

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS SCHOOL OF
COMMERCE MARKETING MANAGEMENT GRADUATE PROGRAM UNIT



Assessment on determinants of Customer Complaint Behavior: A case study in Ethiopian Airlines

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the
Degree of Master of Arts in Marketing Management**

By: Azeb Hiluf

Advisor: Getie Andualem, (Ph.D)

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Addis Ababa**

Addis Ababa University
College Of Business and Economics
School of Commerce

Marketing Management Graduate Program Unit

This is to certify that the thesis is prepared by Azeb Hiluf entitled;
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_____	_____	_____
Department head	Signature	Date

_____	_____	_____
Thesis Advisor	Signature	Date

_____	_____	_____
Internal Examiner	Signature	Date

_____	_____	_____
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Declaration

I, Azeb Hiluf, hereby declare that this research paper entitled “**Assessment on determinants of Customer Complaints Behavior, the case of Ethiopian Airlines**” is my original work and has not been used by others for any other requirements in any other university and all sources of information in the study have been appropriately acknowledged.

AzebHiluf
Student

Signature

23 June, 2017
Date

Letter of Certification

This is to certify that Azeb Hiluf has carried out her thesis on the topic entitled: **“Assessment on determinants of Customer Complaint behavior, the case of Ethiopian Airlines”**The work is original in nature and suitable for the award of Master of Arts (MA) in Marketing Management.

Getie Andualem(Ph.D.)

23 June, 2017.

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List of Acronyms

CB	Consumer Behavior
CCB	Customer Complaint Behavior
DOT	US Department Of Transport
Ethiopian (ET)	Ethiopian Airlines
EU	European Union
IATA	International Air Transport Association
NWOM	Negative Word of Mouth
SPSS	Statistical Packages for Social Science
FGD	Focus Group Discussion

Abstract

The aim of this study was to find out the determinant factors of customer complaint behavior within the context of Ethiopian Airlines. A structured questionnaire and focus group discussion were used to collect data from the airline's customers residing or transiting in Addis who were chosen conveniently and 20 front line employees randomly chosen respectively. In total, 385 respondents participated in this study. The analysis of the results was performed using descriptive (Frequency, percentage, mean & standard deviation) and inferential statistics (Correlation & Multiple regression) by SPSS version 20 software. The findings from correlation & regression on the study variables show that Service recovery, Access to complaint channels, Attitude towards complaining and Perceived likelihood of success were found to be positively and significantly influencing Customer Complaint Behavior as they were hypothesized. The analysis between demographic variables and CCB also revealed that all demographic variables except gender were positively and significantly correlated with Customer Complaint Behavior, whereas no significant relation was examined between gender and CCB. The results from FGD also showed that complaint channels are not accessible to all customers and service recovery is not effective because employees lack empowerment. Based on the above findings, it was recommended that the company should work on improving the service recovery plans by empowering and training its employees than offering monetary compensations, accessibility of the complaint channels by investing on user friendly technology, promoting and encouraging complaints in order to improve customers' attitude towards complaints and perception on the company's ways of resolving complaints.

Key words: *Service recovery, Access to complaining channels, Attitude towards complaining and Perceived likelihood of success, CCB, FGD and SPSS.*

Chapter ONE

1.1. Introduction

This chapter includes background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, definition of terms, significance of the study, delimitation/scope of the study and organization of the research report.

1.2. Background of the study

Marketing is an organizational function and a set of processes for creating, communicating and delivering value to customers and for managing customer relationships in a way that benefits the organization, as well as its stakeholders (American Marketing Association, 2004).

Marketing has evolved through several stages of development over the past century, and this can be seen in view of the competing management philosophies, namely production orientation, sales orientation, marketing orientation and societal marketing orientation (McDaniel et al., Rix, 2004). Although each philosophy manifests itself in marketing thinking and activities to this day, each one of these was the dominant paradigm during a specific time in the historical development of the marketing discipline.

Production orientation revolved around the notion that a good, well priced product will automatically sell in the market, whilst a sales orientation is based on the belief that the organization's success depends on constant and rigorous selling to customers (Rix, 2004). However nowadays, producing well priced goods and selling in mass does not guarantee an organization's success anymore rather, companies need to secure long term relationships by satisfying the needs of their customers in particular and the society at large in general; which are the notion of the Marketing and societal marketing concepts.

The marketing concept refers to the idea that the economic and social justification for an organization's existence is the satisfaction of consumer wants and needs, while at the same time meeting organizational objectives. (McDaniel, Lamb & Hair, 2008).

Societal marketing orientation builds on a marketing orientation by protecting and enhancing the long-term interests of the society at large (McDaniel et al., 2008). Nevertheless, marketing orientation is superior to a form of management thinking that focuses on production or sales (Lancaster & Reynolds, 2005).

Firms that embrace the marketing concept seek ways to build a profitable long-term relationship with each customer. This is an important idea. Even the most innovative firm faces competition sooner or later. And trying to get new customers by taking them away from a competitor is usually more costly than retaining current customers by really satisfying their needs. Satisfied customers buy again and again. This makes their buying job easier and it also increases the selling firm's profits. Building mutually beneficial relationships with customers requires that everyone in an organization work together to provide customer value *before* and *after* each purchase. (William D. Perreault, jr. E. Jerome McCarthy, 2002).

The primary objective of service producers is to develop and provide offerings that satisfy customer needs and expectations, thereby ensuring their own economic survival.

Customers have a more difficult time evaluating and choosing services than goods, because;

- Services are intangible and non-standardized and
- Consumption is so closely intertwined with production.

Hence, in order to close the gap between expectations & perceptions and build a long term relationship with customers, service providers need to understand how consumers choose and evaluate their service offerings; which calls for the discussion of consumer behavior.

Consumer behavior is the study of the process involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use, or dispose of products, services, ideas, or experience to satisfy needs and desires (Solomon, 2004). A decision entails a choice between different courses of action or behaviors. Consumers make decisions about which behavior to perform in order to achieve their respective goals and in this way solve the problems that will satisfy their needs Peter

&Olsen, (2008). Consumer behavior is therefore expressed as the result of a dynamic and often complex decision-making process Jacoby, Szybillo&Busato-Schach,(1977). The consumer decision-making process, which consists of multiple stages that consumers undergo during a purchasing decision involves:

- Problem recognition and information search
- Evaluation of alternatives,
- Purchase and consumption, and
- Post purchase evaluation.

Because the main point of this paper involves customer complaint resulting due to service failure, which would generally occur during and/or after service consumption, the concern of this paper will be the latter two processes of consumer decision making which are purchase and consumption and post purchase evaluation.

1.2.1. Company background

Ethiopian Airlines was founded on 21 December 1945 and commenced operations on 8 April 1946 and made the first scheduled flight to Cairo via Asmara, in Douglas C-47 Sky train.

The national airline had been set up a few months earlier as Ethiopian Air Lines Inc., a joint venture with American airline, TWA (Trans World Airlines). Following the successful inaugural flight to Cairo, a regular weekly service was established. Weekly services to Djibouti and Aden followed, as well as a domestic service to Jimma. The airline has been a member of the International Air Transport Association since 1959 and of the African Airlines Association (AFRAA) since 1968. The Enterprise was established as a public enterprise in Ethiopia in 1995 by Council of Ministers Regulations No. 216/ 1995, and is governed further by Council of Ministers Regulations No. 81/2003, 147/2008 and 292/2013. Its principal place of business is at Bole international airport in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and it has area and station offices all over the world. “The Enterprise Is Wholly owned By the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia; there are No Shares and No Par Value. The Enterprise is

authorized by The Council Of Ministers to transfer the Net Profits to Paid up Capital.” Ethiopian is a Star Alliance member, having joined in December 2011.

Vision, Mission and Values

Vision 2025

- Ethiopian will be the most competitive and leading aviation group in Africa by providing safe, market driven and customer focused passenger and Cargo Transport, Aviation Training, Flight Catering, Maintenance Repair and Overhaul(MRO), Ground Services, Domestic and regional services by 2025.
- Ethiopian will expand customer base by 7% and increase the number of local as well as domestic destinations by 2010.
- Maintain sustainable profit by expanding customer base and earning customer loyalty.

Mission Statement

- To become the leading Aviation Group in Africa by providing safe and reliable passenger and cargo transport, aviation training, flight catering, MRO and ground services whose quality and price “value proposition” is always better than its competitors.
- To ensure being an airline of choice to its customers, employer of choice to its employees and an investment of choice to its owner.
- To contribute positively to the socio-economic development of Ethiopia in particular and the countries it operates in general by undertaking its corporate social responsibilities and providing vital global air connectivity.

Source: www.ethiopianairlines.com

Type of Complaints

Customer relation is a department in Ethiopian Airlines which handles and deals with customers' complaints. Customers may complain due to sub-standard service rendered in the course of their trip; in-flight or on ground. Complaints may come through different channels; in person, through telephone, through Company mail/ letter, e-mail or comment cards.

The type of complaints that often come to the department can be generally categorized as follows:

- **Error in Computation:** (of excess baggage charges).
- **Fares:** Evidence of incorrect or insufficient information, regarding restricted fares to specified routes.
- **Meal Services:** Poor quality-that is reported by many passengers on the same flight, insufficient quantity of meal to serve all passengers, failure to provide dietary meal previously reserved.
- **Messages Failure:** On part of Ethiopian personnel to follow through or relay message promised to inconvenience passenger on occasions other than those associated with over sale or Interrupted Trip Expense.
- **Interrupted Trip:** Flight cancellation or delay.
- **Baggage irregularities:** Delay or misplacement of baggage.
- **Over Sale:**Passengers denied boarding due to over sale of seats.

Depending on sector flown or ticket itinerary (as applicable) settlement of Complaint could be based on the following procedure/ regulation:

- As per ET Service Recovery
- As per Star Alliance Coordinated Customer Relations Guide
- As per DOT for Travel to/from USA
- As per EU Regulation EC No. 261/2004 for travel from Europe
- As per Israeli rule for travel to/from Israel
- Others

Source: Standard Operating Procedure of customer relations.

1.3. Problem Statement

Majority of dissatisfied customers do not voice their complaint to an organization. If dissatisfaction is so strong that complainers want “revenge” against the company, they will even resort to a suboptimal alternative, such as switching to a more costly competing product. However, those who do tend to complain continue patronage if their complaints are properly handled. Best and Andreasen(1977), TARP (1986), Tschol(1994).

If a customer does complain, even if his/her complaint is not resolved, he/she is more likely to return to do further business with the company than a non-complainer. Where customers have made a complaint, between 54-70% will continue to do business with the company if the complaint is resolved. If the customer feels that the complaint was resolved quickly, this figure increases to a very impressive 95%. Since a high standard of service is a major priority, properly handled complaints will increase company knowledge of itself and other customers and consequently customer satisfaction. ÖzkulBozkurt, (2006). 10-15 percent loss in the sales of a firm comes from customers who are dissatisfied because they communicate the negative experience to nine to ten different people TARP, (1981).

Marketers need to understand when complaints are likely to occur, which consumers tend to complain and to establish a formal channel of communication that will encourage all customers to voice their complaints in order to understand how they feel about their offerings and it is imperative for organizations to identify customer complaint factors which may serve as an opportunity for organizations to turn dissatisfied customers into satisfied ones, by means of service recovery Heung & Lam, (2003).

The customer service report of Ethiopian Airlines for the past four years shown below; compares the number of passenger complaints reported to the customer relations office with number of passengers transported, number of passengers denied boarding and baggage irregularities which are mentioned as a major source of passenger complaints by customer relations office. The comparison

shows more than 99% of the airline’s passengers transported and more than 70% of those inconvenienced are not filing their complaints to the airline. Hence, this study raises the question why the airline’s customers are not voicing their complaints? And what factors influence this behavior?

Table 1.1.: Customer service report of Ethiopian Airlines

Fiscal year	#ofpassengers carried	# of passengers denied boarding	#ofbaggage irregularities	#of customer complaints
2012/13	4,686,164	24,170	27,705	6,982
2013/14	5,280,744	28,233	30,545	6,887
2014/15	5,908,675	31,789	31,650	7,117
2015/16	8,356,447	46,015	37,718	7,727

Although many studies have been made in the area of complaining behavior, (Day 1984, Gilly 1987, Singh 1988, Wilkes 1991, TARP 1986) only little information could be found by the researcher carried on complaining behavior of customers carried in the airline industry. Therefore, to address the above mentioned research problem, this empirical study was undertaken on the area.

1.4. Objectives of the study

1.4.1. General objective

The general objective of this study is to find out the determinants for the airline’s customers’ complaining behavior.

1.4.2. Specific objectives

The specific objectives of the study are:

- To examine the attitude of the airline’s customers towards complaining.
- To assess if there are easily accessible channels of communication that encourages customers to voice their complaints.
- To investigate whether the airline’s service recovery are good enough to guarantee customer satisfaction and loyalty.

- To assess customers' perception on the likelihood of complaints being resolved.
- To investigate whether there is a relationship between demographic variables and Customer ComplaintBehavior.

1.5. Definition of terms

1.5.1. Conceptual Definition

- **Consumer/Customer:** A consumer is in general thought of as a person who identifies a need or desire, makes a purchase and then disposes of the product during the stages in the consumption process (Zaichkowsky&Polegato, 2008).
- **Customer complaint behavior:** Customer complaint behavior is described as a set of multiple responses that are prompted by perceived dissatisfaction with a purchase episode (Singh, 1988).
- **Service failure:** Any real or perceived service-related problem that occurs during the customer's encounter with an organization (Maxham, 2001).
- **Service recovery:** involves those actions that organizations take with a view to respond to service failures, with the ultimate purpose of restoring the customer to a state of satisfaction by attempting to rectify and recover those elements of the service delivery system which have failed (Lorenzoni& Lewis, 2004).
- **Employee empowerment:** Actions enabling the growth of individuals and organizations as they add value to the products or services the organization delivers to its customers (Muel and Formisano, 2000).

1.5.2. Operational definition

- **Fare:** Amount paid for transportation by Air.
- **Baggage checked:** Equivalent to registered luggage means baggage of which the carrier takes sole custody.

- **Baggage allowance:** Per person amount of baggage by total weight, number of pieces or volume that will be transported free of charge to the passenger.
- **Excess baggage:** Baggage in excess of the Baggage allowance which will be transported with additional fee.
- **Ticket office:** The office of an airline which is authorized to issue tickets.
- **Check in counter:** The place where formalities undertaken on the arrival of a passenger at an airport. This consists of the issuance of a boarding pass for the relevant flight.
- **Star Alliance:** One of the world's largest global airline alliances.
- **Voicing complaints:** Expressing dissatisfaction either to the company or third party.
- **Non voice complaint:** Responding to dissatisfaction by taking no action, brand switching or engaging in negative word of mouth.
- **Negative word-of-mouth communication:** The act of consumers saying negative things about a product or service to other consumers.
- **Transit passenger:** A passenger at an airport who arrived from a particular origin point and is there to change flights to his/her destination.

1.6. Significance of the study

As the main purpose of this study is to find out the determinants for the airline's customers' complaint behavior, it will allow managers & decision makers the option of potentially controlling those variables; will suggest ways and means of tackling the problem at hand and will aid in future formulation of strategies. Findings of this study will also be useful for students and academicians as an input for embarking upon similar researches in the future.

1.7. Scope of the Study

1.7.1. Geographical scope

Due to time and cost constraints, the study focus of this study will be delimited to Ethiopian Airlines and its customers residing in and transiting through Addis Ababa.

1.7.2. Theoretical scope

The theoretical scope of this study focused on:

- **The dependent variable;** Complaining behavior namely, (Take no action, Stop using the airline's services, Negative word of mouth, Voice complaints directly to the airline & Take legal action).
- **Independent variables;** which are assumed to influence this behavior: (Attitude towards complaining, Access to complaining channels, Availability of alternatives, and service recovery).
 - *Furthermore, a check on a number of demographic variables (i.e. Respondents' Age, Gender, Educational qualification, Level of income and Respondents' origin) will be done to determine if they have a relationship with Customer Complaint Behavior.*

1.7.3. Methodological scope

The methodological focus of this study is survey method and data were collected using questionnaires from customers and focus group discussion with the airline's front line staff in order to collect information that can help understand changes among different classifications and relationship of different variables affecting customer complaint behavior.

1.8. Organization of the Research Report

The research report will be organized under five chapters as listed below:

Chapter-1:Introduction: This chapter contains background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, definition of terms, significance of the study, and delimitation/scope of the study.

Chap-2:Review of related literature: This chapter deals with the literature relevant to the study. It will have an introduction, theoretical review, empirical review and the conceptual framework of the study.

Chap-3:Research Methodology: This chapter describes the type and design of research, the subjects/participants of the study, the sources of data, the data collection tools/instruments employed, the procedures of data collection; and the methods of data analysis used.

Chap-4:Results and discussion/Data presentation, analysis & interpretation: This chapter summarizes the results/findings of the study; interpret and discuss the findings.

Chap-5:Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation: This chapter comprises four sections, which include summary of findings, conclusions, recommendations and limitations & direction for future study.

Chapter TWO

Review of Related Literature

2.1. Introduction

Consumer behavior is an essential part of this study as it governs the concept of customer complaint behavior, which occurs as result of a dissatisfying service experience and there are several studies made on the area.

First, this chapter will start by reviewing literature which forms the basis for the theory underlying this concept. Since consumer behavior fundamentally describes the manner in which consumers make decisions, the stages in the decision-making process and influences on this process are subsequently explored. Then a discussion on customer complaining behavior will proceed.

Thereafter, the chapter will review empirical studies made on the subject to grasp on possible variables influencing customer complaint; and finally, based on the above two reviews, this chapter concludes with forming a conceptual framework on which the study will be based.

2.2. Theoretical review

According to Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard and Hogg (2006), consumer behavior was often referred to as buyer behavior in its early stages of development, which emphasized the interaction between consumers and organizations at the time of a purchase. However, consumer behavior involves more than the completion of a transaction and the immediate antecedents and consequences of a purchase; rather, it is the study of consumers and those processes involved in their search for purchase, use and disposal of products, services, ideas and experiences that they expect to satisfy their unique needs and desires. Consumer behavior consequently entails all mental, emotional and physical activities that are undertaken by a consumer which result in an action taken to satisfy the consumer's unique needs and desires.

Zanoli and Naspetti, (2002) further explain that, an approach based on consumer knowledge, perception and the needs consumers want to satisfy, with cognition referring to the mental constructs and processes involved in

thinking, understanding and interpreting stimuli from the environment. Blythe,(2008) states, this approach to consumer behavior relates to psychology and the study of mental processes, which include motivation studies, studies of goals and incentives, perception studies, studies of personality and self-concept, learning studies and studies of attitude formation and change. Consumer behavior is therefore based on the disciplines of psychology and are, in this sense, aimed at understanding how people think about the products and services they purchase. Consumer behavior is, however, not based on these disciplines alone and therefore also overlaps with the disciplines of economics, sociology and anthropology. Consequently, studies of the family, reference groups, social class and self-image as well as cultural studies are essential in order to fully grasp & comprehend consumer behavior. Hoyer and Macinnes, (2010) further hold that the cultural environment affects what motivates people, how they process information and what kind of decisions they make and, in addition, ethnicity, social class, family and friends influence decisions by affecting consumer values and lifestyles. Peter and Olson, (2008) assert that consumer behavior includes all those aspects in the environment that shape the thoughts and feelings that consumers experience and the actions they perform in their consumption processes.

2.2.1. A Model of Consumer Behavior Hoyer and Macinnes, (2010)

The model of consumer behavior addresses two key questions:

How do consumers make decisions about acquisition, usage, and disposition of an offering? And what factors influence these decisions?

i) The Psychological Core: Internal Consumer Processes

The psychological core represents important stages of information processing which serve as inputs to the decision-making process. In other words, before consumers can make decisions, they must have some source of knowledge of information up on which their decisions can be based. The psychological core involves the following major elements.

- **Exposure, Attention, and Perception:** In everyday life, consumers are constantly exposed to many different types of information, including advertising and word-of-mouth communication.
- **Categorizing and Comprehending Information:** Consumers use the information that they perceive and attend to in order to make categorization judgments and to comprehend the information to which they are exposed.
- **Forming and Changing Attitudes:** Based on the information they perceive, attend to, categorize, and comprehend, consumers may form attitudes (or enduring evaluations) about various options. One of the reasons why our attitudes may not completely predict our behavior is that we may not remember the information we have been exposed to when we later make a decision.

ii) The Process of Making Decisions

Based on the information that a consumer has processed and stored in memory, he/she can now begin to make some decisions. In general, the decision-making process involves the following major stages.

- **Problem Recognition and Search for Information:** Consumers begin the process by engaging in some form of problem recognition and information search. Solomon et al, (2006) classify the human needs into two different categories depending on their nature; psychological and functional or physical needs. They state that psychological needs are the outcome of emotional feelings of consumers whereas functional or physical needs are usually the results of necessity. Once the need is recognized, the consumer is likely to search more product related information before making a purchase decision. Search of information process itself can be divided into two parts as stated by Oliver, (2011): The internal search and external search. In internal search, the consumers compare the alternatives from their own experiences and memories depending on their own past experiences and knowledge

whereas external sources include colleagues, peers, friends and family members.

- **Evaluation of alternatives and Purchase Decision:** In this stage the consumer analyzes all the information obtained through the search and considers various alternative products and services compares them according to the needs and wants. Moreover, another various aspects of the product such as size, quality, brand and price are considered at this stage. Once the information search and evaluation process is over, the consumer makes decision to make a final purchase as he/she has already reviewed all the alternatives and came to a final decision point. Kacen, (2002).
- **Post-Purchase Evaluation:** The final stage in the consumer decision making process is post-purchase evaluation stage. Many companies tend to ignore this stage as this takes place after the transaction has been done. However, this stage can be the most important one as it directly affects the future decision making processes by the consumer for the same product. Therefore, this stage reflects the consumer's experience of purchasing a product or service. This view is further supported by Ofir, (2005) mentioning that the consumer decision making process is a repetitive action and a good experience is vital in reducing the uncertainty when the decision to purchase the same product or service is considered the next time.

The opinions of peers, friends and family regarding the purchases made is specified as one of the most important factors affecting the outcome of post purchase evaluation perrey and sillecke, (2001).

iii) The Consumer's Culture: External Processes

Culture is broadly defined as the myriad groups and social systems to which an individual belongs that bear on the values and beliefs they hold and the symbols they use to communicate group membership. Culture refers to the lens through which all phenomena are seen. Consumers have certain feelings,

perceptions, and attitudes because of the unique combination of groups one belongs to.

External processes involve the following elements.

- Regional, ethnic, and religious influences
- Social class influences
- Age, gender, and household differences
- Reference groups and social influence
- Psychographics: Values, personality and lifestyle

iv) Outcomes of Consumer Behavior

Factors associated with the psychological core and the culture can also influence consumer behavior outcomes, such as:

Symbolic consumer behavior: Consumer behavior can symbolize who we are; the groups to which we belong and our own sense of self can affect the symbols we use to express our identity.

The diffusion of consumer behavior through a market: Consumers often engage themselves in word-of-mouth communication disseminating information about their positive and negative experiences related to their acquisition, consumption, or use of a product. The dissemination of information can have both positive and negative effects for market.

2.2.2. Customer Complaint Behavior

Service organizations find it difficult to provide constant customer satisfaction due to the high level of human involvement in service delivery, which often leads to inevitable service failures. Service failures, as a result, cause the disconfirmation of service expectations. According to Schiffman and Kanuk (2004), consumers evaluate performance in light of their own expectations.

There are three possible outcomes of these evaluations:

- 1) Neutral feelings due to actual performance meeting expectations;
- 2) Positive disconfirmation when performance exceeds expectations; and
- 3) Negative disconfirmation when performance falls below expectations

Negative disconfirmation gives rise to customer dissatisfaction, which is generally considered as the initiator of customer complaint behavior. Dissatisfied customers may choose to keep silent, voice their complaints or engage in negative word of mouth communication.

As the marketing thinking evolved through the years, understanding of complaint behavior has also changed; as shown on the below table.

Table 2.1.: Epistemological changes in the Customer Complaint Behavior understanding.

Description	Previous understanding of customer complaints	New understanding of customer complaints
Perspective	Goods dominant logic	Service dominant logic
Customer-Provider interaction	Static/transactional	Dynamic/relationship
Complaint phase	Post-purchase	Intra and post-interaction
Result of failure	Dissatisfaction	Negative impression
Nature of Communication	- Listening to the customer - Dialogue with the customer	-Noting specific complaint -Seeking feedback
Aims of service recovery	- Correcting specific product failure -Obtainingasatisfied Customer	-Learning and adjustment during co-creation process -Strengthening the relationship

Source: Tronvoll, 2008

Customers complain to voice their dissatisfaction to a manufacturer, retailer, regulatory agencies, or the media. Sometimes consumers seek formal redress through legal means or from governmental agencies. Thus, marketers must understand the nature of consumers' responses to dissatisfaction because a variety of mostly negative consequences can result. Hoyer and MacInnis,(2010).

Day and Landon (1977), offer classification of customer complaint behavior based on a distinction between "No action", "Action", "Private action" and "Public action".

Table 2.2: Classification of Customer Complaint Behavior.

Take no action at all, forget the experience.	No Action	
Decide to stop buying product or brand or boycott seller (Exit). Warn friends about the product and/or seller (Negative word-of -Mouth).	Action	Private action
Seek redress directly from business firms (Voice). Take legal action to obtain redress		Public action

According to Tax and Chandrashekar, (1992) post-purchase complaint behavior represents customer-directed actions aimed at redressing problems associated with product or service purchase and/or usage. McAlister and Erffmeyer, (2003) indicate that since dissatisfaction with a product or service or other aspect of the exchange is the primary driver of complaints, organizations are provided with information that can be used to improve activities and resolve business issues. Singh, (1990) emphasizes that organizations should recognize customer dissatisfaction, understand its sources and its manifestations and then manage it in order to maintain profitability.

Complaint behavior is generally, but not exclusively described as one of the responses to perceived dissatisfaction during the purchase and/or post-purchase stages of the consumer decision-making process Crie, (2003).

Complaint options in response to dissatisfaction include seeking redress (refund, exchange, repair or apology), engaging in negative word-of-mouth (telling other people about one's dissatisfaction), exiting (ceasing to patronize the organization) and contacting third parties Blodgett, Hill & Tax, (1997). These third parties include government agencies or private agencies specifically designed to direct customer complaints through the appropriate channels, as well as those parties that customers consult to seek legal redress Kolodinsky & Aleong, (1990). According to Singh (1988), when a customer takes

legal action or voices complaints directly to the organization with a view to seek redress or refund, such responses are known as public actions.

Consumers tend to voice, to complain, openly only when the dissatisfaction is important. Landon,1977; Richins,(1985). The importance of dissatisfaction is a complex determinant which involves different variables: Product cost, search time, physical harm, ego involvement. Furthermore, complaints are more frequent when the problem is manifest more than judgmental. Landon, (1977); Best and Andreasen,(1977). That means that problems are reported only under determined circumstances. Again, the number of directly expressed complaint is just a minimal part of the potential complaint.

When the customer spreads word-of-mouth communication or ceases to patronize the organization, these responses can be categorized as private actions. When consumers are unhappy with a product or service, they are often motivated to tell others in order to relieve their frustration and to convince others not to purchase the product or to do business with the company. Negative word-of-mouth communication is more likely to occur when the problem is severe, when consumers are unhappy with the company's responsiveness, and when consumers perceive that the company is at fault.

Marketers need to be responsive to negative word of mouth, make an effort to identify the reason for or source of the difficulty, and take steps to rectify or eliminate the problem with restitution or communications. Compared to traditional face to face word of mouth communication, the online WOM platform has unique characteristics that may influence the way consumers process WOM and make purchase decisions Lee, Park & Han, (2008).

The consumer reaction towards a product or a service decline can vary enormously if alternatives are really and easily available. A dissatisfied user can smoothly opt for exit in a competitive market where competitors are known and accessible. On the contrary, in monopolistic situation or more realistically in a "loose monopoly", where a small amount of competition exists the most likely

reaction to product or service failure is staying loyal or engaging in negative word of mouth. In these cases, voice can have limited effect and exit is nearly impossible because, in reality, or in the consumer's mind, this alternative "is closed". Tronvoll,(2007).

However, in addition to public and private actions, a dissatisfied customer may also decide to take no action Jooste, (2009), Kolodinsky&Aleong,(1990). Singh, (1988) asserts that the customer then rather forgets about a dissatisfying episode and does nothing. Kitapci and Dortyol, (2009) believe that a customer may take no action based on the belief that action is not worth the time or effort spent. This view is supported by Grönfeldt and Strother, (2006) who add that some of the most common reasons why dissatisfied customers do not complain include that they do not have the necessary time and effort to lodge a complaint and wait for the issue to get resolved; they do not believe the organization will be responsive; they do not like confrontation; and they are not aware of their consumer rights. Day and Landon(1977), note that when the customer takes no action, the dissatisfaction is felt, but then suppressed without having any effect on the customer's behavior. Such a response to dissatisfaction is accordingly defined as a non-behavioral response. Singh, (1988).Crie, (2003)therefore holds that the term 'response' contains several modalities which are not exclusively behavioral, notably a change of attitude or inactivity. Singh, (1988) affirms that the inclusion of non-behavioral responses is as a result both justified and necessary in order to understand the process underlying customer complaint behavior responses.

Velázquez et al. (2006), mention that chances of a successful complaint are variables dependent on the particular purchase and/or consumption episode. Most customers only complain if they believe that there is a realistic chance that the organization would be prepared to make amends; organizations can therefore influence customers' perceptions that a complaint will be successful through the extent to which customer orientation is practiced and communicated Stauss&Steidel, (2004). Kim et al., (2003) add that the perceived

likelihood of a successful complaint may be increased by providing sufficient complaining channels; this will make it easier for customers to complain. Huppertz, (2007) supports this view by stating that customers will perceive complaining as easier when the time and effort required to complain, are reduced. This author highlights that it takes work to complain – and this contributes to the cost of complaining. Customers accordingly carry out an internal cost-benefit analysis, upon which they may base their decision whether or not to complain and the cost of complaining is compared to the benefits of the complaint, with this comparison dependent on a subjective value Stauss & Steidel, (2004). Kim et al., (2003) Weun, Beatty and Jones (2004), stress the importance of considering service failure severity, since high levels of perceived justice may not be sufficient to overcome a severe service failure. These authors describe service failure severity as a customer's perception of the intensity of a service problem.

According to Richins, (1983) problem severity in response to dissatisfaction is a central determinant of customers' effort of response. When a minor dissatisfaction is experienced, customers' responses are often minimal - most often customers neither voice complaints nor spread negative word-of-mouth; however, customers tend to complain when their dissatisfaction is serious enough, regardless of other factors compounding the situation. Richins, (1983).

According to Chan and Wan, (2008) the collectivist tendency to engage in private responses is a problematic issue for managers, because this type of response prevents the organization from providing a recuperation effort; consequently, collectivists should be encouraged to voice their dissatisfaction directly to the organization with a view to facilitate more effective recovery of inevitable failures associated with service delivery.

It is clearly imperative for organizations to pay attention to the complaint behavior of customers of different cultures and accordingly customize methods of managing complaints Ngai et al., (2007). Yuksel et al., (2006) add that, given

the apparent relationship between customer attitudes and behaviors, understanding differences between cultures in their attitudes towards complaining is also important in order to devise actions aimed at affecting customers' tendency to complain directly to the organization instead of somewhere else. Moreover, some of the negative attitudes that prevent customers from complaining could be culture-related (such as propensity to complain, fear of confrontation and losing face), while members of another culture may believe that complaining is an essential function of consumerism Yuksel et al., (2006). Ngai et al., (2007) emphasize that only by understanding the roots of customers' complaint behavior can organizations develop effective strategies to resolve complaints, which may in turn improve bottom-line performance, diminish negative word-of-mouth and positively impact customer retention, while also improving customers' perceptions of service quality.

Furthermore, attitude towards complaining is valuable for describing which type of complaining behavior will be taken - those customers with a positive attitude are more likely to seek redress by voicing complaints to the organization and less likely to engage in negative behaviors such as negative word-of-mouth and exit Blodgett & Granbois, (1992). Yuksel et al. (2006), and Kim et al. (2003), claim that those customers who have a more positive attitude towards complaining are more likely to express their complaint intention to the organization. Singh and Wilkes (1996), propound that positive attitudes towards complaining are developed through previous complaint experiences which yielded positive outcomes. It is consequently suggested that customers who tend to complain have prior complaint experience, have a positive attitude towards complaining and are in addition, self-confident and assertive Singh, (1990).

Mostert, De Meyer & Van Rensburg, (2009); These authors suggest that understanding the reasons behind customer defections can give organizations the opportunity to implement strategies that address any shortcomings in the service delivery system in an attempt to retain customers. For this reason,

service failure management and service recovery are recognized as essential components of successful customer retention management Petzer&Steyn, (2006).

Mattila, (2001) suggests that the best way to prevent a service failure is to do things properly from the start and not to rely on service recovery to keep customers loyal. However, even though organizations try to prevent (as well as plan) for service failures, the inevitable does happen, and customer expectations are not met Grönfeldt&Strother, (2006). Maxham and Netemeyer, (2002) therefore recommend that organizations should learn from their mistakes when they do fail, and ensure that they get it right the second time. This is especially important if one considers the fact that many service relationships are continuous, resulting in the possibility of multiple failures during the course of a relationship Maxham&Netemeyer, (2002).

2.3. Empirical review

TolonMetehan, Ph.D., The relationship between Demographic Characteristics and Complaint Behavior, published on International Journal of Business and Social Science.

It was found that customers who have higher occupational level are more likely to complain about a firm or a product when they feel dissatisfied. In this research, it is found that older Turkish customers are more likely to complain contrary to related literature which indicates that younger customers are more inclined to complain. Regarding the relation between complaint behavior and educational level, the analysis results indicate that better educated Turkish customers exhibit more complaint behavior. This finding of the study is similar to findings of other countries' studies. When customer complaint behaviors were examined according to the income level in Turkish market, no statistically significant relationship was found. According to analysis results, there is statistically no significant difference between males and females in terms of complaint behavior.

Eric W.T. Ngai, Vincent C.S. Heung & Y.H. Wong and Fanny K.Y., Article on Consumer complaint behavior of Asians and non-Asians about hotel services”

Guest complaint behavior is influenced by their culture and demographic variables. Asian guests with the cultural characteristics of a higher power distance, a collectivist orientation, and a greater tendency to avoid uncertainty are less likely to complain than non-Asian guests for fear of “losing face” and because they are not familiar with the channels of complaint. They are more likely to engage in private complaining action such as telling friends and relatives about their bad experiences in hotels. Thus, it should be noted that even if an Asian guest does not complain, this does not mean that he or she is satisfied. As there is a greater likelihood that such a guest will make private complaints such as spreading negative word-of-mouth criticisms, hoteliers should pay more attention to those guests who choose not to complain.

Moshe Davidow and Peter A. Dacin (1997), article on "Understanding and Influencing Consumer Complaint Behavior: Improving Organizational complaint Management"

They state that organizations cannot respond to a complaint until the consumer complains. Still, organizational actions to encourage consumers to complain have not always been effective, because they have not focused on the proper variables influencing complaint behavior and non-voice complaining. Focusing on the relevant variables to encourage complaints should allow the organization to proactively target specific areas for change which helps the organization prepare a more effective and efficient consumer complaint handling program. However, a program can only be effective if it reaches its intended target audience, the quality of the program alone will not determine its success and ultimate value to the organization.

2.4. Conceptual framework and Research hypotheses

Service failure research proposes that customer dissatisfaction is the primary consequence of service failures, which provides the motivation for subsequent customer complaint behavior. Reynolds & Harris, (2005). Complaining is distinguished from ordinary criticism in the sense that it articulates the source of dissatisfaction; it is therefore not simply a comment on what has occurred, but leads to subjective judgment on the part of the customer Gabbott & Hogg, (1998). Previous studies indicate that both personal and company variables have an influence on the way customers complain. In view of that, based on studies by Blodgett et al., (1997), Fishbein & Ajzen, (1975), Suskind, (2006) and Lewis & Spyropoulos, (2001); the below conceptual framework is developed for this study.

2.4.1. Conceptual framework

The following four independent variables; Attitude towards complaining, Access to complaint channels, Service recovery & perceived likelihood of success are thought to influence the dependent variable i.e. Customer Complaint Behavior.

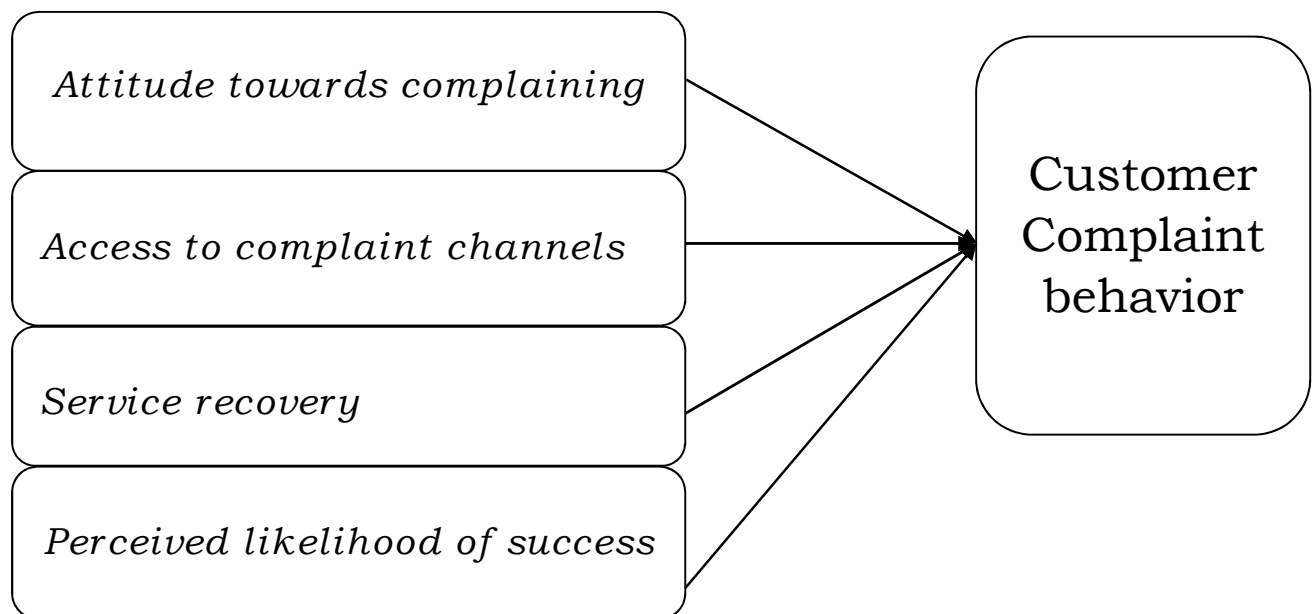


Figure 2.1.: Conceptual framework of the study

2.4.2. Explanation of the Variables

Attitude towards complaining

Attitude can be defined in terms of how a person generally sees a specific behavior negatively or positively, after evaluating results of an act. Fishbein & Ajzen, (1975). Study of Psychological and Consumer Behavior literature reveals that a person's behavioral intention determines his/her attitude toward that particular behavior. Attitude towards complaining behavior is known as personal tendency of a dissatisfied customer seeking redress from the company. Richins, (1980).

A consumer is going to voice against dissatisfaction, or spread NWOM, is decided by his attitude toward complaining Day, (1977). Customers who have positive attitude towards complaining do not get involved in negative behaviors like negative word of mouth and exit intentions Day & Landon, (1976). Usually, customers who have positive attitude toward complaining are more likely to complain as compared to those who have negative attitude towards complaining Bodey & Grace, (2007).

Access to complaint channels

Consumers have had always different channels with which to express their dissatisfaction with a service or a product. These include; in person, through telephone, through Company mail/letter, e-mail or comment cards. While these formal ways of complaining channels exist, they should be accessible to all. If not, there are several other ways that consumers show their dissatisfaction. These newest methods are through social media, web and blogs. Suskind, (2006). Negative word of mouth can go global as consumers' air gripes on blogs and websites. These sites are a potential threat to businesses because they are available to consumers worldwide, and the information may be unfair or inappropriate. Customer complaint channels may ensure customer satisfaction by way of indirect means by offering support to customers who perceive a lack of initial quality service. Yavas et al, (1997). By breaking down the perceived barriers to complaining, an organization can successfully

increase the percentage of customers who articulate their problems. Barriers can be broken down by making it easy to complain.

Service Recovery

When customer expectations are not met as a consequence of a service failure, another set of customer expectations become active, namely service recovery expectations. If customers are dissatisfied, marketers need to find ways of making up for this dissatisfaction to win back the customers' business. How consumers will respond to service recovery efforts will depend on their expectations. When consumers expect to maintain a good relationship despite a mishap, the business should sincerely apologize and promise to prevent such mishaps in the future. When consumers expect to respond aggressively and to control the situation, the business should take their complaints seriously, give them choices, and help them feel in control. When consumers expect a rational response based on costs and benefits, the business should offer a discount or some other benefit to restore some level of satisfaction. Velázquez et al., (2006). When dissatisfied consumers perceive that the cause of the service problem is permanent, marketer related, and under the firm's control when in fact it is not, marketers need to correct these misperceptions. Providing consumers with logical explanations for service failure, especially if it was not the company's fault, or providing some form of compensation such as a gift or refund can often reduce consumers' feelings of dissatisfaction Lewis & Spyropoulos, (2001).

Perceived likelihood of success

Customers are less likely to complain if they perceive that their chances of benefiting from doing so are low, or that the offering is insignificant. Hoyer and MacInnis, (2010). Andreasen (1985), Singh (1991), Hirschman (1970). Velázquez et al. (2006), confirm that the chances of a successful complaint is a variable dependent on the particular purchase and/or consumption episode. Most customers only complain if they believe that there is a realistic chance that the organization would be prepared to make amends; organizations can therefore

influence customers' perceptions that a complaint will be successful through the extent to which customer orientation is practiced and communicated (Stauss & Steidel, 2004). Complaining is more likely when motivation, ability, and opportunity are high. Meaning, consumers are less likely to act if they perceive that complaining will take a lot of time and effort. Customers who are certain about how to complain and/or who are confident enough to gain redress from the company are more expected to complain than the customers who are not sure about getting redress from the company (Bodey & Grace, 2007).

2.4.3. Hypotheses

Based on the developed model and to address objectives of the study, the below four hypotheses are therefore proposed to be tested.

- **H1₁:** *There is a positive and statistically significant relationship between Attitude towards complaining and Customer Complaint Behavior.*
- **H1₂:** *There is a positive and statistically significant relationship between Access to complaint channels and Customer Complaint Behavior.*
- **H1₃:** *There is a positive and statistically significant relationship between service recovery and Customer Complaint Behavior.*
- **H1₄:** *There is a positive and statistically significant relationship between Perceived likelihood of success and Customer Complaint Behavior.*

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter will discuss the ways of conducting the study such as, research approach, research design, research method, population of the study & sampling technique, procedure of data collection and method of data analysis used by the study. In addition, reliability, validity and ethical considerations are also presented.

3.2. Research Approach: According to Cameron and Price (2009), quantitative data present significant practical advantages as it allows the researcher to draw conclusions related to a wider group and data can also be statistically analyzed. Qualitative research that is unstructured, exploratory in nature and based on small samples from the population Malhotra, (2007). Hence, this study employed a combination of qualitative and quantitative research that is collecting data from a large sample of customers through questionnaires in order to determine relationships and differences among a large sample of the target population and will hold a focus group discussion with a small sample of front line employees who deal with different types of customers in their day to day activities.

3.3. Type of Research: The type of research chosen for this study is explanatory research. John, Hafiz, Robert and David, (2007) indicate that explanatory research describes phenomena and attempts to explain why behavior is the way it is. In other words, it enables us to understand the very nature of what we are actually looking at.

Explanatory research frequently includes descriptive elements but goes beyond this to identify the causes lying behind the effects and the nature of the relationships between the two. An explanatory study would seek to differentiate between, and measure, the relative influence of the factors and explain the cause and effect relationship between them Wyk, (2009). And as the

aim of this study is to find out why Ethiopian Airlines' customers do not voice their complaints and what factors influence this behavior, the research type chosen for this purpose is explanatory research.

3.4. Population of the study:The population of this study are all Ethiopian airlines' customers from all over the world. However, due to cost, time and location constraints, those customers who reside in/transit through Addis Ababa were considered as a population.

3.5. Sampling Design: 385 respondents were chosen as samples with 95% confidence level, and margin of error (confidence interval) of +/- 5%.

The sample size was determined according to Scott Smith (April, 2013) who recommends the below formula for unknown population size and as the population of study are Ethiopian Airlines' customers residing and transiting through Addis, it was difficult to determine the exact number of the population. Hence, this formula was used to find out the number of respondents needed for the study.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Necessary Sample Size} &= (Z\text{-score})^2 * \text{Std. Dev} * (1 - \text{StdDev}) / (\text{margin of error})^2 \\ &= ((1.96)^2 * .5(.5)) / (.05)^2 \\ &= (3.8416 * .25) / .0025 \\ &= .9604 / .0025 = 384.16 \\ &385 \text{ respondents are needed.} \end{aligned}$$

3.6. Sampling technique: Those customers who happen to be in places where the airline's services are rendered such as ticket offices, airport check-in counter etc. as the researcher; stood a chance of being selected for the interview. Hence, convenience sampling was used to select the 385 respondents. 20 front line employees were also randomly selected to participate in the focus group discussion.

3.7. Sources of Data Collection: both Primary & Secondary data were employed in this study.

3.7.1. Primary data:

- **Structured questionnaire:** was used to collect data from the sampled Ethiopian Airlines customers.
- **Focus group discussion:** was held with 20 selected front line employees to find out their feelings and experiences in relation to customers' complaining behavior and the variables influencing this behavior.

3.7.2. Secondary data: Books, journals, articles and websites related to the topic were also used as supporting materials.

3.8. Research Instrument: The data from sample respondents was gathered using self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted 11 questions. 5 of the questions related to passengers' demographics, 1 indicator question related to service failures on a five point likert scale (*this question was used as a base for the other questions and not included in the framework as it is a situational variable and would only be related to a specific dissatisfaction episode not to a general behavior*) and the rest five which are related to the study variables and adopted from Mariëtte Louise Walters, (2010). This adopted questionnaire was then modified to fit into this study and arranged in to a five point Likert scale anchored from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" on a scale headed by five constructs; Attitude towards complaining, Access to complaint channels, Service recovery and Perceived likelihood of success as an independent variables and Customer Complaint Behavior, the dependent variable.

The second source of primary data, Focus Group Discussion (FGD), was also employed with the airline's front line personnel to allow them inform the study from their experience. This in turn helps to validate the conceptual framework designed, based on the literature review.

As addressed above, secondary data was also used to primarily construct the basic framework of the study before proceeding to primary data collection.

3.9. Method of Data Collection: Both the collection of data with a predesigned questionnaire and focus group discussion were held in the presence of the researcher so that concepts which were unclear could be clarified to the respondents.

3.10. Data Analysis Methods: In analyzing data, both qualitative and quantitative methods (descriptive and inferential statistics) were used. Descriptive statistics like mean, frequency, and standard deviation of the variables and inferential statistics like Pearson's correlation analysis to examine direction and significance of the correlation of the variables considered under this study and linear multiple regression analysis to examine the relationship between the dependent variable (Customer Complaint Behavior) and the four independent variables (Attitude towards complaints, Access to complaining channels, Service recovery and Perceived likelihood of success) applied. To check whether there is a relationship between demographic variables and CCB, correlation analysis between the two variables was also done.

The regression equation or model specification for an examination of Customer Complaint Behavior.

$$Y_i = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \Sigma$$

Where, Y=Customer Complaint Behavior

α = Y intercept/constant

β_1 = The beta weight or regression coefficient of Attitude towards complaining

β_2 = The beta weight or regression coefficient of Access to complaint channels

β_3 = The beta weight or regression coefficient of Service recovery

β_4 = The beta weight or regression coefficient of Perceived likelihood of success

X_1 = Attitude towards complaining

X_2 = Access to complaint channels

X_3 = Service recovery

X_4 = Perceived likelihood of success

Σ = sum of residuals or error terms

3.11. Procedures of Data collection:

Data were collected from Addis Ababa Airport Ethiopian Airlines counters and ticket offices found all over the city. Agents working for the company and who were willing to participate in the administration of the questionnaire were retrained to distribute and collect the self-administered questionnaire. As convenience sampling was used, whoever approached the counters was chosen for the study. The purpose of the research was explained to them and their cooperation sought to complete the written survey questionnaire.

3.12. Validity and Reliability

3.12.1. Validity

Validity determines whether the measuring instrument truly measures what it was intended to measure or how truthful the research results are. And in order to verify whether the instrument used for this study was valid, content validity check was used. Content validity was verified by discussing with the research advisor, who looked into the appropriateness of the questions and the scales of measurement and by reviewing of related literature. The comments and findings of both were incorporated accordingly.

3.12.2. Reliability

Although some of the items in the questionnaire were adopted from Mariëtte Louise Walters, (2010), reliability test was run on all items as modifications and additions were made in order to fit it to this study. The reliability of the questionnaire was tested by means of internal consistency. According to Malhotra(2010), internal consistency reliability assesses the internal consistency of a set of items when several items are summated in order to form a total score for the scale and the technique used to assess internal consistency for this study is Cronbach's alpha (α) - Is a measure of internal consistency, that is how closely related a set of items are as a group. It is considered to be a scale of reliability. Scales with a Cronbach's alpha (α) above 0.70 are considered to have good reliability. And according to Zikmund et al.,

(2010) scales with coefficient alpha between 0.60 and 0.70 indicate fair reliability as well. Cronbach's alpha of the total scale is found to be 0.82; while the computed Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the subscales of complaint behavior were, 0.75 customer complaint behavior (5 items), 0.77 Attitude towards complaining (5 items), 0.82 Access to complaint channels (5 items), 0.84 Service recovery (5 items) and 0.61 Perceived likelihood of success (3 items).

Table 3.1. Reliability Statistics of overall items

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.817	.829	5

Table 3.2. reliability statistics of the subscales

Measurement	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
Customer Complaint Behavior	.755	.755	5
Attitude towards complaining	.766	.779	5
Access to complaint channels	.825	.825	5
Service recovery	.826	.841	5
Perceived likelihood of success	.616	.616	3

3.13. Ethical Considerations

In the process of data collection, issues related to voluntary participation and informed consent was ensured. The researcher and agents who were trained to assist in the administration of the questionnaire, informed prospective participants about procedures involved in the research. To protect the privacy of participants, the principle of anonymity was strictly adhered to. The confidentiality of filled data was also guaranteed and no personally identifiable data has been collected.

CHAPTER FOUR

Data presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the data analysis and discussion of the research findings. Both descriptive, focusing on the description of the sample population and discussion of the findings as well as inferential statistics, which makes inferences about the population based on the data from the sampled population, are presented. The data analysis was undertaken with the help of computer Statistics Package for Social Sciences (IBM SPSS version 20). It will commence by analyzing the sample profile of the respondents who participated in the study in terms of the demographic information obtained. Subsequently, the empirical research results obtained from the research are presented by discussing the frequencies and statistical results obtained from each section of the questionnaire, as well as the main findings related to the objectives of the study. To test the hypotheses and achieve objectives of the study, a multiple regression analysis was employed. Pearson's Correlation Coefficients were also used to observe the relationships between the various variables influencing complaint behavior.

4.2. Analysis of respondents' profile

The data was collected from among the sampled population of Ethiopian airlines customers who are older than 18 years. It was screened and only complete questionnaires were considered for the data analysis. Though the sample size was 385, 400 questionnaires were distributed in order to minimize the number of unreturned questionnaires. Out of the total 400 questionnaires distributed, 21 were not returned and 8 questionnaires were discarded because they had significant missing values. Hence, for the analysis and findings purpose of this study, 371 questionnaires were used.

Section A of the questionnaire was related to the respondents' demographics. The table below depicts the detailed response:

Table 4.1. Respondents' profile.

#	Demographic characteristics	Descriptive statistics	
		Frequency	Percentage
1.	Gender		
	Male	221	59.6
	Female	150	40.4
2.	Age		
	18-24	14	3.8
	25-30	43	11.6
	31-40	101	27.2
	41-50	118	31.8
	51&Above	95	25.6
3.	Respondents' origin		
	Africa	149	40.2
	Europe	51	13.7
	Asia	92	24.8
	America	62	16.7
	Other	17	4.6
4.	Educational qualification		
	High school	25	6.7
	Certificate/Diploma	64	17.3
	BA/BSC Degree	200	53.9
	MA & Above	81	21.8
	Null	1	.3

Concerning their age, out of 371 respondents, 3.8% (14), 11.6% (43), 27.2% (101) and 31.8% (118), 95% (25.6) were of age groups 18-24, 25-30, 31-40, 41-50 and 51 years and above, respectively.

In relation to respondents' educational level, from the total sample, the majority were found to be B.A. Degree holders, which are 53.9% (200); 21.8% (81) M.A. & Above Degree holders while 17.3% (64) were College Diploma or certificate holders and while 6.7% (25) of respondents were High school graduates.

Moreover, the majority of the respondents, 32.6% (121), fall within the category of monthly income bracket of USD 500 –1500. Followed by a monthly income of USD 1500-2500 amounting to 28% (104), 22.1% (82) of them getting more than USD 3500, 11.9% (44) USD 2500-3500 and 5.4% (20) of them making less than USD 500 a month.

Most of the respondents, 40.2% (149) are from Africa; 24.8% (92) from Asia, 16.7% (62) from America, 13.7% (51) of them are from Europe and 4.6% (17) are from other continents than those mentioned above. And 59.6% (221) of the respondents are Male and 40.4% (150) are female.

In the next sections, in order to compare the responses, descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation were used. The mean indicates to what extent the sample group averagely agrees or disagrees with the different statements. The higher the mean the more the respondents agree with the statement while the lower the mean the more the respondents disagree with the statement. In addition, standard deviation shows the variability of an observed response.

4.3. Analysis of responses related to service failure:

In this section, the respondents were requested to rate the below listed service failures according to their importance to them from 1-5 (*Where 1 is Least important, 2 moderately important, 3 Important, 4 Very important and 5 is Most important*), which will be used as a base for the rest of the questions regarding complaining behavior.

Table 4.2. Descriptive statistics of Importance of Service failure

		Error in computation	Message failure	Failure to provide pre reserved meal	Flight cancellation/Delay	Baggage irregularity	Denied boarding
N	Valid	370	370	370	369	370	370
	Missing	1	1	1	2	1	1
Mean		2.61	2.65	2.49	3.05	3.11	3.21
Std. Deviation		1.586	1.562	1.566	1.690	1.683	1.728

Source: Survey result SPSS, 2017.

The result shows that denied boarding has a mean value of 3.21 indicating that majority of the respondents agree it is the most dissatisfying factor. The second most important variable within the set is Baggage irregularity, followed by flight cancellation/delay with mean values of 3.11 and 3.05, Message failure, error in computation and failure to provide pre reserved meal hold from 4th to last positions with means 2.65, 2.61 and 2.49 respectively.

Table 4.3. Descriptive statistics of the study variables

1	Customer Compliant Behavior	I would take no action	I would not personally fly on this airline again	I would urge family and friends not use the airline	I would complain to the airline directly	I would seek legal action
	Valid	370	370	371	371	371
	Missing	1	1	0	0	0
	Mean	3.74	3.17	3.24	2.31	2.24
	Std. Deviation	1.360	1.660	1.649	1.531	1.515
2	Attitude towards complaining	I am reluctant to present a complaint even if the service offered is not good	Complaining is a customer's right	I always complain when I am dissatisfied	When I encounter a service failure, even if the price is cheap, I usually complain, ask for refund or compensation	In general, I am more likely to complain, ask for a refund or compensation than other people I know
	Valid	370	369	369	369	371
	Missing	1	2	2	2	0
	Mean	3.62	2.53	2.28	2.04	2.04
	Std. Deviation	1.488	1.155	1.166	1.155	1.399

3	Access to Complaining Channels	There are complaining means in places where the airline's services are provided both on ground and inflight	The means of complaining are mentioned everywhere so that customers are encouraged to submit their concerns	The means of complaining are easy to use/access	Instead of going through the trouble of filing a complaint, it's easier for me to post my dissatisfaction on social media/blogs	I choose not to say anything hence do not use any channel
	Valid	370	368	371	370	370
	Missing	1	3	0	1	1
	Mean	2.85	2.45	1.97	2.75	3.86
	Std. Deviation	1.530	1.468	1.270	1.523	1.474
4	Service recovery	It's not necessary for the airline to do anything	Apologize to me for the poor service I received	Provide an explanation of the problem	Correct the problem as soon as possible	The airline should extend monetary compensation equivalent to the loss I encountered
	Valid	370	370	370	371	370
	Missing	1	1	1	0	1
	Mean	2.47	2.95	2.80	2.94	2.50
	Std. Deviation	1.311	1.668	1.737	1.083	1.692
5	Perceived likelihood of success	The airline will take appropriate action	The airline will give better service in the future	The airline will give better service in the future and this will also benefit other customers		
	Valid	371	370	371		
	Missing	0	1	0		
	Mean	2.83	2.87	2.70		
	Std. Deviation	1.635	1.601	1.617		

Source: Survey result, 2017.

4.4. Analysis of responses related to the study variables:

4.4.1. Customer Complaint Behavior

In this section, respondents were asked to rate the manner in which they would respond after encountering a service failure from 1-5 (Where 1 is strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 neutral, 4 agree and 5 is strongly agree).

Table 4.3 indicates that most of the respondents (Mean= 3.74) would not take any action when they are dissatisfied with the airline's services or faced with service failures. Moreover, the table shows that those who said they would urge their family and friends not to use the airline stand second with means of 3.24, third were those who said they would not fly on this airline again (3.17) and followed by those who said they would complain to the airline directly and would seek legal action with mean value of 2.31 and 2.24 respectively.

The result indicates that most of the respondents tend to not take any action, spread negative word of mouth or walk away than expressing their complaints. This result is very alarming to the airline as negative word of mouth could be troublesome because it may influence other consumers to stop (or never begin) doing business with the company.

4.4.2. Attitude towards complaining

This section's question was posed to find out customers' attitude towards complaining.

The result showed that most of the respondents (Mean 3.62) are reluctant to complain even if the service offered is not good, followed by those who claim complaining is a customer's right with mean value 2.53 and those who said they complain when they are dissatisfied with mean value 2.28, next were those who said they are more likely to complain, ask for refund and compensation and those who claim they usually complain, ask for refund or compensation scored an equal mean value of 2.04 with Standard deviation of 1.166 and 1.399 respectively.

This result shows that most of the respondents have a negative attitude towards complaining.

4.4.3. Access to complaint channels

In this section, respondents were asked to rate their feelings towards the accessibility of complaint channels from 1-5 (Where 1 is strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 neutral, 4 agree and 5 is strongly agree).

The results show that most of the respondents (Mean= 3.86) said they choose not to say anything so do not use any channel as they don't want to complain, where, 2.85 said there are complaining means in places where the airline's services are rendered, 2.75 prefer to post their dissatisfaction on social media/blogs, 2.45, the means of complaining are mentioned everywhere to encourage customers to complain, where 1.97 said the complaining means are easy to use/access. This implies that most of the airline's customers do not use any channel because they don't want to complain and although those who want to complain know there are complaint channels in place, they do not use them or prefer social media and blogs over them because they are not either properly promoted or are not easy to use or access.

4.4.4. Service recovery

The next question was regarding the airline's service recovery after service failure.

The results show that most of the respondents (Mean= 2.95) said the airline should apologize to them for the poor service they received with mean value of 2.94, correct the problem as soon as possible, respondents with mean value of 2.80 said the airline should provide an explanation of the problem, those with mean value of 2.50, said it should extend monetary compensation equivalent to the loss encountered, and last were those who said it's not necessary for the airline to do anything, with mean value 2.47.

This shows that most of the respondents prefer apology, explanation and for the problem to be corrected quickly than monetary compensation and giving

monetary compensation and rewards does not necessarily guarantee customer satisfaction.

4.4.5. *Perceived likelihood of success*

The next question discusses customers' feeling on how successful they think they would be if they file a complaint

The responses show that respondents with mean value of 2.87 indicate they think the airline will give better service in the future, mean value of 2.83 indicate the airline will take appropriate action and mean value of 2.70, the airline will give better service in the future and this will benefit other customers.

This result shows that majority of the respondents do not believe that the airline would take appropriate action if they file a complaint instead they believe that complaining could make the airline give better service in the future.

4.5. Inferential Statistics

4.5.1 Correlation Analysis

In this section a correlations analysis were done to establish whether relationships do exist between variables conceptualized in the framework. Accordingly Pearson's correlation was used. A correlation coefficient expresses quantitatively the magnitude and direction of the liner relationship between two variables, Pearson correlation coefficient reveal magnitude and direction of relationships (either positive or negative) and the intensity of the relationship (-1 to 1).

Table4.4.: Correlation Analysis of independent variables and Customer Complaint Behavior.

		CCB	Attitude	Service recovery	Perceived likelihood of success	Access to complaint channels
	Pearson Correlation	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)					
	N					
Attitude	Pearson Correlation	.715**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000				
	N	371				
Service recovery	Pearson Correlation	.721**	.558**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000			
	N	371	371			
Perceived likelihood of success	Pearson Correlation	.291**	.206**	.094	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.071		
	N	371	371	371		
Access to complaint channels	Pearson Correlation	.765**	.735**	.581**	.253**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	371	371	371	371	371

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Survey result, 2017.

4.5.1.1. Correlation Analysis of the independent variables and Customer Complaint Behavior.

As per table 4.4 above, the coefficients show that the four factors measuring complaining behavior positively correlate and results are discussed below:

➤ Attitude towards complaining and CCB

There was a significant positive and strong relationship between attitude towards complaints and complaint behavior ($r=0.715^{**}$, $p=0.0001$). In other words, the value of ($r=0.715$) indicates a strong positive relationship in the

context of this study and R^2 value of 51%, which shows that perceived quality has 51% contribution and the remaining 49% are expressed by other variables.

➤ **Service recovery and CCB**

There was a strong and positive relationship between service recovery and complaint behavior ($r=0.721^{**}$, $p=0.0001$). In other words the value of ($r=0.721$) indicates a strong positive relationship in the context of this study and R^2 value of 52%, which shows that service recovery has 52% contribution and the remaining 48% are expressed by other variables.

➤ **Perceived likelihood of success and CCB**

There was a weak but positive relationship between perceived likelihood of success and complaining behavior ($r=0.291^{**}$, $p=0.0001$). In other words, the value of ($r=0.291$) indicates that perceived likelihood of success and complaining behavior have a weak but positive correlation in the context of this study and R^2 value of 8%, which shows that perceived likelihood of success only contributes 8% and the 92% are expressed by other variables.

➤ **Access to complaint channels and CCB**

As indicated in the table above access to complaint behavior was positively and significantly correlated with complaining behavior ($r=0.765^{**}$, $p=0.0001$). In other words, the value of ($r=0.765$) indicates a strong positive relationship in the context of this study and R^2 value of 58%, which shows that access to complaint channels has 58% contribution and the remaining 42% are expressed by other variables.

Table 4.5.: Correlation Analysis of demographic variables and Customer Complaint Behavior

		CCB	Age of respondents	Gender of respondents	Respondents' Origin	Educational qualification	Monthly income
CCB	Pearson Correlation	1					
	Sig. (2-tailed)						
	N	371					
Age of respondents	Pearson Correlation	.296**	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000					
	N	371	371				
Gender of respondents	Pearson Correlation	.040	-.009	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.445	.861				
	N	371	371	371			
Respondents' Origin	Pearson Correlation	.260**	-.074	.135**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.155	.009			
	N	371	371	371	371		
Educational qualification	Pearson Correlation	.298**	.318**	.109*	.195**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.036	.000		
	N	371	371	371	371	371	
Monthly income	Pearson Correlation	.588**	.207**	.040	.487**	.542**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.443	.000	.000	
	N	371	371	371	371	371	371

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

4.5.1.2. Correlation Analysis of demographic variables and Customer Complaint Behavior.

Table 4.5 above shows a correlation analysis to examine whether there is a relationship between demographic variables and Customer Complaint Behavior and the results reveal a positive and significant relationship between Age ($r=0.296$, $P=0.000$); Respondents' origin ($r=0.260$, $P=0.000$); Educational

qualification ($r=0.298$, $P=0.000$); Monthly income ($r=0.588$, $P=0.000$). The correlation is weak in strength for the former three variables whereas strong with monthly income. As for gender, it has no significant relationship with Customer Complaint Behavior ($r=0.040$, $P=0.445$).

4.5.2. Assumptions for Regression Analysis

4.5.2.1. Normality test

Normal distributions take the form of a symmetric bell shaped curve. The standard normal distribution is one with a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1. Severe asymmetry then is stated to be the result of strong outliers. A common test for normality is to run descriptive statistics to get skewness and kurtosis. Skewness should be within +2 and -2 range, if the data is normally distributed. Kurtosis is the peakedness or flatness of a distribution and this distribution shall also commonly fall between +3 and -3 (Garson, 2012). Normality test was done for the five variables on SPSS, which showed the variables' skewness and kurtosis fall within the suggested range.

Table 4.6.: Normality test

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Attitude towards complaining	371	.458	.127	-.334	.253
Access to complaint channels	371	.337	.127	-.820	.253
Servicerecovery	371	.083	.127	-1.190	.253
Perceivedlikelihoodofsuccess	371	-.107	.127	-1.228	.253
CCB	371	.197	.127	-.839	.253
Valid N (list wise)	371				

4.5.2.2. Multicollinearity Test

Multicollinearity can be detected using tolerance value and variance inflator factor (VIF) value. A good regression model must not have a strong correlation among its independent variables or must not have a multicollinearity problem and that the value of variance inflation factor (VIF) must have a value between 1 and 10 and the tolerance level should be more than 0.2 (SPSS Inc, 2007). An insignificant tolerance value point to the variable under discussion is almost a perfect linear combination of the independent variables already in the equation and that it should be dropped out from the equation. Table 4.7 below shows the variables in the study fulfill the above mentioned requirements.

Table 4.7. Multi collinearity

Model	Collinearity Statistics	
	Tolerance	VIF
1	.432	2.313
Attitude towards complaining	.405	2.471
Access to complaint channels	.621	1.610
Servicerecovery	.930	1.076
Perceivedlikelihoodof success	.405	2.471

a. Dependent Variable: CCB

(Source: Survey result SPSS, 2017)

4.5.2.3. Homoscedasticity test

This assumption holds that for each value of the predictors, the variance of the error term should be constant. In another words, Homoscedasticity is an assumption in regression analysis that the residuals at each level of the predictor variables have similar variances. That is, at each point along any predictor variable, the spread of residuals should be fairly constant.

The graph should look like a random array of dots evenly dispersed around zero. If this graph funnels out, then the chances are that there is heteroscedasticity in the data. If there is any sort of curve in this graph, then, the chances are that the data have broken the assumption of linearity (Field,

2009). As can be seen on the scattered plot in Appendix 4, the residuals look like they are evenly dispersed around zero and that the graph is not something like cone shaped. Therefore, it is safe to say that this study has no homoscedasticity problem.

4.5.2.4. Normally Distributed Errors

This assumption states that the residuals in the model are random, normally distributed variables with a mean of 0. This assumption simply means that the differences between the model and the observed data are most frequently zero or very close to zero and that differences much greater than zero happen only occasionally. In general, the normal distribution makes a straight diagonal line, and the plotted residuals are compared with the diagonal. If a distribution is normal, the residual line will closely follow the diagonal (Field, 2009). As can be seen in Appendix 5, the residuals have a sound normal distribution because the plotted residuals follow the diagonal straight line instead of making any other shape or curve.

4.5.2.5. Multiple regression analysis

In order to predict and project the complaining behavior of the sample consumers, and to estimate the level or magnitude of their contribution, a multiple linear regression analysis was employed. This model (presented in Appendix 3), tells us the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that is accounted for by the independent variables. In this case the coefficient of determination adjusted (R^2) was 0.734. This implies that about 73.4% of the dependent variable (i.e. complaint behavior) can be explained by the independent variables (i.e., leaving about 26.6% to be explained by other exogenous factors. Adjusted R^2 values also indicate the overall effect size of all the independent variables on the dependent variable.

The ANOVA table from appendix 3 shows that the F value 255.894 is significant at 0.000 level. Therefore, the model explains the relationship between the

independent variables (Access to complaint channels, Attitude towards complaining, Service recovery and Perceived likelihood of success.) and the dependent variable (Customer complaint behavior).

Table 4.8.: Multiple regression

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	.048	.105		.455	.649
	Attitude towards complaining	.258	.049	.217	5.308	.000
	Access to complaint channels	.345	.041	.352	8.340	.000
	Service recovery	.361	.032	.384	11.296	.000
	Perceived likelihood of success	.109	.025	.122	4.368	.000

Source: Survey result SPSS, 2017.

From the above table we can derive the below **regression equation**:

$$CCB = \alpha + \beta_1x_1 + \beta_2x_2 + \beta_3x_3 + \beta_4x_4 + \Sigma \dots \dots \dots (1)$$

$$CCB = \alpha + \beta_1ATC + \beta_2ACC + \beta_3SR + \beta_4PLS + \Sigma \dots \dots \dots (2)$$

$$CCB = -0.048 + 0.217ATC + 0.352ACC + 0.384SR + 0.122PLS \dots \dots \dots (3)$$

The regression model from table 4.8 above result shows that keeping other variables constant, 0.217 unit change in Attitude towards complaining will bring a unit improvement in Customer Complaint Behavior; 0.352 unit change in Access to Complaint Channels will bring a unit improvement in Customer Complaint Behavior; 0.384 unit change in Service Recovery will bring a unit improvement in Customer Complaint Behavior; 0.122 unit change in Perceived Likelihood of Success will bring a unit improvement in Customer Complaint Behavior.

4.6. Hypotheses Testing and Interpretation of Results

4.6.1. Summary of the outcome of the Research Hypotheses

Hypotheses	Result
H1 ₁ : There is a positive and statistically significant relationship between Attitude towards complaining and Customer Complaint behavior.	Failed to reject
H1 ₂ : There is a positive and statistically significant relationship between Access to Complaint Channels and Customer Complaint behavior.	Failed to reject
H1 ₃ : There is a positive and statistically significant relationship between Service recovery and Customer Complaint behavior.	Failed to reject
H1 ₄ : There is a positive and statistically significant relationship between perceived likelihood of success and Customer Complaint behavior.	Failed to reject

Table 4.9. Outcomes of the research hypotheses

(Source: Survey result SPSS, 2017)

4.6.2. Interpretation of results

The adjusted R-square value indicates the variance in Customer Complaint Behavior as it was explained by the independent variables which mean the result of regression for the four independent variables on Customer Complaint Behavior as presented on the model summary in Appendix 2. The strength of each predictor (independent variable) influencing the dependent variable can be investigated via standardized Beta coefficient. The regression coefficient explains the average amount of change in the dependent variable caused by a unit change in the independent variable. The larger value of Beta coefficient an independent variable has, brings the more support to the independent variable as the more determinant in predicting the dependent variable. The multiple regression table relates the dependent variable Customer Complaint Behavior to

the four independent variables; Attitude towards complaining, Access to complaint channels, Service recovery and Perceived likelihood of success.

The table shows that service recovery (Beta=0.384, p=0.000) is the strongest influencer of complaint behavior followed by Access to complaint channels (Beta=0.352, p=0.000); Attitude towards complaining (Beta=.217, P=0.000); perceived likelihood of success (Beta=.122, P=0.000). All variables have a significant relationship with complaint behavior at $P < 0.05$. Hence, all the hypotheses are accepted.

4.6.3. Validating the proposed Hypotheses

H1₁: There is a positive and statistically significant relationship between Attitude towards complaining and Customer Complaint behavior.

The coefficient of Attitude towards complaining was 0.217, $P=0.000$, which makes the relationship between the variable customer complaint behavior statistically significant and shows that a unit change in this variable encourages customers to complain by 21.7%, keeping other variables constant. Hence, $H1_1$ is accepted. The result supports the works of Day & Landon, (1976), Bodey & Grace, (2007) and Fishbein & Ajzen, (1975).

H1₂: There is a positive and statistically significant relationship between Access to Complaint Channels and Customer Complaint behavior.

The coefficient of Access to complaint channels show Beta=0.352, $p=0.000$, which makes the relationship with Customer Complaint Behavior positive and statistically significant; shows that a unit change in this variable encourages customers to complain by 35.2%, keeping other variables constant which led to the acceptance of $H1_2$. The result supports previous studies of Suskind, (2006) & Yavas et al, (1997).

H1₃: There is a positive and statistically significant relationship between Service recovery and Customer Complaint behavior.

This hypothesis was accepted as the coefficient shows $\text{Beta}=0.384$, $p=0.000$, which makes the relationship with Customer Complaint Behavior positive and statistically significant and which shows that a unit improvement in service recovery will result in 38.4% improvement in Customer Complaint Behavior., keeping other variables constant. This result also supports previous works of Velázquez et al., (2006), Petzer&Steyn, (2006) and Lewis &Spyrakopoulos, (2001).

H1₄: There is a positive and statistically significant relationship between perceived likelihood of success and Customer Complaint behavior.

Beta coefficient of Perceived likelihood of success is $\text{Beta}=.122$, $P=0.000$, shows there is a positive and statistically significant relationship with Customer Complaint Behavior and which shows that a unit change in this variable encourages customers to complain by 12.2%, keeping other variables constant. Hence, H1₄ is accepted. Which supports results of Stauss&Steidel,(2004) &Bodey& Grace, (2007) &Blodgett et. Al.,(1997).

4.7.Customer Complaint Behavior and Demographic variables

To check whether there is a relationship between demographic variables and complaint behavior, correlation analysis was done between these two variables.

- As can be referred from table 4.5, the correlation analysis realized a positive and significant relationship between Age ($r=0.296$, $P=0.000$); Respondents' origin ($r=0.260$, $P=0.000$); Educational qualification ($r=0.298$, $P=0.000$) and Monthly income ($r=0.588$, $P=0.000$). The result also showed ($r=0.040$, $P=0.445$) for gender indicating there is no significant association between respondents' gender and their complaint behavior in the context of this particular study. The result supports earlier studies by Ndubisi and Ling (2005), Ngai et al.,(2007); Oh, (2003),

Phau& Sari, (2004), but contradicted the study of Heung & Lam, (2003), which stated Gender has a significant effect on Customer Complaint Behavior.

4.8. Summary of results from Focus group discussions

The two most important research instruments to collect primary data are - questionnaire and focus group discussions Wiid and Diggins, (2009). Accordingly, to support the results obtained from the quantitative data through distributing questionnaire, and strengthen the conceptual framework, this study used Focus group discussion (FGD) with 20 front line staffs (in two groups each consisting 10 people) who were randomly selected and whose average work experience with the company is 6 years. The question raised along with the discussion is presented below:

➤ Complaint behavior of customers and their demographics

The first question presented for discussion was regarding demographics of customers and their complaining behavior. All respondents agreed that those customers from the west such as Europe & America tend to express their complaints and/or compliments because these people are from a continent with a deep rooted and farfetched customer service environment. They also thought that older people and those who are well educated tend to express their complaints due to their experience, know how on how to complain and willingness to go extra miles to correct things than those younger and uneducated ones. They were not however, unanimous regarding gender and income but most thought they did not have an influential factor on complaining behavior.

➤ Company variables

The participants were then presented with the study variables in order for them to express their feelings towards them. Regarding the accessibility of complaining channels, the respondents believed that they are not so easy and accessible for all as customers have to either call, email or request for comment

cards in order to express their concern which are not very convenient and accessible to all.

The participants also believed that the company needs to work on empowering its employees as it goes hand in hand with service recovery. They explained that they need their managers' intervention in order for them to solve most of service failures to customers which would take long and is not effective to recover service failures before they turn into complaints. As a result, customers will not be happy with the way their complaints are resolved and would be reluctant to complain next time as they won't be confident that it will be successful.

➤ **Participants' recommendation**

Asked what should be done in order to improve the above discussed issues, the respondents pointed the following:

- Team work effort between different departments is needed to handle the complaint at the right time.
- Empowerment measures on the agents (front line employees) needs to be taken.
- Encourage the complaints as much as possible by producing possible solutions on timely manner.

4.9. Triangulation of results from the Survey Vs Focus Group Discussion

- It was found that both in the focus group discussion & survey age, country of origin and educational qualification to be influential demographic factors. Also, in both, Gender does not seem to be an influential factor whereas results differ on monthly income.
- Employees in the FGD and respondents in survey believed that the complaining channels are not easily accessible and friendly to use.
- Both indicated an improvement is required on the company's service recovery plans.

CHAPTER 5

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the conclusions drawn from the main findings of the empirical research, as well as the recommendations proposed. The chapter commences with summary of major findings of the research study, followed by conclusions based on the study's secondary objectives. Finally, recommendations based on these conclusions are presented.

5.2. Summary of major findings

In order to examine the customer complaining behavior factors, the study based on previous studies and literature reviewed considered four determinants namely Attitude towards complaining, Access to complaint channels, Service recovery and Perceived likelihood of success. Based on the conceptual frame work and objectives of the study 11 items were provided on a 5 point Likert scale to the respondents. The gathered data was analyzed by means of descriptive and inferential statistics using SPSS version 20 software.

- Correlation analysis on demographic variables indicated that all demographic variables except Gender have significant relationship with Customer Complaint Behavior. Gender, however, has no significant relationship with CCB.

In the regression analysis part the following results were achieved for the four independent variables.

- The results indicated that although all four variables have a positive and significant influence on complaining behavior, Service recovery, Access to complaining channels, Attitude towards complaining and Perceived likelihood of success are put accordingly based on their significance.
- Based on the regression analysis, hypotheses which stated that there is a positive and statistically significant relationship between Attitude towards complaining, Access to complaint channels, Service recovery,

Perceived likelihood of success and Customer Complaint Behavior were all accepted.

- Finally Customer Complaint Behavior was found to be positively explained by the sum of the four independent variables by 73.4% in this study and the remaining 26.6% of the dependent variable (i.e. complaint behavior) is explained by other exogenous variables.

5.3. Conclusion

The primary objective of this study was to find out the determinants for why customers don't complain when they are faced with service failures in the context of Ethiopian Airlines. To answer this question, secondary objectives were formulated and to examine whether the specific variables hypothesized to influence this behavior such as Attitude towards complaints, Access to complaining channels, Service recovery and Perceived likelihood of success actually have an influence on complaint behavior. The study employed both quantitative and qualitative research methods together with review of related literature.

Questionnaire which was filled by the airline's customers was administered and FGDs were also held with selected 20 Ethiopian Airlines front line customers in two groups containing 10 participants each to explore the determinant factors for complaint behavior. In addition, the study tried to identify which determinant factor has the highest influence on customer complaint behavior. In view of that, to analyze the data from the quantitative survey; descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, and regression analysis were used. As a result of the regression analysis all the independent variables were found to have a significant influence on the behavior. Hence, all Hypotheses were accepted.

The correlation analysis between demographic variables and CCB also showed that all variables except gender have a significant relationship with complaining behavior. As for Gender, it has a positive but no significant relationship with Customer Complaint Behavior in the context of this study.

5.4. Recommendation

Based on the findings and conclusion drawn, in order for the airline to encourage its customers to voice their complaints, the below should be considered. The following are accordingly recommended:

- Service recovery was found to be the most influencing factor of Customer Complaint Behavior and according to Ethiopian Airlines' customer relations department standard procedures manual, service recovery is based on regulations agreed upon by airlines worldwide which are monetary compensations based on the inconvenience encountered. According to this study however, customers prefer apology, explanation and for the problem to be corrected as soon as possible. Hence, the airline should recognize the value of achieving a higher service recovery effort by means of an apology, explanation and correction of the problem. These strategies not only restore customers to a state of satisfaction, but establish positive perceptions in the minds of customers. In addition, mentioning monetary compensations as a reward could create opportunistic complainants and may not encourage those who really are dissatisfied.
- The company should empower and train its employees in order for them to be customer-focused and emphasize on providing service excellence. It was found in the FGDs that employees are not empowered to recover service failures before they turn into complaints and they need their managers' intervention for most of the decisions.
- It was found out that both customers and employees believe the complaint channels are not accessible and easy to use. The airline should therefore ensure that appropriate complaint channels are in place; promote them so that customers are aware of these channels, and are willing to make use of them. This will make it possible for customers to complain and express their complaint directly to the organization,

which will provide a feedback mechanism that can be used to improve the airline's service delivery system. This can be achieved by investing on technology which is efficient and user-friendly. The findings also revealed that customers prefer not to use any channel or tell their friends and family about problems they encounter and prefer to express both the positive and negative experiences they had on their personal social media and blogs. This highlights the importance of consistently encouraging customers to voice their dissatisfaction directly to the company rather than somewhere else. Hence, the airline should devise means for the customers to send concerns on its own social media pages as well in order to correct them before they go viral.

- In order to improve customers' attitude towards complaining, the airline may promote the acceptability of providing negative feedback to businesses. This will alert business on the ongoing problems and give it a second chance to satisfy customers before they go away.
- Perceived likelihood of success, though the least predictor has a significant influence on complaint behavior. Therefore, the airline should communicate the complaining means and even sometimes contact customers randomly to check on their feelings regarding their last purchases and correct them so that customers know their complaint will be successful if they file a complaint. If customers are positive concerning the airline's effort towards improvement, this may increase their chances of expressing their dissatisfaction in the future.
- Last but not least, the above mentioned will not be effective if the problem is recurring and as the primary purpose of the company is to delight customers and keep them loyal, it should work on avoiding service failures and strive for perfection. This will secure customer satisfaction & loyalty, repeat purchases and positive word-of-mouth communication in this fierce competitive time.

5.5. Limitations and directions for future study

5.5.1. Limitations

Limitations of one study would be an opportunity for further researches. Accordingly, among the limitations associated with this study, scope is one. The scope of this study is confined to Ethiopian Airline's customers located in or transiting through Addis. This is because of resource limitations borne by the researcher and which will have an effect on the generalization of the study. The second limitation of this study involves the fact that non-probability sampling method was used to draw the samples from the target population. As a result, demographics were not equally distributed across the different nationalities and conclusions could only be drawn in terms of those respondents who participated in the study and not from the population at large.

5.5.2. Directions for future study

Due to cost and time factors, this study is confined on some variables and the researcher believes that the study needs to be further undertaken on a wider range, incorporating more variables than those studied on this thesis to ensure the comprehensive analysis and reporting of customers' complaint behavior.

The study is also restricted on Ethiopian Airlines and its customer but could be further investigated including other Airlines or in other sectors to verify whether the outcomes would be different.

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Appendices

Appendix 1
QUESTIONNAIRE
CUSTOMER COMPLAINT BEHAVIOUR

This questionnaire serves as part of a study for MA in Marketing Management and has been designed to obtain feedback from you on your complaint behavior concerning airline services.

The results from this survey will be used to predict behavior of customers towards this topic. Participating in this survey is completely voluntary and anonymous. The questionnaire consists of 11 questions and should not take more than 15 minutes to complete. Please answer the questions from your own perspective.

Thank you in advance for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

Please give your response by placing X mark in the box provided next to each response option.

A. Personal characteristics

1. Which of the below is your age group?

18 – 24 25 – 30 31 – 40 41 – 50 51 & Above

2. Gender

Male Female

3. Please indicate where you are from?

Africa Europe Asia America Other

4. . What is your educational qualification?

High school Certificate/diploma BA/BSC Degree Post
graduate degree

5. What is your gross monthly income?

Less than 500 USD

500-1500 USD

1500-2500 USD

2500-3500 USD

More than 3500

B. Service failure 6. Please rate the below questions (from 1-5). (Where 1 is Least important, 2 moderately important, 3 Important, 4 Very important and 5 is Most important).	1	2	3	4	5
Error in computation (Of fare, excess baggage rate etc.).					
Message failure/misinformation by the airline's staff.					
Failure to provide pre-reserved/sufficient meal.					
Interrupted trip (Flight cancellations/delay).					
Baggage irregularity (Delay/ Misplacement).					
Denied boarding (Over sale/Misconnections).					

Please rate the below questions (from 1-5). (Where 1 is strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 neutral, 4 agree and 5 is strongly agree).

C. Complaint behavior 7. Please rate the following statements based on the manner in which you would respond after experiencing a service failure.	1	2	3	4	5
I would take no action					
I Would not personally fly on this airline again					
I would urge family/friends not to use the airline					
I would complain to the airline directly					
I would seek legal action					
D. Attitude towards complaining 8. Please indicate to what extent you agree with each statement regarding how you feel about complaining.	1	2	3	4	5
I am reluctant to present a complaint even if the service offered is not good.					
Complaining is a customer's right.					
I always complain when I am dissatisfied.					
When I encounter a service failure, even if price is cheap, I usually complain, ask for a refund or compensation.					
In general, I am more likely to complain, ask for a refund or compensation than other people I know.					

E. Access to complaint channels	1	2	3	4	5
9. Please rate your feeling towards the airline's complaint channels					
There are complaining means in all places where the airline's services are provided both on ground and inflight.					
The means of complaining are mentioned everywhere so that customers are encouraged to submit their concerns.					
The means of complaining are easy to use/access					
Instead of going through the trouble of filing a complaint, it's easier for me to post my dissatisfaction on social media/blogs					
I choose not to say anything hence do not use any of the complaint channels.					
F. Service recovery	1	2	3	4	5
10. Please indicate to what extent you think the following responses from the Airline will be appropriate following your experience of a service failure.					
It is not necessary for the Airline to do anything.					
Apologize to me for the poor service I received.					
Provide an explanation of the problem.					
Correct the problem as soon as possible.					
The airline should extend monetary compensation equivalent to the loss I encountered.					
G. Perceived likelihood of success	1	2	3	4	5
11. Please rate the following statements based on your expectation of how successful you will be if you complain your dissatisfaction to the airline.					
The airline will take appropriate action (e.g. Refund, Apology, Reward).					
The airline will give better service in the future.					
The airline will give better service in the future and this will also benefit other customers.					

*******Thank you*******

Appendix 2

Model summary

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.858 ^a	.737	.734	.56584

a. Predictors: (Constant), Access to complaint channels, Perceived likelihood of success, Service recovery, Attitude

Appendix 3

ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	327.720	4	81.930	255.894	.000 ^b
	Residual	117.183	366	.320		
	Total	444.903	370			

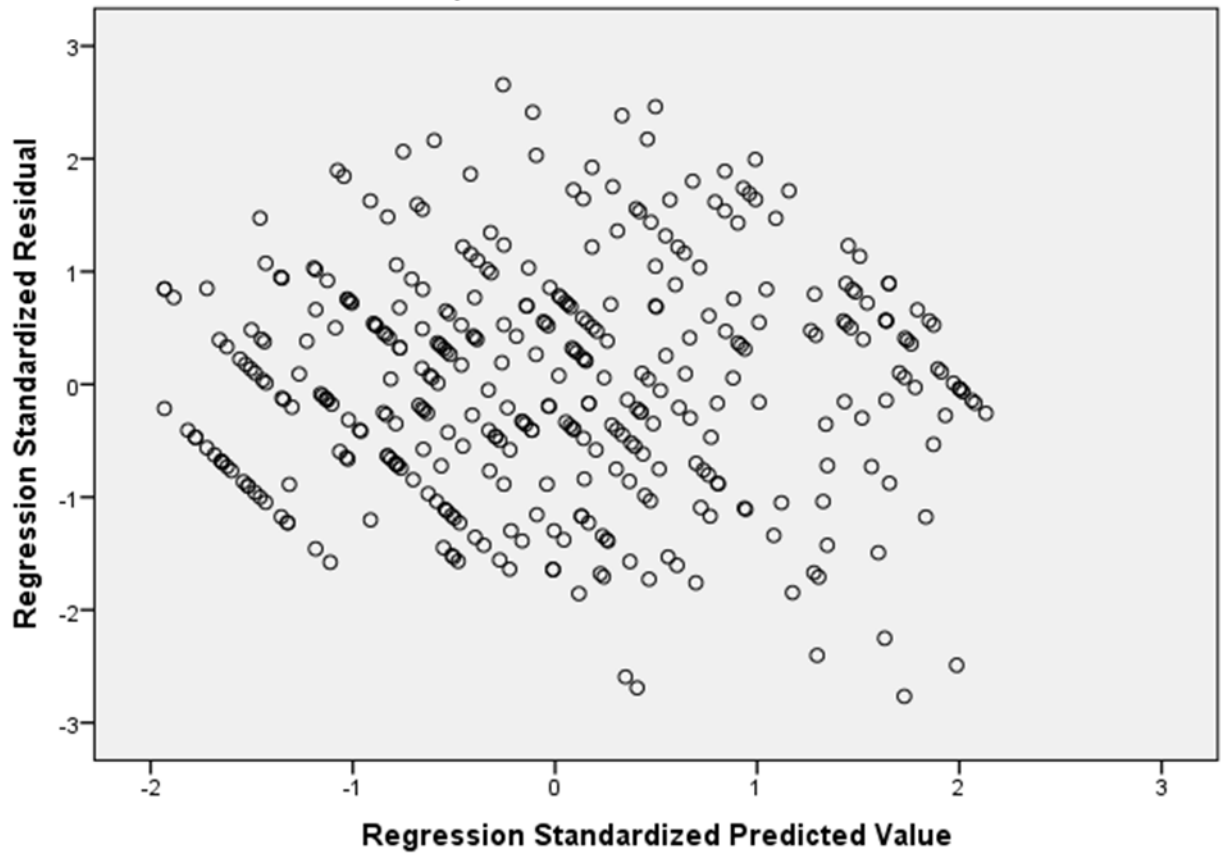
a. Dependent Variable: CCB

b. Predictors: (Constant), Access to complaint channels, Perceived likelihood of success, Service recovery, Attitude

Appendix 4

Scatterplot

Dependent Variable: CCB



Appendix 5

Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual

Dependent Variable: CCB

