outcome. Their classification should remain consistent with the evaluation boundary. A recurring expense should not be labeled one-time solely to protect reported benefits. Conversely, genuine temporary spending should be explained so users understand the transition. The proposed framework requires clear documentation and reconciliation rather than prescribing a company-specific accounting treatment.

Table 2 proposes a balanced verification matrix. It combines financial indicators with customer, service, workforce and information measures because an early cost improvement can weaken later performance. No universal threshold or weighted score is claimed. The aim is to expose dependencies and support reasoned review. An acquisition that sacrifices service reliability to achieve savings may require reassessment even when the financial dashboard initially appears favorable. Boards should examine whether benefits are durable and consistent with the strategic purpose.

Table 2: Proposed post-acquisition verification matrix

Domain	Evidence	Interpretation safeguard
Commercial continuity	Contract status; customer retention; renewal outcomes.	Separate ownership effects from market changes.
Cost benefits	Equivalent invoice comparisons; shared-service costs.	Deduct recurring support and implementation costs.
Revenue benefits	Customer-level bridges; pricing and volume records.	Exclude unrelated demand growth and projects.
Cash and capital	Collections; working capital; maintenance and expansion spend.	Avoid equating accounting earnings with cash value.
Service and workforce	Operational continuity; critical-role retention; incidents.	Test whether savings weaken future capability.
Information reliability	Migration reconciliation; metric definitions; issue closure.	Completion of software installation is not a benefit.

Source: proposed diagnostic framework. Indicators are not validated scores or universal performance thresholds.

4.4 Integrated Value Creation Framework

Figure 2 connects acquisition thesis, diligence, integration choices and verified outcomes, with feedback to assumptions and governance. Commercial rights and service continuity are treated as conditions supporting execution. Information quality enables benefit measurement, while oversight challenges unsupported claims. The model is conceptual: arrows indicate proposed dependencies rather than estimated causal effects. It can organize managerial review and guide research, but it cannot rank transactions or certify that an acquirer has achieved a particular level of value creation.

Three propositions follow. First, closer alignment between diligence findings and integration responsibilities should be associated with earlier identification of material benefit shortfalls. Second, stronger preservation of service capability should support customer continuity during integration, conditional on contract and market circumstances. Third, higher-quality benefit baselines and reconciliations should improve the reliability of post-acquisition evaluation. These are testable expectations. The paper does not claim that they have been confirmed in Saudi aviation hospitality or that their effect sizes are known.

Future measurement should distinguish formal completion from operating effectiveness. Evidence might include resolution of material contract issues, reconciled migration records, verified procurement comparisons and documented

benefit bridges. Researchers should use predefined definitions and independent review where possible. Measures based solely on management satisfaction may reflect expectations or incentives rather than actual value. A study could combine operational records with interviews to explain mechanisms, provided access, confidentiality and research ethics are addressed before collecting data.

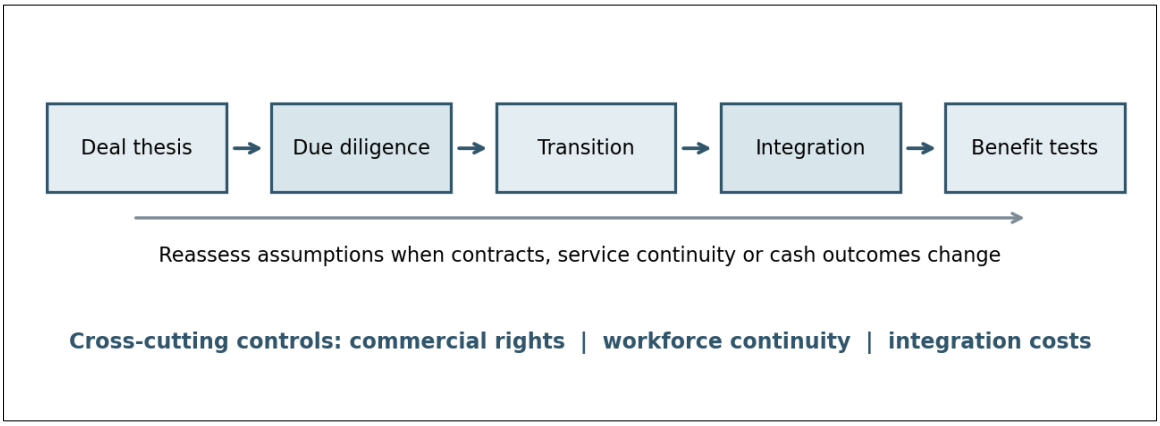


Figure 2: Proposed framework for post-acquisition value creation
Source: author conceptual synthesis. Arrows show proposed dependencies and review feedback, not measured causal effects.

4.5 Managerial and Governance Implications

One distinction concerns value for the combined organization and value retained by the buyer. Operational improvements may be genuine while the acquisition price transfers much of their expected benefit to the seller. Evaluation should therefore separate execution performance from investment attractiveness. A capable integration team cannot necessarily recover an excessive price through better coordination. Conversely, a favorable purchase price does not excuse service deterioration. Assessing both dimensions helps explain why apparently successful integration and disappointing investment outcomes can coexist.

Organizational learning should also remain specific. After each acquisition, teams can compare assumptions with evidence and record why particular decisions succeeded or failed. Such review should distinguish transferable practices from conditions unique to the target. Repeating an earlier integration template without examining differences may create false confidence. The proposed approach preserves decision rationales, baseline definitions and unresolved issues so future teams can evaluate their relevance. This makes learning a documented activity rather than an assertion based solely on completing several deals.

Finally, accountability must survive the transfer from temporary project teams to ordinary management. Benefits that require continuing operational effort need permanent owners and review routines. Closing an integration office should not terminate tracking of material assumptions. The handover should identify which commitments remain, which measurements continue and who approves changes to the benefit baseline. This would support sustained evaluation while reducing dependence on transaction advisers. Researchers could investigate whether documented handovers are associated with fewer unexplained revisions in later benefit reporting across comparable acquisitions.

The framework's main insight is that acquisition value depends on coordination across the transaction lifecycle. Diligence identifies conditions, integration acts on them and verification evaluates the result. Problems emerge when these stages use different assumptions or owners. A benefit approved during valuation may lack an operational implementation plan, while integration teams may complete tasks unrelated to the original thesis. The proposed response is traceability from each material value assumption to an action, responsible executive and evidence source.

For finance leaders, this means maintaining disciplined interpretation rather than defending the deal at every review. A revised forecast can provide useful evidence when it reveals changed conditions or infeasible assumptions. Concealing shortfalls postpones corrective action and weakens learning. CFO oversight should connect financial analysis to operational realities, including service obligations, staffing and investment needs. Success should be assessed through transparent outcomes and decisions, not merely the ability to report that the transaction closed or integration milestones were completed.

Boards also need to evaluate conflicts and incentives. Saudi governance regulations provide relevant oversight context, though applicability depends on issuer circumstances. Acquisition sponsors may have incentives to emphasize growth or defend forecasts. A proposed review process should permit independent challenge of assumptions and benefit claims, with clear responsibility for material decisions. The framework does not presume misconduct; it identifies where incentives can affect judgment and where reliable information is needed to protect shareholder interests.

Table 3 presents a proposed implementation pathway. It begins with thesis definition and diligence linkage, proceeds through controlled transition and targeted integration, and ends with recurring verification and learning. The phases are not a promised timetable. Their sequence and duration depend on operational conditions, legal requirements and the transaction structure. A phase should advance when its material dependencies are addressed, rather than because management wishes to declare completion. Unresolved issues should retain ownership and visibility across phase boundaries.

Table 3: Proposed lifecycle responsibilities

Phase	Primary responsibility	Evidence required
Thesis and diligence	Sponsor, finance and specialist advisers.	Documented standalone baseline and material dependencies.
Controlled transition	Integration lead with operational owners.	Service continuity plan and accountable issue register.
Targeted integration	Functional executives and finance.	Verified system changes and synergy implementation records.
Recurring verification	Finance, operating leadership and board.	Benefit bridges, cash analysis and transparent assumption changes.
Learning and handover	Permanent owners with board oversight.	Ongoing commitments and transferable lessons documented.

Source: author proposal. Responsibilities require adaptation to the transaction and company governance structure.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND TRANSACTION IMPLICATIONS

Acquisition-led expansion in Saudi aviation hospitality should be evaluated through incremental, durable benefits rather than transaction completion or consolidated growth alone. This paper proposes an evidence-based framework linking strategy, diligence, service-preserving integration and financial verification. The framework highlights contract dependencies, workforce capability, reliable information and transparent benefit measurement. Its propositions require local empirical testing. For boards and finance leaders, the immediate priority is to connect each material acquisition assumption with accountable implementation and evidence that distinguishes realized value from market growth, accounting effects and unfulfilled expectations.

6. Future Research and Validation

The paper is a targeted conceptual synthesis rather than an empirical transaction study. International hospitality and integration findings may not transfer directly to Saudi airport services. Access to some sources was limited to abstracts or publication information, reducing methodological appraisal. Public passenger indicators describe market context but cannot establish company effects. No acquisition premium, synergy amount or confidential deal performance is estimated. The framework should therefore support investigation and review rather than be treated as a validated predictor of transaction success.

Future research should examine completed, delayed and abandoned transactions where data access permits. Studying only visible successes creates survivorship bias. Longitudinal designs could compare pre-deal expectations with subsequent operating and cash outcomes while accounting for market conditions. Relevant controls include size, financing, ownership, customer concentration and target capability. Counterfactual selection requires particular care because acquired businesses may differ systematically from non-acquired firms. Simple before-and-after growth comparisons would provide weak evidence of the acquisition's contribution.

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