
# FACTORS AFFECTING PASSENGERS' PURCHASE DECISION DURING COVID 19: THE CASE OF ETHIOPIAN AIRLINES

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# FACTORS AFFECTING PASSENGERS' PURCHASE DECISIONS DURING COVID19: THE CASE OF ETHIOPIAN AIRLINES

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## DECLARATION

I declare that this research paper entitled **'FACTORS AFFECTING PASSENGERS' PURCHASE DECISIONS DURING COVID19: 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 has been appropriately acknowledged.

**By: BETHELHEM FISSEHA**

**Signature: _____**

## STATEMENT OF CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that BETHELHEM FISSEHA AKALU has carried out his research work on the topic entitled **'FACTORS AFFECTING PASSENGERS' PURCHASE DECISIONS DURING COVID19: THE CASE OF ETHIOPIAN AIRLINES'.** The work is original in nature and is suitable for submission for the award of Masters' Degree in Marketing Management.

**Research Advisor: Mesfin Workneh (PHD)**

**Signature: _____**

**Date: _____**

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Finally, my taught become my destiny and I would like to take this opportunity to thank my God for his wisdom, protection, resilience and patience provided to me to accomplish this achievement.

My family is my foundation from my birth till date and my achievement was a milestone of their effort throughout my life time.

My deepest gratitude and admire goes to Dr. Mesfin Workneh, for his academic guidance and enthusiastic encouragement from the beginning up to the end of this research period.

# ABSTRACT

The primary objective of the thesis is to identify factors that affect passengers' decision to purchase their international air ticket from Ethiopian airlines at the time of covid-19 period. The paper also covered how each factor influences the purchase decision of customers and if the variables involved (independent variables) have any different effect across the demographic profile of the respondents. The study examined five factors that were taken from prior research works and focused only on individual international travelers of Ethiopian airlines who have appeared at Ethiopian airlines Addis Ababa ticket office. All responses were collected by using a structured questionnaire that is through convenience sampling (n=372). The data was examined and analyzed using SPSS. The findings were gained from employing descriptive statistics like comparison of mean scores, standard deviations and deploying an independent t-test and ANOVA and other analyses (i.e., correlation analysis and multiple linear regressions). According to the study findings, four factors were found to be affecting purchase decision of Ethiopian airlines customers to purchase their international ticket during the covid-19 period. These factors were travel restriction, being vaccinated, virtual technology and price. However, fear of infection was found to have less important effect. The finding of the study showed that there was a significance difference in perceiving the five factors between and among the customers of Ethiopian airlines with different demographic profiles. The thesis tries to give insight on process improvement and enhancing advancing technological resources like automating the process and exert more resources accordingly.

**Keywords:** Ethiopian Airlines, purchase decision, Covid-19, pandemic

# CHAPTER ONE

# INTRODUCTION

This section clarifies the main foundation of the thesis paper. It comprises of the nine scopes under the introduction chapter as depicted in the upcoming discussions.

## 1.1 Background of the study

According to Kotler (2008) customer behavior is a combination of different part of economics, marketing, psychology, and sociology which makes it an integrated science. Therefore, consumer behavior focuses on customers buying behavior comprising their mental, psychological and sociological characteristics and structures. Customer behavior can be easy, simple and direct to make a decision when the risk involved is either low or if it is easier to evaluate different alternatives.

These evaluating segments in an aviation industry include but not limited to airline products/services and various marketing functions and activities to gain as much segments as possible to bit a competitive market. So, customer behavior is a pillar in any of the marketing functions (Swarbrooke & Horner, 1999). In this scope, the marketing mix (promotion, communications, advertisements) can be considered as an incentive and the customer behavior attempts to identify the replies of the customers to the stimuli by evaluating and analyzing the decision making process of the customers.

Customer decision making could be defined as the "behavior patterns of customers that precede, determine and follow on the decision process for the acquisition of products, ideas or services" (Du Plesis, 1991) Customer decision making has long been of great interest to researchers. Early decision making studies concentrated on the purchase action. It was only after the 1950's that modern concepts of marketing were incorporated into studies of customer decision making, including a wider range of activities (Engel, 1995).

The contemporary research indicates that more activities are involved than the purchase itself. Many other factors influence the customer decision making than the final outcome. Vast

numbers of studies have investigated this issue and many models have been developed accordingly.

The best approach addressing the customer decision making behavior process during this pandemic is, the main concept of incentives (marketing mix) and the replies from the customers strengthens the fact that there is vagueness about what happens between being exposed to a marketing mix and making a purchase decision. This ambiguous part will capture aspects comprising the cultural, social, personal, and psychological in the whole process of decision making (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2006 cited by Kotler, 2008).

The airline industry is not an exception to the fact that decision-making process especially considering the current global crisis likes the pandemic. The global aviation industry has enjoyed decades of steady growth, even in the face of previous global catastrophes such as the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001 and the global financial crisis of 2008. Aviation has been largely resilient with passenger travel demands increasing at a steady pace of approximately 4.5% annually (International Air Transportation Association (IATA), Olsthoorn X.,2001). However, aviation has never been impacted by a global pandemic of the current proportion, which novel coronavirus officially known as COVID-19, has pervaded over 46 countries, infecting over 3.7 million people and causing 230,000 deaths since December 2019 (Smidt, 2020; World Health Organization, 2020a). Sevilla (2018) identified that infections like COVID-19 (H1N1 and SARS) had the potential to be nationally and internationally from air travel as has appeared to be the case in the current pandemic.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak has caused far-reaching implications in global society since the beginning, most of which exponentially increased by the time the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a pandemic. Apart from the obvious disease repercussions on health and mortality, the different measures taken by governments to control the spread of the virus caused major disruptions that have affected all aspects of social and economic activity worldwide. The heavy interdependence of the aviation industry on all economic and social issues and on domestic and international mobility has led it to be one of the hardest-hit industries by the COVID-19 crisis (ICAO, Effects of Novel Corona virus on Civil Aviation; Economic impact analysis, 2020).

When breaking down the global impact of the pandemic on the aviation industry between the different continents, although most regions have adopted similar measures to control the outbreak, there are numerous reasons as to why its impact and expected recovery times differ among them. The different lockdown and quarantine timings, low propensity to travel (fear) and border shutdowns, alongside each region's air connectivity, infrastructure development and regulatory affairs, has resulted in the COVID- 19 crisis affecting each one in a different manner.

The border closures, the economic slowdown, and the fear to travel due to the epidemiological situation—slightly relieved by the measures taken—have resulted in enormous financial woes and in worst-case scenarios in bankruptcies accompanied by mass furloughs becoming the new normal in the aviation and tourism sectors.

While several preventive activities have been agreed upon by stakeholders, some measures have risen financial and feasibility concerns to the airline industry. An optimal balance between public health safety and airline financial viability is critical, especially when the airline passenger revenues already dropped by $314 billion in 2020. General biosecurity measures such as temperature screening of individuals, minimizing inter-personal contacts during the boarding and deplaning processes, limiting movement within the cabin during flight, increasing frequency and quality of cabin cleaning, and simplifying catering procedures have been implemented at the expense of the aviation industry. The International Air Transport Association (IATA) recently endorsed the mandatory face-coverings for passengers and masks for crew members but opposes onboard social distancing because of the significant loss of revenue. IATA asserted that the risk of infectious disease transmission on board is low even without special measures as suggested by scientifically questionable evidence such as contact tracing for selected flights or informal surveys of major airlines. However, proving the effectiveness of these multi-faceted measures has been difficult. Also, these might not be well perceived or complied by some passengers. (IATA Press Release No.39, 2020)

An airline industry during this pandemic is one of industries highly affected by the pandemic is now most of the airlines or operators are looking for a new era of cost reduction initiatives, invest heavily in process improvement areas, system design platforms, adjustments on industry restart, demand fostering, biometric measures, contactless service at each customer contact points and on other technological innovations to make protect their passengers' safety and health

risks. The major objective of such new era of managing aviation industry is to foster demand and thereby attract new traffic and retain its existing customer base.

In this research, I was looking at and examining the airline industry taking the case of Ethiopian Airlines inducing factors affecting passengers to identify, explore, and see the effect (if any) of the different predictors that are impacting the customers' decisions to buy a product and or services during the novel coronavirus-19 pandemic.

## 1.2 Statement of the problem

According to Kumar, Batista, and Maull (2011), the most indispensable way of enhancing the company's activities to win its fierce competition is to identify and comprehend the needs and wants of the customers. And it is very important especially at this pandemic period and to enhance the safety, security and health of airline customers.

The International Air Transport Association said, World Carriers will lose about $48 billion in 2021. It had earlier forecast a $38 billion deficit. After the industry lost about $126 billion in the teeth of the crisis during 2020, there were high hopes for a rebound in air travel during the first half of this year. IATA now says the crucial summer season is at risk. Moreover, Industry break even, previously expected in the fourth quarter, will now be delayed into 2022.

Within the past three months, the global aviation industry has experienced a 70%–95% reduction in passenger demand (Shepardson et al., 2020; Whitely et al., 2020) compared to the 2019 three months data i.e. January-March. Aviation experts and aviation executives concur that increasing passengers' confidence in their personal safety is a complex challenge that must be overcome before commercial aviation can move on to what will likely be a new era that is vastly different than what passengers have become accustomed to (Shepardson et al., 2020). Given the novelty of this severe decrease in air travel, the purpose of the current study is to identify the significant factors affecting Ethiopian airlines international travelers during this pandemic.

With the closure of international borders and imposition of stay-at-home directives, travel demand is almost nonexistent. In the United States alone, travel spending for 2020 is expected to decrease by around $400 billion, translating into a loss of about $900 billion in economic output

(Oxford Economics, 2020). These numbers mean that COVID-19 would have more than seven times the impact of September 11, 2001, on travel-sector revenues.

Worldwide, airline capacity is down 70 to 80 percent in April 2020, compared to April 2019, and multiple large airlines have temporarily ceased operations. Overall, almost 60 percent of the global fleet was grounded in early April 2020 (Andrew D. 2020).

Prior literatures have written different articles, done researches on related issues for instance in Indonesia (Cassandra Annnonis, Limpooisian, Tan Viwang, Wongchoi li, 2014), South Africa, Australia, New Zealand (Jamie Thomas Henderson,2016) and Ethiopia (Solomon M, 2020). Moreover, this thesis tries to show the factors affecting purchase decision of customers in Ethiopian Airlines during the covid-19 pandemic period. However, due to the fact that there is inadequate number of literatures in this area in particular taking Ethiopian Airlines during the covid-19 pandemic period, this thesis tries to address this breach noticed in the related literatures.

## 1.3 Research questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What factors are affecting customers' purchase decision in Ethiopian airlines during the Covid-19 pandemic?
2. How travel restrictions, virtual technology, vaccinations, fear of infection and price influence purchase decision of Ethiopian airline's customers during the covid-19 pandemic?
3. Do the factors affecting customers' decision to purchase from Ethiopian airlines during the covid-19 pandemic period differ among the demographic profile of the respondents?

## 1.4 Objective of the study

### 1.4.1 General objective

The primary aim of this thesis is to recognize and identify the major variables affecting passengers' purchase decision in Ethiopian airlines and their impact during the covid-19 pandemic period.

### 1.4.2 Specific objectives

- To examine how travel restriction influence purchase decision of Ethiopian airlines customers' during the pandemic.
- To examine how virtual technology influence purchase decision of Ethiopian airlines customer during the pandemic.
- To examine how vaccination influence purchase decision of Ethiopian airlines customer during the pandemic.
- To examine how fear of infection influence purchase decision of Ethiopian airlines customer during the pandemic.
- To examine how price influence purchase decision of Ethiopian airlines customer during the pandemic.
- To examine if variation exists among the independent variables and the demographic profile of the respondents during the covid-19 pandemic period.

## 1.5 Significance of the study

This research is believed to show the major factors which are important for customers to purchase from Ethiopian airlines during this pandemic. The research will also help ET's management on how to add additional features or attributes on the service provided especially on contactless technologies and how to go with the new normal trend during the pandemic. Moreover, it provides states to have a standard policy, procedures & practices, and countries to work together instead of having too many travel restrictions and fragmented policies individually. It fills the gap or void in related literatures and can be used as a reference and base for further related literatures.

## 1.6 Scope of the study

This thesis covered the factors associated with limiting passengers' preference to travel during this pandemic to buy products from the airline taking the case of Ethiopian Airlines like**, travel restrictions, virtual technology, being vaccinated, fear of infections and Price.**

The thesis comprised only individual international customers of Ethiopian airlines who are appeared at Ethiopian airlines Addis Ababa ticket offices only. Moreover, corporate clients, passengers' requiring special assistances and group or giant passengers were excluded from this thesis.

The thesis focused on factors affecting passengers' purchase decisions amid the pandemic taking Ethiopian Airlines. And moreover, the questionnaire was responded by the Ethiopian airlines customers only. It was also excluding employees, travel agencies, general sales agents and ground handling agents or companies are not part of the research respondents as a primary methodology. The area coverage of this thesis is individual Ethiopian airlines customers appear to be at all Ethiopian airlines ticket offices in Addis Ababa only during the covid-19 pandemic period.

## 1.7 Limitation of the study

A time or financial constraint is one of the limitations of the study and thereby the geographic coverage would have been more. But as Addis Ababa is the main and the highest passenger flow Hub of Ethiopian airlines, the limitation is managed by having more relevant clients who have international travel experience with Ethiopian Airlines. The research is also limited by the fact that it employed convenience sampling technique, which involves collecting market research data from a conveniently available pool of respondents. This may create a room for bias. Nevertheless, it was overcome by having a reasonable and acceptable number of sample sizes that will represent the population and same was confirmed by reliability, normality and other statistics measurements.

## 1.8 Organization of the study

This thesis has five chapters. The first chapter included introduction, background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives, significance, scope, organization and limitations of the study. The second chapter discussed the review of related literature (both theoretical and empirical) and conceptual framework. The third chapter incorporated the research methodology, consisting of research design, source of data collection, sample size and sampling procedures, method of data collection and data analysis. In the fourth chapter the data analysis and

interpretation was presented. The fifth chapter provided the conclusions, recommendation and future further related inputs accordingly.

## 1.9 Operational Definitions

**Purchase Decision** – is the thought process that leads a consumer from identifying a need, generating options, and choosing a specific product and brand i.e., Ethiopian airlines during pandemic in this case.

**IATA– International Air Transport Association**: – is an airline association working for the process improvement, safety aviation processes and capacity building of the aviation professionals through designing trainings by industry experts for a safety, secured and protected aviation industry for the employees, passengers and the aviation community.

**Virtual Technology-** is a technology type involving an electronic platform developed by the airline like online booking, online ticketing, online check-in, and contactless baggage drop technologies in relation to creating a touch less end to end process.

**Being Vaccinated-**is an Ethiopian airline's all in-flight crews and ground service personnel have been vaccinated twice for SINOPHARM vaccin.

# CHAPTER TWO

# REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter provides an insight to readers about the theoretical view of the topics under study. In line with objective of the study, the chapter covers topics related to consumer behavior, consumer motives, consumers' decision-making steps, information search in a decision-making process taking Ethiopian airlines and a conceptual framework drawn from a theoretical ground taking five factors that are believed to affect passengers' purchase decision during the covid-19 pandemic taking the case of Ethiopian Airlines.

## 2.1 Theoretical Review

### 2.1.1 Customer Motives

Customer has an emotion or initiation or strong desire that makes the buyer to make a decision to buy. Purchase motives thus are those influences or considerations which provide the compulsion to buy, encourage action or decide the offers in the purchase of goods or services from alternatives. These reasons are generally controlled by psychological, social and economic influences etc.

**Motivations which Influence Purchase Decision** The purchase motivations may be classified into two:

I. **Product Motivation**
II. **Patronage Motivation**

**I. Product Motivation**

Product motivations are instincts, needs and reflections which makes the customer to buy a product or service. The product motivations are further classified as emotional and rational product motivations.

**a) Emotional Product Motivations** **b) Rational Product Motivations**

**Emotional Product Motivations** are instincts which convince the customer based on his/her emotions. The buyer does not try to think rationally or reasonably examine the need for purchase. The customer makes a purchase decision to satisfy emotional instincts only like urge, ego, pride, feeling to be unique.

**Rational Product Motivations** are predispositions which arise based on the careful assessment, meticulous evaluations and reasonable assessment. Or in another word, the decision will be made based on the predispositions made after going through the above processes.

The product motivations were associated to my thesis in a sense that products and or services such as travel insurance, contactless service at each customer contact points, health and safety measures gained from that specific airline are the attributes that make passengers decide to purchase from that airline.

**II. Patronage Motivations**

Patronage motivations are in another way is a thought or instincts which persuade the buyer to benefaction with specific vendors. Similarly, there are two aspects of patronage motivations i.e., emotional and rational.

**Emotional Patronage Motivations** are motivations that convince customer to select a specific vendor due to the fact that emotional attachments without logical analysis and meticulous evaluation of options. The customer is subjective in making purchases accordingly.

**Rational Patronage Motivations** are motivations that persuade a customer to buy from vendors based on consideration of prior satisfactions, latest offerings and or post-sales services, etc.

So, knowing the motivations of customers is paramount or indispensable for marketers to meet customers' needs, wants and preferences so that customization of the existing products and or services will be aligned to meet customers need. The first step to identify the variables influencing buying decision is through identifying intents of the buyer.

### 2.1.2 Behaviorist and Congnitivist Theory of Human Behavior

Behaviorism assumes that all humans act rationally in response to stimulus that evoke a cause-and-effect relationship based on either positive of negative reinforcement without emphasizing on internal factors that motivate the action. Whereas cognitivist assumes that there are both subjective and objective reasoning for human behavior that can only be explained by understanding the psychological process that form the basis for decision making (Hung, 2001). Considering my thesis paper and as it is outlined to meet the objectives, my thesis supports the cognitivist theory of human behavior as both objective and subjective thinking and or reasoning are pillars for the theory.

### 2.1.3 Descriptive Versus Decision Models

Decision models are to solve problems by controlling or influencing marketing variables like price, promotion, and advertising and thereby to manage outcomes. Descriptive models seek to discover the power of promotions, communications, stimuli, and other publicizing issues. When contrasting the two models, decision modeling is similar to a behaviorist approach, whereas descriptive modeling is similar to the cognitivist theory.

### 2.1.4 Customer Decision Making Process

According to (Cant, Strydom, Jooste, & du Plessis, 2009), customer decision making begins with the identification of a need or want, which presents the buyer with a gap between their existing state and their desired state. Whilst problem recognition may occur spontaneously or at the whim of individual customers, the aim in marketing is to stimulate customers to recognize a gap in their existing state (Solomon, Marshall, & Stuart, 2011).

In the travel industry (Ritchie, Tkaczynski, & Faulks, 2010) explained the push-pull model for need recognition. The model stated that people travel because they are pushed by intrinsic or extrinsic internal forms that predispose people to travel, while they are then pulled to destinations by external forces of the destination attributes." Push factors can be described as motivational factors or needs that arise due to a disequilibrium or tension in the motivational system (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1977; Kim, Lee, & Klenosky, 2003). Pull factors are those that

impact a traveler's choice of travel destination through attractions within a destination (You, O'leary, Morrison, & Hong, 2000). Push factors usually exist within an origin location and initiate the decision to undertake travel, whereas pull factors usually exist within a host country and make that country appealing to foreign travelers (Kline, 2005). Furthermore, (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002) concluded that both push and pull factors also originate within the traveler themselves and can be manifestations of an individual's personality. Tourism can be a push factor for people to travel. And the knowledge they will get from visiting a certain historical sites or physical heritage can be a pull factor.

### 2.1.5 Customer Segmentation

Segmentation from a marketing and research perspective is the act of outlining customized target groups of people or objects from a wide populace or environment (Teichert, Shehu& von Wartburg, 2008). Customer segmentation is customizing the wide organization's customer base into meaningful and more manageable groups who share common features and characteristics (Yankelovich & Meer, 2006).

Customer segmentation in airline industry is important. As indicated by Chin (2002), business travelers prefer in-flight services, mileage programs, punctuality, augmented services, punctuality, scheduled flights, mileage programs, etc. Whereas tourist travelers prefer flexibility of flights, cheaper prices, frequency and availability of flight alternatives which is pertinent to my thesis.

### 2.1.6 Customer Behavior Models

**NICOSIA MODEL**

The model is a systems model as the human being is examined as one element working towards a goal (system). Francesco Nicosia describes the model by establishing a relationship between a firm and its potential customers. Here the marketing programs (communications) influences or induce a customer towards the product and service. Based on the situation, the customer will review and evaluate the product attributes. If the customer is happy at this stage, it may trigger a decision to buy the product or else vice versa. There are four parts in this model. Part one comprises product features and marketing mixes like advertisement on the one hand and the buyer behavior on the other side.

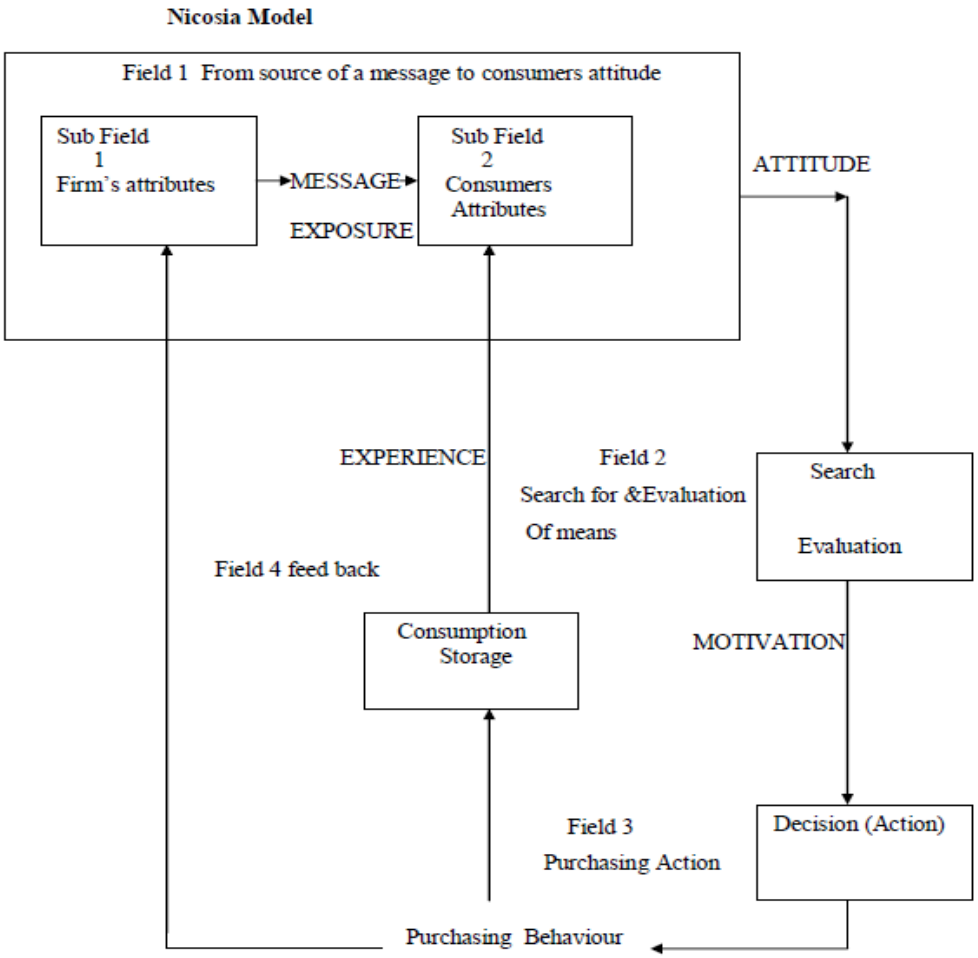


***Figure 1: Nicosia Model of consumer behavior***

The Nicosia model divides the activities in four basic areas;

**Area 1:** Part one has two sub parts-the customer benefits and the company features. The promotion from the firm will reach the customers attributes. Some features could be developed through the technique the communication is comprehended or understood by the buyer. So, the recently established feature becomes the contribution to the area 2.

**Area 2:** This area is related to the retrieving information, looking for options, review and evaluation made by the buyer. If the above step motivates to buy the product / service, it becomes the contribution to the area 3.

**Area 3:** This area explains the end to end process of how the customer purchases a product and/or service.

**Area 4:** This area is about sample test of the buying products/services. It is also a source for the customer feedback.

This model has strong relation with my thesis, that end to end process from a need up to the feedback is incorporated.

## Howard Sheth Model

An enhanced detail explanation has been contributed in the theory of buyer behavior (1969) by Howard and Sheth. The model has three key variables- Perception, learning and attitude formation (Prasad, 2009).

The model is essentially an attempt to explain change of offerings through time and this indicates a relationship or coherence related this paper. Customers gain as much information as possible about a product or services from two sources of information:

a. Social sources b. Commercial sources

The basic organization of the model is given below

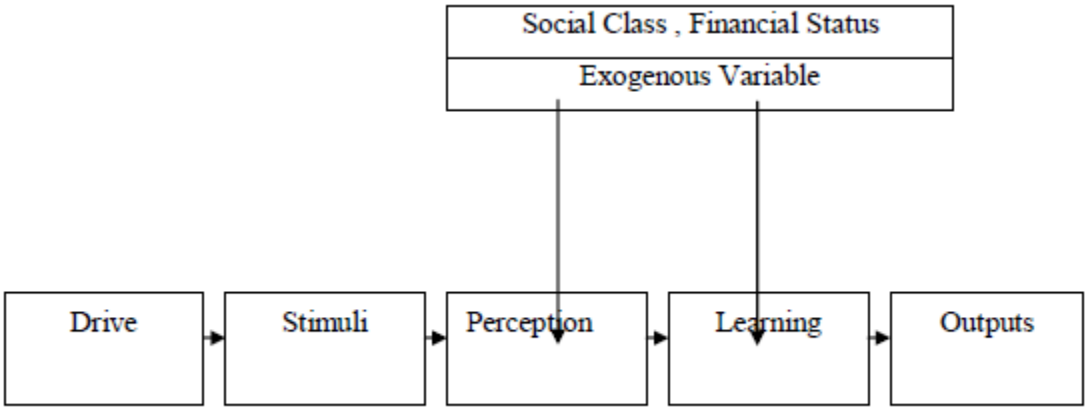


***Figure 2: Basic Structure of Howard Sheth Model***

Thus, a model of buyer behavior variables internal to the customer includes attitudes, perceptions, learning and personality. The external factors are culture, promotions, peep

pressure, inter personal impacts. The contemporary concepts of the buying behavior state that the behavior is the result of people interaction and situation factors. The marketer is expected to be aware of the person-centered factors such as buyer motivation, learning, perceptions, attitudes, values and beliefs. Similarly, marketers must be aware of social environment and internal personal interactions influencing the buyer behavior.

This model is associated with my paper in a sense that the model considers three key variables i.e., perception, learning and attitude formation which are very indispensable in identifying variables affecting the passengers purchase decision in Ethiopian airlines during covid-19 pandemic.

## 2.2 Empirical Review

### 2.2.1 Travel restrictions and purchase decisions

According to Nižetić (2020), the implementation of restrictions within aviation has global and long-term impacts on air transport mobility. In his case-study on air transport mobility in the EU that April 2020 was the peak of impact, with a reduction of flights in the EU region by 89%. Additionally, it was reduced by 96% within investigated airports. With closed borders and travel regulations, tourists are either forbidden or discouraged to travel leaving the air travel mobility to a large extent limited to business travel during the pandemic, hence without private tourism. Verified by this observation by Nižetić (2020), Zagreb airport had a mobility of 2659 flights for January while 100 flights for April. For Split airport, the number of passengers went from 36741 in January to zero in April (Nižetić, 2020). The two examples show consequently how the choice for Swedish customers drastically decreases in their purchasing, leaving the immobility crucial for this paper.

**H1: There is a significant association between travel restrictions and purchase decision.**

### 2.2.2 Virtual technology and purchase decisions

Business travel is a significant sector in the overall tourism market accounting for about 15 per cent of all tourist arrivals (UNWTO, 2008). Although organizations are increasingly facing the need to interact with distant partners (Aguilera, 2008), this does not necessarily require physical

travel. According to Cramton (2001) the way in which groups are organized and their means of communication to support their work are changing.

In fact, according to Wang and Law (2007) information and communications technologies (ICTs) offer people a substitute for face-to-face contact and thus have the ability to replace physical travel.

Mason in 2002 predicted that ICTs would advance sufficiently to permit some substitution in the future (Mason, 2002).

**H2: There is a significant association between Virtual Technologies& purchase decision**

### 2.2.3 Being vaccinated and purchase decisions

Airports and airlines are arguably one of the most important nodes. On average, Americans take 2.1 airline trips each year (Airlines, GALLUP, 2016). The United States airlines move approximately two million people every day (Airlines for America, 2020). If unvaccinated, these travelers are more likely to carry infectious diseases with them. This problem can be viewed as one of externalities, flowing across jurisdictional borders: a state's sovereign prerogative to have robust vaccination laws that protect its residents is undermined if unvaccinated individuals from other states cross its borders daily (PhRMA, 2020). Because vaccines can only provide imperfect protection to those who receive them, and some individuals are unable to be vaccinated at all (due to other medical problems), those who choose to be unvaccinated pose a public health threat.

In addition to its serious impact on public health, COVID-19 has caused unprecedented disruption to the global economy and society, destroying jobs and devastating livelihoods around the world. Aviation and the industries that air travel supports have been particularly badly affected. At the end of 2020, 46 million jobs supported by air travel have been lost or are at risk and as much as $1.8 trillion in GDP supported by air transport could be lost. The rapid progress in developing, trialing and approving vaccines offers hope of an end to the worst of the damage wrought by the pandemic, the global distribution of vaccines represents a huge logistical challenge in which air transport will play a fundamental role (IATA position letter about the role of Vaccinations in recovery of international travel).

It’s OK for fully vaccinated people to travel domestically again without quarantining, so long as they wear a mask and maintain social distancing guidelines, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention announced April 2, 2021 in its updated guidelines for travel.

The agency advises that people still wash or sanitize their hands frequently when traveling. The guidelines also provide guidance for other modes of transportation other than air travel and are for domestic travel.

**H3: There is a significant association between being Vaccinated and purchase decisions.**

### 2.2.4 Fear of infection and purchase decision

De Vos (2020) explained that due to COVID-19, people will reduce their travel, and will prefer to use active modes or cars over public transport. This will reduce the traffic volumes and affect people’s well-being.

Globally, a large decline was observed in mobility due to fear from COVID-19 and the government's orders to mitigate the spread (Warren and Skillman, 2020). In the severely affected cities, mobility was reduced by up to 90% (Muhammad et al., 2020). In the USA, population mobility was reduced by 7.87% due to official stay-home orders. Further, a rise of the local infection rate from 0% to 0.0003% lowered the mobility by 2.31% (Engle et al., 2020). A study conducted in Switzerland revealed that the number of trips per weekday and average kilometers traveled reduced up to around 60% during the second week of March in 2020. This study further mentioned that males continued to travel more compared to females (Molloy et al., 2020).

A qualitative study was conducted by Ives et al. (2019) using focus groups and interviews targeting healthcare staff. Several survey participants mentioned that, due to the fear of infection, they were reluctant to use public transport including air travel and as a result, more people would be willing to travel to work using private cars. They further mentioned that they are willing or able to work if adequate parking spaces are available to accommodate additional demand for private cars. Blendon et al. (2019) reported the results of a national survey that was conducted in the US to explore public opinion on community mitigation measures for pandemic. 89% of the survey participants responded that they would limit the use of public transportation (buses and trains) including air travel. Further, 85% of them mentioned that they would not allow their

children to use public transport and undertaking out of home activities (public events and gatherings) while schools are closed.

**H4: There is a significant association between fear of infections and Purchase decision.**

### 2.2.5 Price and purchase decision

The airline industry cannot be treated like other industries when examining consumers' patterns, choices and behaviors due to its complexity of product demand, price sensitivities and decision-making process. In addition, it does not follow the course for 8 ordinary goods in the sense that price increments diminish consumption (Masiero & Nicolau, 2012). Pricing is auto correlated to previously realized demand shocks, making price endo-geniality a prominent issue in contrast to other industries such as ordinary products (Li et al., 2014). In comparison to price fluctuations in for instance technological and seasonal products, the changes in the airline industry seem difficult to predict. Li et al. (2014) claim how customers are aware and accept the fact that seatmates may have paid less for essentially the same seat, which lays a foundation of interest for exploring attitudes within the certain industry.

**H5: There is a significant association between Price and Purchase decision.**

## 2.3 Conceptual Framework

There are many different articles researched and forwarded by different scholars about purchase decisions. The current study makes use of combined variables of different related literatures and draws a conceptual framework as depicted below.

| **Variables** | **Related Literature reviews** |
|---|---|
| Travel Restrictions | ✓ Nizteck (2020) |
| Virtual Technology | ✓ Wang & Law (2007)<br>✓ Crampton (2001)<br>✓ Aguilera (2008) |
| Being Vaccinated | ✓ De vos (2020)<br>✓ Engle (2020)<br>✓ Blendon (2019) |
| Fear of Infections | ✓ Airlines Gallup (2016)<br>✓ CDC reports (2021) |
| Price | ✓ Masiero & Nicolau (2012)<br>✓ Li et al. (2014) |

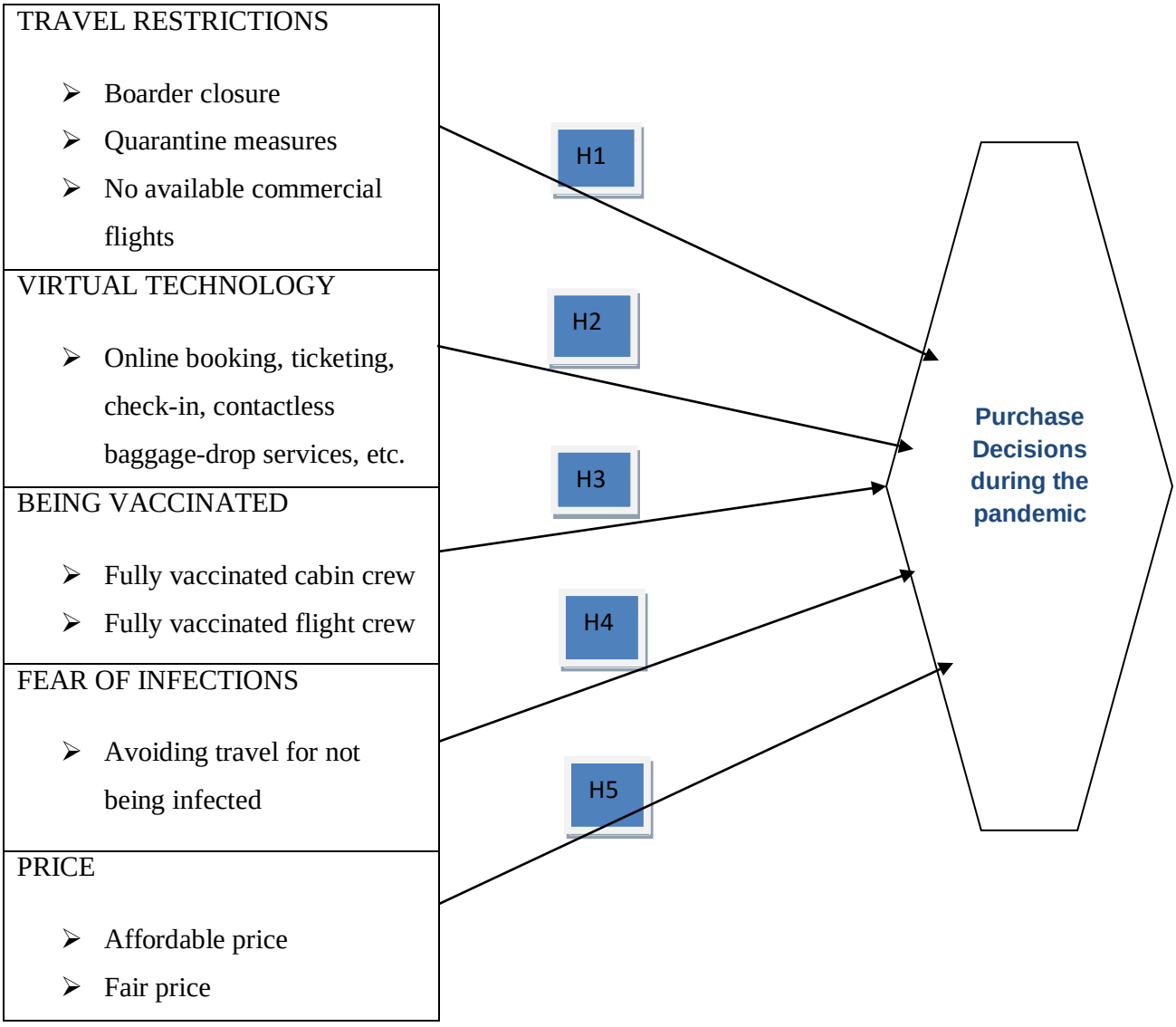


***Figure 3: Conceptual Framework***

Source: adopted from (Nizteck, 2020; Wang & Law, 2007; De vos, 2020; Airlines Gallup, 2016; Masiero & Nicolau, 2012; Li et al, 2014)

# CHAPTER THREE

# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides a detail discussion about the type of research methods that are employed in this research in order to achieve the outlined objectives. The first section highlights an outline of the research design followed by research approach, data type and source, population and sample design, data gathering instruments, analysis, reliability, validity, and ethical issues.

## 3.1 Research Design

Since this research mainly focused on addressing the factors affecting passengers' purchase decisions in an airline industry taking the case of Ethiopian airlines during the covid-19 pandemic, I used explanatory research method.

## 3.2 Research Approach

Quantitative research methods were implemented in the study to assess the various factors affecting purchase decision in ET during covid-19. Survey questions were formulated and once responses are collected and analyzed, interpretation of the data was made using descriptive and inferential statistics.

## 3.3 Data Types and Data Sources

Both primary and secondary sources of data were used in the study. Primary data was obtained from selected respondents using closed ended questionnaire while the secondary data was retrieved from books, journals, reports, websites, previous research works, etc.

## 3.4 Population of the Study

The study population included individual international travelers of Ethiopian airlines who have appeared at Ethiopian airlines Addis Ababa ticket offices only and have at least a travel experience during the pandemic.

## 3.5 Sampling Procedure

### 3.5.1 Sample size

By taking into account the sample sizes used in other similar studies, completion rate of survey questionnaires and the available resource, the sample size used in this study is 385 respondents.

### 3.5.2 Sampling Technique

Sampling is crucial because the defined size of the population is large and studying the entire population will be costly, time consuming and non-practical. Further to this, the research conducted is segmented on factors affecting purchase decision of ET international travelers during the pandemic. Accordingly, a convenience sampling method was employed for the study. This sampling technique focuses on gaining information from the respondents who are 'convenient' for the researcher to access. This may create a room for bias. Nevertheless, it was overcome by having a reasonable and acceptable number of sample sizes that will represent the population and same was confirmed by reliability, normality and other statistics measurements.

## 3.6 Data Gathering Instruments

The Questionnaire had been drafted in English and then translated into Amharic. The survey questionnaire has items for measuring the factors affecting purchase decision of ET's individual international travelers during the pandemic as well as demographic questions. The measurement scales came from existing scales used by (Pieterson, 2009), to measure the five factors (travel restriction, virtual technology, being vaccinated, fear of infection and price). The respondents will be asked to express their reactions to the statements on the survey by choosing Likert scale numbers, strongly agree (5), agree (4), neutral (3), disagree (2), strongly disagree (1)

## 3.7 Data Analysis Technique

Data was carefully recorded and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 21 software and relevant data analysis needed to answer the research questions was carried out. Prior to analysis, the data was adjusted for omissions, legibility and consistency. The data analysis was made by using both descriptive and inferential statistics.

### 3.7.1 Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations was used to summarize and present data with regard to demographic profile of respondents such as gender, age, marital status, educational background, purpose of taking a flight and travel experience of respondents with Ethiopian airlines.

### 3.7.2 Inferential Analysis

#### 3.7.2.1 Pearson Correlation Analysis

In addition to descriptive analysis, Pearson correlation coefficient was used to show the interdependence between the dependent and independent variables. Data was checked for multi-collinearity problem as well, which occurs when there are two highly correlated independent variables. When such problem occurs, one of the independent variables should be omitted. According to (Goodwin & Leech, 2006), there is a strong relationship between two variables when the value is +/-1. However, the value should not exceed +/- 0.90 to avoid multi-Collinearity problem.

#### 3.7.2.2 Multiple Linear Regressions

Multiple Linear Regressions was used to test the significance contribution of each independent variable to the dependent variable purchase decision. If the p-value of multiple linear regressions is less than 0.05, then the relationship between the dependent variable and the selected factors influencing passengers purchase decision will be significant (Saunders, 2009). Accordingly, the alternative hypothesis should not be rejected. If not, vice versa.

Moreover, one-way ANOVA and independent sample T-test was used to see the mean difference among demographic profile of respondents on the factor they perceive important in choosing Ethiopian airlines for their international air ticket purchase.

In this research, the relationship between a dependent variable (Purchase decision) and the five independent variables (travel restrictions, Virtual Technologies, Being Vaccinated, Fear of infections and Price) was determined using a multiple linear regression.

**Equation for multiple linear regressions**

$PD = \alpha + \beta 1X1 + \beta 2X2 + \beta 3X3 + \beta 4X4 + \beta 5X5 + \ldots + \beta nXn + e$

Where, PD = Purchase decision of ET customers
X1 = Travel Restriction
X2 = Virtual Technology
X3 = Vaccination
X4 = Fear of infection
X5 = Price

And $\alpha$ is constant and $\beta 1$, $\beta 2$, $\beta 3$, $\beta 4$, $\beta 5$ and $\beta 6$ are coefficient to estimate, and e is the error term.

## 3.8 Normality, Reliability and validity test

Normality test is used to test if the data sets are normally distributed or not. Accordingly, normality was tested in this study through the use of Skewness and Kurtosis. According to (Kline, 2005), a positive value of Skewness and Kurtosis indicates a positively skewed distribution whereas negative value implies a negatively skewed distribution. Moreover, Kline suggested that Skewness and kurtosis result shall not be beyond the ranges between +/-3 and +/-10 respectively.

In order to examine internal consistency of variables in the research instrument, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was calculated. As (Zikmund, Babin, Carr, & Griffin, 2010)state, scales with coefficient alpha above 0.70 indicates fair reliability. Overall, the internal reliability coefficients for the entire constructs are strong as all alpha coefficients are more than 0.70. Therefore, the relationship among the items is reliable for further analysis.

Validity of the study was checked to confirm the quality of this study. The advisor of this research has verified the content validity and correctness of the questions. Valuable comments were gained before the actual data collection through peer discussion and pilot test.

**Table 1 Reliability test of variables**

| Variables | Coefficient of Cronbach's alpha | No. of items |
|---|---|---|
| Travel Restrictions | 0.793 | 3 |
| Virtual Technologies | 0.801 | 4 |
| Being Vaccinated | 0.841 | 3 |
| Fear of Infection | 0.842 | 3 |
| Price | 0.845 | 3 |
| Purchase Decision | 0.850 | 3 |

## 3.9 Ethical Issues

Ethical issues were considered throughout undertaking this study. The works of scholars cited in this research are properly acknowledged. Respondents were clearly communicated about the purpose and objective of the study to get their genuine opinion when responding to the questionnaire and were promised the data collected will be kept confidential and will be used for academic purpose only. Findings and results obtained from this study are presented without biases.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section discusses the descriptive, inferential and data analysis and findings of the thesis. The data analysis was made using SPSS. In order to make the collected data valid for the analysis, all research questionnaires were examined for errors and incomplete answers and same was removed from the survey data accordingly. Hence, out of the 385 distributed questionnaires, 372 were collected. During the data editing, 13 questionnaires were removed from the survey data. Therefore 372 questionnaires were found to be valid and used for the final analysis.

## 4.1 Descriptive Analysis

### 4.1.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Describing the demographic information and analysis of the survey data is indispensable to make the thesis more meaningful and understandable. The profile of the respondents was analyzed in 7 scopes i.e. gender (two categories), range of age (four categories), marital status (three categories), monthly average net income (four categories), education level (four categories), and travel experience in years (three categories) and travel purposes (three categories).

**Table 4.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents**

| **Demographic Information** | **Total Respondents** | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | **Frequency** | **Percentages** |
| **Gender** | Female | 115 | 30.9% |
| | Male | 257 | 69.1% |
| | Total Respondents | 372 | 100% |
| **Age** | 18-35 | 105 | 28.22% |
| | 36-45 | 101 | 27.16% |
| | 46-55 | 87 | 23.39% |
| | More than 55 | 79 | 21.23% |
| | Total | 372 | 100% |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Travel Purpose** | Business | 125 | 33.60% |
| | Tourism | 137 | 36.83% |
| | Study | 110 | 29.57% |
| | Total | 372 | 100% |
| **Average net income** | Up to ETB 6,000 | 69 | 18.55% |
| | ETB 6,001 to 12,000 | 83 | 22.31% |
| | ETB 12,001 to 18, 000 | 123 | 33.06% |
| | More than ETB 18,000 | 97 | 26.08% |
| | Total | 372 | 100% |
| **Educational Background** | High school and below | 71 | 19.08% |
| | Diploma | 85 | 22.85% |
| | Bachelor's | 121 | 32.53% |
| | Graduate Studies | 95 | 25.54% |
| | Total | 372 | 100% |
| **Travel Experience** | Less Than 5 years | 51 | 13.71% |
| | Between 5 to 10 Years | 128 | 34.41% |
| | More than 10 Years | 193 | 51.88% |
| | Total | 372 | 100% |
| **Marital Status** | Single | 180 | 48.39% |
| | Married | 135 | 36.29% |
| | Divorced | 57 | 15.32% |
| | Total | 372 | 100% |

**Source: Survey Data (2021)**

Table 4.1 shows the demographic profile of 372 respondents in the survey data. In terms of gender, male respondents have outnumbered the female respondents (Female 30.9%, Male 69.1%). Regarding the age of respondents, the sample population was highly dominated by the age group of 18-35 (28.22%) and then followed by the age group of 36-45 (27.16%). The rest of the respondents consist of adults in the age group of 46-55 (23.39%) and those above the age of

55 (21.23%). From this, it can be inferred that the dominant age or the respondents were younger generation falling under the age of 45.

In terms of marital status, 48.39% were single and then 36.29% were married customers. The remaining 15.32% were divorced customers. The highest in number in this survey was the group that earns a monthly net income of between ETB12, 001 and less than 18,000 (33.06%) followed by those that earn more than 18,000 ETB (26.08%). The next group account for 22.31% earning a monthly net income between ETB 6,001 and ETB 12,000 and 17.55% account for those that earns less than ETB 6,000. In terms of education, the largest of the population comprises BA degree holders, which accounts for 32.53% of the total respondents, followed by those that hold educational level above BA degree. This shows that the respondents were well informed and educated.

### 4.1.2 Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

So as to determine the equivalence of groups in the survey, employing an analysis of means and standard deviation is indispensable (Marczyk, Dematteo and Festinger, 2005). The mean indicates that the predispositions towards agreeing or disagreeing on the questionnaires distributed. In another word, in this survey data the mean and responses have a positive same directional relationship.

The response continuum for each statement is a linear scale indicating the extent respondents agree or disagree with each statement. For example, a generic response continuum is 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Undecided or Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree for statements favorable to the construct. So this means the composite score for each individual is to calculate a mean-item summated score, that is, an individual's summated score divided by the number of items constituting the scale or subscale thereby creating a mean-item score for each individual that falls within the range of the values for the response continuum options. All items comprising a scale or subscale are assumed to have equal weight when calculating a summated score or a mean-item score. In another word, it can be inferred that the more the mean score is, the more respondents agree on the statements.

## Table 4.2 Summary of Descriptive Data

## Analysis of Travel Restriction and Purchase Decision

| S/N | Statements | Rating Scale | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1(SD) | 2(D) | 3(N) | 4(A) | 5(SA) | Mean | St. Deviation |
| 1 | ET implements all local and government requirements and restrictions strictly. | 4 | 7 | 6 | 203 | 152 | 4.22 | 1.71 |
| | | 1.08% | 1.88% | 1.61% | 54.56% | 40.87% | | |
| 2 | ET advises all the self-isolation to destinations. | 7 | 1 | 4 | 199 | 161 | 4.24 | 1.73 |
| | | 1.88% | 0.27% | 1.08% | 53.49% | 43.28% | | |
| 3 | ET implements all local and government requirements and restrictions strictly. | 9 | 30 | 13 | 177 | 143 | 4.17 | 1.68 |
| | | 2.42% | 8.07% | 3.49% | 47.58% | 38.44% | | |
| **Average (aggregate) mean** | | | | | | | **4.21** | |

## Analysis of Virtual Technology and Purchase Decision

| S/N | Statements | Rating Scale | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1(SD) | 2(D) | 3(N) | 4(A) | 5(SA) | Mean | St. Deviation |
| 1 | I can book and pay online without a need to come to an airline customer contact office. | 6 | 22 | 8 | 186 | 150 | 4.11 | 1.79 |
| | | 1.61% | 5.91% | 2.15 | 50.00% | 40.33% | | |
| 2 | I can check-in online and drop bags without contacting any airline staffs. | 5 | 21 | 3 | 211 | 132 | 4.09 | 1.65 |
| | | 1.34% | 5.65% | 0.81% | 56.72% | 35.48% | | |
| 3 | Et has a web based, mobile phone application and 24/7 call center to answer all of my travel queries. | 30 | 6 | 15 | 153 | 168 | 4.03 | 1.58 |
| | | 8.07% | 1.61% | 4.03% | 41.13% | 45.16% | | |
| 4 | ET's contactless technologies reduce my fear of being infected while travelling international travels. | 9 | 25 | 12 | 182 | 144 | 4.13 | 1.62 |
| | | 2.42% | 6.72% | 3.23% | 48.92% | 38.71% | | |
| **Average (aggregate) mean** | | | | | | | **4.09** | |

## Analysis of Being Vaccinated and Purchase Decision

| S/N | Statements | Rating Scale | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1(SD) | 2(D) | 3(N) | 4(A) | 5(SA) | Mean | St. Deviation |
| 1 | ET has no restrictions of being vaccinated as a requirement to travel. | 6 | 7 | 0 | 212 | 147 | 4.23 | 1.81 |
| | | 1.61% | 1.88% | 0% | 56.99% | 39.52% | | |
| 2 | ET staffs like ground handling staffs, cockpit crews and cabin crews are vaccinated. | 1 | 9 | 4 | 201 | 157 | 4.26 | 1.23 |
| | | 0.27% | 2.42% | 1.08% | 54.03% | 42.20% | | |
| 3 | I feel safe as the airline is free airline from covid-19 infection. | 5 | 7 | 6 | 203 | 151 | 4.23 | 1.16 |
| | | 1.34% | 1.89% | 1.61% | 54.57% | 40.59% | | |
| **Average (aggregate) mean** | | | | | | | **4.24** | |

## Analysis of Fear of Infection and Purchase Decision

| S/N | Statements | Rating Scale | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1(SD) | 2(D) | 3(N) | 4(A) | 5(SA) | Mean | St. Deviation |
| 1 | ET has full insurance coverage in case of being infected during the flight. | 5 | 10 | 0 | 224 | 133 | 3.27 | 1.23 |
| | | 1.34% | 2.69% | 0% | 60.22% | 35.75 | | |
| 2 | ET flight cabins are fully sanitized and disinfected before departures, at transits and at destinations. | 7 | 1 | 1 | 214 | 149 | 3.33 | 1.15 |
| | | 1.88% | 0.27% | 0.27% | 57.5a3% | 40.05% | | |
| 3 | ET's strict implementation of the physical distancing during the flight by removing the middle seat between and by selling only half of the seats of the aircraft capacity. | 17 | 37 | 15 | 218 | 85 | 3.75 | 1.23 |
| | | 4.57% | 9.95% | 4.03% | 58.60% | 22.85% | | |
| **Average (aggregate) mean** | | | | | | | **3.45** | |

## Analysis of Price and Purchase Decision

| S/N | Statements | Rating Scale | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 1(SD) | 2(D) | 3(N) | 4(A) | 5(SA) | Mean | St. Deviation |
| 1 | ET's prices are fair at this covid-19 period. | 9 | 30 | 13 | 176 | 144 | 4.11 | 1.34 |
| | | 2.42% | 8.06% | 3.49% | 47.32% | 38.71% | | |
| 2 | Prices are affordable at this covid-19 period compared to other competitors. | 5 | 10 | 1 | 223 | 133 | 4.26 | 1.56 |
| | | 1.34% | 2.69% | 0.27% | 59.95% | 35.75% | | |
| 3 | I get discounts as applicable during this covid-19 period. | 5 | 21 | 13 | 211 | 122 | 4.02 | 2.79 |
| | | 1.34% | 5.65% | 3.49% | 56.72% | 32.80% | | |
| **Average (aggregate) mean** | | | | | | | **4.13** | |

Based on the descriptive data in Table 4.2, mean score of all variables is greater than mid of the scale that is 3. Being vaccinated (M=4.24) becomes the most important criteria in passengers' purchase decisions in purchasing an international air ticket from Ethiopian airlines during covid-19 period followed by travel restriction (M=4.21), price (M=4.13), virtual technology (M=4.09), and fear of infection (M=3.45). Meanwhile, the dependent variable purchase decision (M=4.12) is also above the mid mean scale level (i.e. 3).

The mean score for being vaccinated is relatively high (4.25). This indicates that vaccination is integral in the mind of customers in making purchase decision from Ethiopian airlines during this covid-19 period. The same is relatively true for travel restrictions having a mean score of (4.21). From this we can infer that, customers of Ethiopian airlines prefer the airline because of its fully vaccinated staffs, effective information availability of the travel restrictions to destinations and its competitive price.

The other factor with a relatively higher mean score of 4.09 virtual technology, which implies that customers choose Ethiopian airlines for its virtual technologies and contactless customer services. Next to virtual technologies, the mean score of fear of infection is relatively (3.45).

This indicates that customers are averagely happy by Ethiopian airlines services in reducing passengers' fear of infection for its excellent physical distancing principle applied during the flight.

### 4.1.3 Measurement of Reliability and Validity

In survey based research it is important to validate the scales used for reliability and validity. Reliability refers to the extent to which the items measure accurately and consistently what they intend to measure. The instrument for this study contains 19 items that are in a Likert scale type. The overall reliability of the instruments is measured using Cronbach's Alpha. Cronbach's alpha is a coefficient (a number between 0 and 1) that is used to rate the internal consistency (homogeneity) or the correlation of the items in a test. A good test is one that assesses different aspects of the trait being studied. Cronbach's alpha will generally increase as the inter correlations among test items increase, and is thus known as an internal consistency estimate of reliability of test scores. Because inter correlations among test items are maximized when all items measure the same construct, Cronbach's alpha is widely believed to indirectly indicate the degree to which a set of items measures a single construct (Gleam &Rosemary, 2003). George and Mallery (2003) provide the following rules of thumb: => .9 excellent, > .8 Good, > .7 Acceptable, > .6 Questionable, > .5 Poor, and < .5 Unacceptable p.231 (as cited in Gleam & Rosemary, 2003). If correlations between items are too low, it is likely that they are measuring different traits and therefore should not all be included in a test that is supposed to measure one trait. Table 4.3 and Table 4.4 illustrate the reliability of the independent and dependent variables. Based on the results presented in this table, it can be concluded that all the scales used in the study were reliable. Thus, they can be used to measure the variables under study. A Cronbach's alpha of 0.781 is obtained which is well above what is considered acceptable by scholars which is 70% (Gleam & Rosemary, 2003). The Cronbach's alpha for all the items are also above 70 %.

**Table 4.3 Measure of Internal Consistency- Cronbach's alpha for all variables**

| Cronbach's Alpha | N of items |
|---|---|
| .781 | 6 |

**Source: Survey Data (2021)**

**Table 4.4 Measure of Internal Consistency- Cronbach's alpha**

**Item-Total Statistics**

| | Scale Mean if item Deleted | Scale Variance if item Deleted | Correlated Item-Total Correlation | Cronbach's Alpha item |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Travel Restriction | 21.9157 | .2.045 | .648 | .773 |
| Virtual Technology | 21.8421 | 2.184 | .585 | .807 |
| Being Vaccinated | 22.5123 | 2.188 | .639 | .775 |
| Fear of Infection | 22.0917 | 2.146 | .542 | .803 |
| Price | 21.7654 | 2.156 | .639 | .745 |
| Purchase Decision | 21.7255 | 2.063 | .553 | .788 |

**Source: Survey Data (2021)**

**Table 4.5 Measure of Internal Consistency- For all questionnaire items**

**Reliability Statistics**

| Cronbach's Alpha | N of items |
|---|---|
| .907 | 19 |

**Source: Survey Data (2021)**

## 4.2 Correlation Analysis

To examine the relationships between the variables employed in this study, correlation analysis was used. Correlations are indispensable to measure association of between two or more variable (Marczyk, Dematteo and Festinger, 2005). Generally speaking, correlations between .10 to .30, .30 to .70, .70 to .90, .90 to 1.00 are assumed small, moderate, large and very large respectively. In order to determine the most influencing factor predicting purchase decision towards Ethiopian airlines, relationship between all variables was determined through correlation analysis before proceeding to regression analysis.

As per table 4.6, the coefficients show that, all independent variables were significant with the dependent variable at p value of $p<0.05$ level. And all independent variables are positively

related with purchase decision i.e. travel restriction, virtual technology, being vaccinated, fear of infection and price.

The highest correlation result was between being vaccinated and purchase decision (r=0.780), followed by the correlation between being vaccinated and Fear of infection (r=0.759). All other correlation results fall under the r value range 0.718 that is between fear of infection and purchase decision.

**Table 4.6 Correlation between independent and dependent variables**

| | | Travel Restriction | Virtual Technology | Being Vaccinated | Fear of Infection | Price | Purchase Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Travel Restriction | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .434** | .568** | .581** | .559** | .548** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .009 | .005 | .001 | .003 | .007 |
| | N | | 372 | 372 | 372 | 372 | 372 |
| Virtual Technology | Pearson Correlation | | 1 | .687** | .567* | .256** | .434** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | | .000 | .024 | .001 | .000 |
| | N | | | 372 | 372 | 372 | 372 |
| Being Vaccinated | Pearson Correlation | | | 1 | .740** | .634** | .780** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | | | .000 | .000 | .000 |
| | N | | | | 372 | 372 | 372 |
| Fear of Infection | Pearson Correlation | | | | 1 | .563* | .718** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | | | | 0.49 | .000 |
| | N | | | | | 372 | 372 |
| Price | Pearson Correlation | | | | | 1 | .685** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | | | | | .001 |
| | N | | | | | | 372 |
| Purchase Decision | Pearson Correlation | | | | | | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | | | | | |
| | N | | | | | | |
| **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) | | | | | | | |
| *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed) | | | | | | | |

**Source: Survey Data (2021)**

## 4.3 Assumptions for testing regression analysis

Before proceeding to regression analysis, the basic parametric statistical test assumptions of normality, linearity and multi-collinearity tests are undertaken and the below result is obtained.

### 4.3.1 Normality Test

According to Saunders (2009), normality test is used to determine whether the data sets are normally distributed or not. The normality test has been tested by using skewness and kurtosis. Skewness is a measure of the asymmetry of a distribution. Whereas, kurtosis measures the extent to which observations cluster around a central point. According to (Kline, 2005), Skewness and the kurtosis result shall not be beyond the ranges between +/-3 and +/-10.0 respectively. Table 4.7 shows all variables are within the acceptable range for normality.

**TABLE 4.7 Normality Test**

| | N | Skewness | | Kurtosis | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Static | Statistic | Std. Error | Statistic | Std. Error |
| Travel Restriction | 372 | .231 | .124 | -1.023 | .252 |
| Virtual Technology | 372 | .225 | .124 | -.111 | .252 |
| Being Vaccinated | 372 | .292 | .124 | .712 | .252 |
| Fear Of Infection | 372 | .142 | .124 | .960 | .252 |
| Price | 372 | .052 | .124 | .722 | .252 |
| Purchase Decision | 372 | .243 | .124 | .775 | .252 |

**Source: Survey Data (2021)**

### 4.3.2 Linearity Test

Linearity refers to the degree to which the change in the dependent variable is related to the change in the independent variables. To determine whether the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables is linear, P-P plots (probability-probability plot) of the regression residuals through SPSS software have been used and it is presented as follows.

If the data follow a normal distribution with mean $\mu$ and variance $\sigma 2$, then a plot of the theoretical percentiles of the normal distribution versus the observed sample

percentiles should be approximately linear. Since we are concerned about the normality of the error terms, we create a normal probability plot of the residuals. If the resulting plot is approximately linear, we proceed assuming that the error terms are normally distributed.

**P-P Linearity Test**

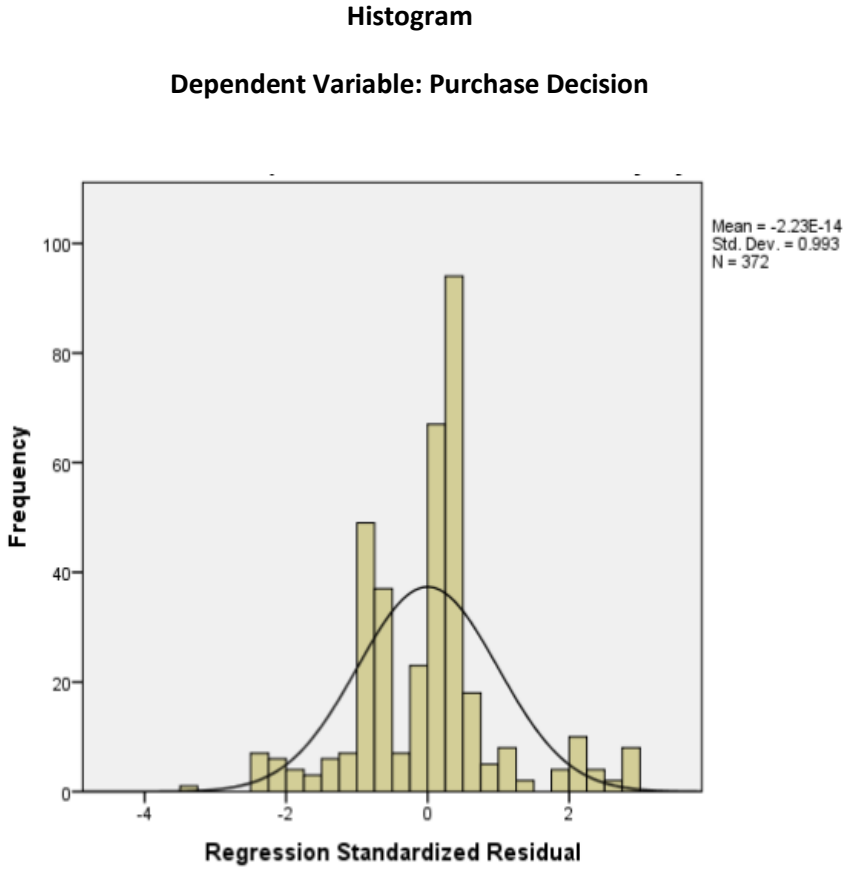


***Figure 4: Histogram for Linearity Test***

**Source: Survey Data (2021)**

As Garson (2012) and Field (2009) noted, normal distribution take the form of a symmetric bell shaped curve. Accordingly, as we observed from figure 4, the histogram looks like a normal distribution (bell-shaped curve) and the distribution is roughly normal. Moreover, the curve is perfectly skewed (symmetrical). Therefore, it can be concluded that the model was good for the data.

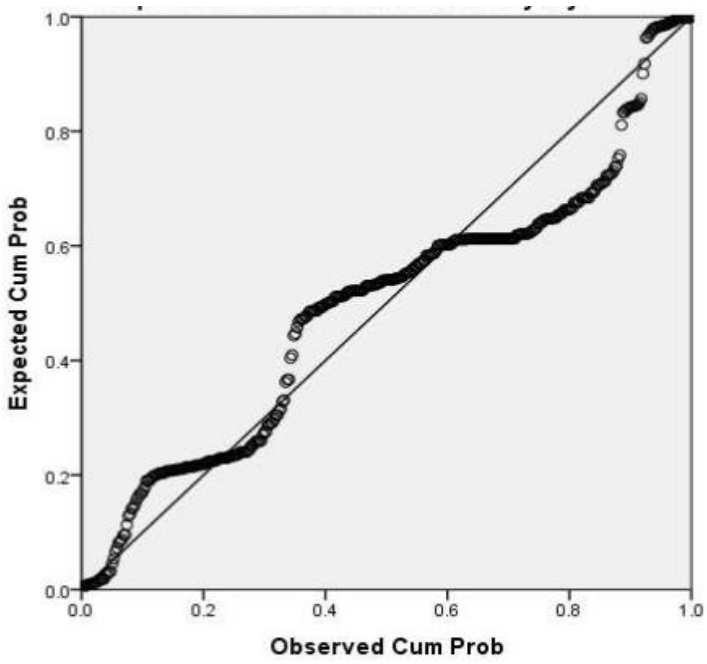


**Figure 5: Normally Distributed errors**

## 4.3.3 Multicollinearity Test

In order to run a regression analysis, mlticollinearity diagnosis needs to be checked. Therefore, the collinearity statistics result for both dependent and independent variable constituents were performed on SPSS and presented as follows.

**TABLE 4.8Multicolinearity Test**

**Coefficients[a]**

| Model | | Collinearity Statistics | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Tolerance | VIF |
| 1 | Travel restriction | .532 | 1.880 |
| | Virtual Technology | .684 | 1.463 |
| | Being Vaccinated | .475 | 2.107 |
| | Fear Of Infection | .627 | 1.596 |
| | Price | .757 | 1.320 |

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase Decision

**Source: Survey Data (2021)**

According to Saunders, et al. (2009), most regression programs can compute variance inflation factors (VIF) for each variable and as a rule of thumb; VIF above 5.0 suggests problems with multicollinearity. Moreover, Field (2009), also underline that, values for "Tolerance" below 0.1 indicate serious problems, although several experts suggest that values for "Tolerance" below 0.2 are worthy of concern. Accordingly, as it can be seen in the above collinearity table (table 4.8), multicollinearity is not the problem of this model, because VIF (variance inflation factor) of the model is well less than 5.0 and the tolerance is greater than .10. Hence, the value of VIF ranges between 1.320 to 2.107 and the tolerance of the variables ranges between .475 and .757. Thus, according to the above diagnosis information presented in all the tests, there are no significant data problems that violate the assumptions of multiple regressions and the variables are not overlapped and they are free from collinearity effect which possibly hinders the prediction ability of the model.

## 4.4 Regression Analysis

In order to see the contribution of independent variables (travel restrictions, virtual technology, being vaccinated, fear of infection and price) on the dependent variable (Purchase decision), multiple linear regression analysis was conducted.

The regression model presents how much of the variance in the measure of passengers' purchase decision is explained by the underlying factors of purchase decisions. The predictor variables have comprised for 67.2% adjusted R square with estimated standard deviation 0.27543 of the variance in the criterion variable (passengers' purchase decision). The remaining 32.8% are explained by other factors outside of this model.

Similarly, the ANOVA table shows the overall impact/suitability of the model from a statistical perspective. As the significance value of F statistics shows a value of 96.457and p- value (.000), which is less than $p<0.05$, the model is significant. This indicates that the variation explained by the model is not due to chance. As it is stated earlier in this chapter, this study aims to identify the most contributing independent variables in the prediction of the dependent variable. Thus, the strength of each predictor (independent) variable influence on the criterion (dependent) variable can be investigated via standardized Beta coefficient. The regression coefficient explains the average amount of change in dependent variable that is caused by a unit of change in the

independent variable. The larger value of Beta coefficient that an independent variable has, the more support to the independent variable as the more important determinant in predicting the dependent variable.

Adjusted R-square is a more consistent measurement for the regression. R-square has strong relationship with the number of predictor variables.

**Table4.9 Regressions (Multicolliniarity table) for passengers' purchase decision**

**ANOVA[a]**

| Model | | Sum of squares | Df | Mean square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Regression | 38.269 | 6 | 7.650 | 96.457 | .000[b] |
| | Residual | 29.027 | 366 | .079 | | |
| | Total | 67.276 | 372 | | | |

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase Decision

b. Predictors: (Constant), Travel restriction, virtual technology, being vaccinated, fear of infection,price

**Coefficients[a]**

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | T | Sig. | Collinearity Statistics | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | | | Tolerance | VIF |
| (Constant) | .314 | .310 | | 1.769 | .078 | | |
| Travel Restriction | .263 | .119 | .310 | 3.467 | .001 | .196 | 1.370 |
| Virtual Technology | .135 | .053 | .212 | 4.172 | .000 | .397 | 2.518 |
| Being Vaccinated | .018 | .093 | .228 | .314 | .013 | .232 | 1.576 |
| Fear of Infection | .098 | .068 | .006 | .108 | .914 | .305 | 3.279 |
| Price | .376 | .124 | .369 | 4.473 | .000 | .250 | 2.663 |

a. Dependent Variable: Purchase Decision

**Source: Survey Data (2021)**

According to Table 4.9, Except for fear of infection, for the rest of independent variables the regression model reveals that the regression standardized coefficients were statistically significant ($p<0.05$).

**Table 4.10 Summary of the Overall Outcome of the Research Hypotheses**

| Hypothesis | Result | Reason |
|---|---|---|
| H1: There is significant association between travel restriction and passengers' purchase decision. | Ho: Rejected<br>H1: Fail to Reject | β =0.310, p<0.05 |
| H2: There is significant association between virtual technology and passengers' purchase decision. | Ho: Rejected<br>H2: Fail to Reject | β =0.212, p<0.05 |
| H3: There is significant association between being vaccinated and passengers' purchase decision. | Ho: Rejected<br>H3: Fail to Reject | β =0.228, p<0.05 |
| H4: There is significant association between fear of infection and passengers' purchase decision. | Ho: Fail to Reject<br>H4: Rejected | β =0.006, p>0.05 |
| H5: There is significant association between price and passengers' purchase decision. | Ho: Rejected<br>H5: Fail to Reject | β =0.369, p<0.05 |

**Source: Survey Data (2021)**

Table 4.10 indicates, among the five factors identified in this model, price is the highest influencer of the dependent variable and thereby affects customers purchase decision in Ethiopian airlines during this covid-19 pandemic. The next influential variable is travel restrictions, followed by being vaccinated and virtual technology respectively. Fear of infection is not statistically significant to affect purchase decision in this model since most countries are opening their boarders, most of the people have taken the vaccination fully and precautions taken inside the cabin of the aircraft is eminently safe.

In addition to the above mentioned factors, which have been confirmed significant through regression analysis, there are other factors influencing purchase decision of customers of Ethiopian airlines during the covid-19 pandemic. Next, we will see the other factors influencing customer purchase decision.

## 4.5 Underlying variables influencing customers' purchase decision based on Respondents' Profile

To examine and verify if there is a difference between the demographic profile of passengers and the factors they consider as being important in influencing their purchase decisions, two inferential statistics techniques were employed. These are independent t-test and ANOVA which

help to compare demographic characteristics and investigate how they are related with the other five independent variables.

Thus, t- test was used to for gender independent variable and ANOVA test was used for the rest of the predictor variables.

### 4.5.1 Factors influencing customers' decision based on Gender

As shown in table 4.11, the result of independent sample t-test shows that factors travel restriction and virtual technology are perceived to convince male customers' more than female customers of Ethiopian airlines. The reciprocal is true for the rest of the variables i.e., being vaccinated, fear of infection and price. This shows that the factors that are perceived to be important in forming purchase intention of female and male subjects are almost different. They also shop differently and in general, have different attitudes about shopping.

**Table 4.11 Independent sample t-test between gender and independent variables**

**Group statistics**

| | Gender of Respondents | N | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Travel Restriction | Male | 257 | 4.2647 | .27607 | .06768 |
| | Female | 115 | 4.2146 | .43768 | .08787 |
| Virtual Technology | Male | 257 | 4.2435 | .34567 | .02787 |
| | Female | 115 | 3.8987 | .66754 | .06786 |
| Being Vaccinated | Male | 257 | 4.1835 | .42144 | .07854 |
| | Female | 115 | 4.4167 | .42974 | .04480 |
| Fear of Infection | Male | 257 | 4.1871 | .35965 | .02157 |
| | Female | 115 | 4.4928 | .39372 | .04105 |
| Price | Male | 257 | 4.1398 | .27567 | .02709 |
| | Female | 115 | 4.3789 | .38787 | .02456 |

**Source: Survey Data (2021)**

Gender has statistically significant effect on Purchase decision.

### 4.5.2 Factors influencing customers' decision based on age

The result of the analysis showed that there is significant difference between age group of respondents with regard to all factors except virtual technology. Different age group of passengers will have different purchase decision and selection criteria. The airline can do significant customization on target segments based on the results and further research.

**Table4.12 One Way ANOVA between age and independent variables**

**ANOVA**

| | | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Travel Restriction | Between Groups | 1.376 | 2 | .287 | 3.167 | .001 |
| | Within Groups | 55.575 | 370 | .237 | | |
| | Total | 56.752 | 372 | | | |
| Virtual Technology | Between Groups | 1.698 | 2 | .079 | .156 | .579 |
| | Within Groups | 71.368 | 370 | .195 | | |
| | Total | 73.066 | 372 | | | |
| Being Vaccinated | Between Groups | 5.852 | 2 | 2.103 | 13.543 | .000 |
| | Within Groups | 51.286 | 370 | .163 | | |
| | Total | 57.138 | 372 | | | |
| Fear of Infection | Between Groups | 11.430 | 2 | 3.690 | 31.010 | .001 |
| | Within Groups | 44.966 | 370 | .123 | | |
| | Total | 56.396 | 372 | | | |
| Price | Between Groups | 3.572 | 2 | 1.486 | 6.823 | .001 |
| | Within Groups | 73.666 | 370 | .201 | | |
| | Total | 77.238 | 372 | | | |
| Purchase Decision | Between Groups | 4.791 | 2 | 1.429 | 6.723 | .009 |
| | Within Groups | 73.666 | 370 | .201 | | |
| | Total | 78.457 | 372 | | | |

**Source: Survey Data (2021)**

### 4.5.3 Factors influencing customers' decision based on income

The result of the analysis presented in Table 4.13, shows that there is a difference among all the four income categories. Those decisions made by the customers will vary based on the differences of income earned respectively. This is due to the fact that customers' decision to prefer one airline from the other could be based on self-esteem, life style, personal values and personal status as a result of the level of income earned and status level.

**Table4.13 One Way ANOVA between income and independent variables**

**ANOVA**

| | | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Travel Restriction | Between Groups<br>Within Groups<br>Total | 7.574<br>49.276<br>56.750 | 2<br>370<br>372 | 1.784<br>.127 | 21.036 | .001 |
| Virtual Technology | Between Groups<br>Within Groups<br>Total | 4.640<br>66.909<br>71.549 | 2<br>370<br>372 | 1.547<br>.183 | 8.460 | .002 |
| Being Vaccinated | Between Groups<br>Within Groups<br>Total | 7.267<br>61.816<br>69.083 | 2<br>370<br>372 | 2.723<br>.178 | 16.183 | .000 |
| Fear of Infection | Between Groups<br>Within Groups<br>Total | 8.7000<br>47.339<br>56.095 | 2<br>370<br>372 | 2.900<br>.118 | 23.168 | .000 |
| Price | Between Groups<br>Within Groups<br>Total | 2.217<br>32.453<br>34.670 | 2<br>370<br>372 | .739<br>.089 | 8.336 | .000 |
| Purchase Decision | Between Groups<br>Within Groups<br>Total | 4.627<br>62.839<br>67.466 | 2<br>370<br>372 | 1.931<br>.174 | 5.132 | .000 |

**Source: Survey Data (2021)**

## 4.5.4 Factors influencing customers' decision based on travel experience

According to the ANOVA result, disparity between respondents was visible due to the various years of travel experience using Ethiopian airlines services and products. So travel experience influences customers' decision to buy air tickets from Ethiopian airlines. This is because the more passengers have a travel experience, the easier it is to differentiate and compare services and products of all competitors for these savvy customers.

**Table4.14 One Way ANOVA between travel experience and independent variables**

**ANOVA**

| | | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Travel Restriction | Between Groups | 10.249 | 1 | 6.124 | 37.465 | .000 |
| | Within Groups | 48.803 | 371 | .133 | | |
| | Total | 59.052 | 372 | | | |
| Virtual Technology | Between Groups | 11.303 | 1 | 5.652 | 34.428 | .000 |
| | Within Groups | 60.246 | 371 | .164 | | |
| | Total | 71.549 | 372 | | | |
| Being Vaccinated | Between Groups | 13.218 | 1 | 7.077 | 46.708 | .000 |
| | Within Groups | 55.610 | 371 | .152 | | |
| | Total | 68.828 | 372 | | | |
| Fear of Infection | Between Groups | 8.279 | 1 | 3.478 | 32.572 | .000 |
| | Within Groups | 47.044 | 371 | .178 | | |
| | Total | 55.323 | 372 | | | |
| Price | Between Groups | 1.568 | 1 | 1.114 | 7.542 | .000 |
| | Within Groups | 23.465 | 371 | .076 | | |
| | Total | 25.033 | 372 | | | |
| Purchase Decision | Between Groups | 9.876 | 1 | 5.786 | 13.641 | .000 |
| | Within Groups | 61.879 | 371 | .268 | | |
| | Total | 71.755 | 372 | | | |

**Source: Survey Data (2021)**

### 4.5.5 Factors influencing customers' decision based on educational background

ANOVA result in table 4.15 shows that there is statistical significance variance between the respondents' educational level. This indicates that educational level influences customers purchase decision. This is due to the fact that the more knowledgeable the customer is, the more information search, compare and contrast inputs will be used to verify and choose the available options accordingly.

**Table4.15 One Way ANOVA between Educational background and independent variables**

**ANOVA**

| | | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Travel Restriction | Between Groups | 2.782 | 2 | 1.124 | 7.364 | .000 |
| | Within Groups | 45.365 | 370 | .151 | | |
| | Total | 48.147 | 372 | | | |
| Virtual Technology | Between Groups | 8.869 | 2 | 3.046 | 13.659 | .000 |
| | Within Groups | 63.412 | 370 | .111 | | |
| | Total | 72.281 | 372 | | | |
| Being Vaccinated | Between Groups | 9.185 | 2 | 3.062 | 18.498 | .000 |
| | Within Groups | 59.680 | 370 | .175 | | |
| | Total | 68.865 | 372 | | | |
| Fear of Infection | Between Groups | 2.776 | 2 | .421 | 4.534 | .001 |
| | Within Groups | 28.581 | 370 | .092 | | |
| | Total | 31.357 | 372 | | | |
| Price | Between Groups | 8.017 | 2 | .654 | 7.245 | .000 |
| | Within Groups | 35.399 | 370 | .072 | | |
| | Total | 44.416 | 372 | | | |
| Purchase Decision | Between Groups | 8.061 | 2 | 1.247 | 5.762 | .000 |
| | Within Groups | 76.594 | 370 | .203 | | |
| | Total | 84.655 | 372 | | | |

**Source: Survey Data (2021)**

## 4.5.6 Factors influencing customers' decision based on purpose of travel

The reason to make a travel decision influences purchase decision of the customer. Either a business trip or leisure trip, each travel will have different evaluation criteria to make the trip decision. The parameters include price, special service, on time performance, flexibility of schedules. The results indicate that the purpose of trip has significant difference on the passengers' purchase decision in all the factors except travel restriction.

**Table4.16One Way ANOVA between travel purpose and independent variables**

**ANOVA**

| | | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Travel Restriction | Between Groups | 2.229 | 3 | .267 | 2.578 | .092 |
| | Within Groups | 49.977 | 369 | .276 | | |
| | Total | 52.206 | 372 | | | |
| Virtual Technology | Between Groups | 11.709 | 3 | 3.857 | 27.878 | .000 |
| | Within Groups | 56.674 | 369 | .158 | | |
| | Total | 68.383 | 372 | | | |
| Being Vaccinated | Between Groups | 3.891 | 3 | .287 | 6.211 | .001 |
| | Within Groups | 41.876 | 369 | .435 | | |
| | Total | 45.767 | 372 | | | |
| Fear of Infection | Between Groups | 2.626 | 3 | .456 | 5.225 | .001 |
| | Within Groups | 43.743 | 369 | .189 | | |
| | Total | 46.369 | 372 | | | |
| Price | Between Groups | 2.992 | 3 | .533 | 3.446 | .003 |
| | Within Groups | 33.462 | 369 | .181 | | |
| | Total | 36.454 | 372 | | | |
| Purchase Decision | Between Groups | 5.889 | 3 | 1.989 | 16.787 | .000 |
| | Within Groups | 69.989 | 369 | .275 | | |
| | Total | 75.878 | 372 | | | |

**Source: Survey Data (2021)**

## 4.5.7 Factors influencing customers' decision based on marital status

Based on the findings from the survey data, respondents in a different marital status were influenced differently and same was verified by the statistical measures. This is mainly related to their spending pattern and frequency will change before and after marriage and thereby affect their purchase decision and to select from among the available brand. In addition, married people give more value to family and may avoid travel during this covid-19 and single people give more value to friends. So such disparity will definitely induce customers to make decision as a result of being in different categories of marital statuses.

**Table4.17 One Way ANOVA between marital Status and independent variables**

**ANOVA**

| | | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Travel Restriction | Between Groups | 6.314 | 1 | 4.569 | 15.989 | .000 |
| | Within Groups | 48.989 | 371 | .141 | | |
| | Total | 55.303 | 372 | | | |
| Virtual Technology | Between Groups | 10.399 | 1 | 2.689 | 19.383 | .000 |
| | Within Groups | 59.991 | 371 | .178 | | |
| | Total | 70.390 | 372 | | | |
| Being Vaccinated | Between Groups | 8.780 | 1 | 2.890 | 29.897 | .000 |
| | Within Groups | 40.445 | 371 | .110 | | |
| | Total | 49.225 | 372 | | | |
| Fear of Infection | Between Groups | 1.998 | 1 | 1.398 | 13.898 | .000 |
| | Within Groups | 31.999 | 371 | .099 | | |
| | Total | 33.997 | 372 | | | |
| Price | Between Groups | 1.991 | 1 | .996 | 11.181 | .000 |
| | Within Groups | 32.679 | 371 | .089 | | |
| | Total | 34.670 | 372 | | | |
| Purchase Decision | Between Groups | 6.854 | 1 | 3.427 | 17.564 | .000 |
| | Within Groups | 71.603 | 371 | .195 | | |
| | Total | 78.457 | 372 | | | |

**Source: Survey Data (2021)**

## 4.6 Discussion of Results

This paper has particularly tried to see five factors that affect passengers' purchase decision as proposed by and adopted from the works of different research papers that have effects on individual customers of Ethiopian airlines in making purchase decision from Ethiopian airlines during covid-19 period. As per the findings of the research, four factors were found to significantly affect the individual customers purchase decision. These factors were travel restriction, virtual technology, being vaccinated and Price. The other variable which is fear of infection has no significant influence and it wasn't statistically significant. This is due to the fact that countries are opening their boarders, strict covid-19 protocol implementation inside the cabin, availability of vaccines, travel insurance availability from operators, etc.

According to the regression analysis, this model has identified variables which comprise 67.2% effect on the dependent variables. This reveals that there are other variables which are out of this

model affecting the dependent variable (purchase decision). The percentage of the variables which are not included in this model is 32.8%

The hypotheses were also addressed in the analysis. The null hypothesis was rejected and the alternate hypothesis failed to be rejected for four variables i.e. travel restriction, virtual technology, being vaccinated and price. The reciprocal was true for one variable i.e. fear of infection.

The findings of the T-test and ANOVA results also showed that the independent factors affecting passengers' purchase decision have differences among the different demographic profiles of the customers. The T-Test revealed that male respondents were more affected by travel restriction and virtual technology. And female respondents were more affected by the being vaccinated, fear of infection and price as compared to the male respondents. The ANOVA findings was telling us that passengers in different age group, income level, educational background, purpose of travel, travel experience and marital status are affected differently indicating different reaction to make decision to purchase products and or services.

My thesis has similarity with other literatures like the study of Airneth (2008).

Finally, all the research objectives and questions which were raised in the first chapter of the study were addressed based on the result and finding of the study and the questions are stated below:

- How does travel restriction influence the purchase decision of Ethiopian airlines customers?
  - According to the study, it is confirmed that travel restriction has significant effect on the purchase decision of Ethiopian airlines customers.

- How does virtual technology influence the purchase decision of Ethiopian airlines customers??
  - It is confirmed by the study that virtual technology has significant effect on the purchase decision of Ethiopian airlines customers.

- How does being vaccinated influence the purchase decision of Ethiopian airlines customers?
  - It is confirmed by the study that being vaccinated has significant effect on the purchase decision of Ethiopian airlines customers.

- How does fear of infection influence the purchase decision of Ethiopian airlines customers?
  - It is validated by the study that fear of infection during the flight has no significant effect on the purchase decision of Ethiopian airlines customers.

- How does price influence the purchase decision of Ethiopian airlines customers?
  - It is confirmed by the study that price has significant effect on the purchase decision of Ethiopian airlines customers.

# CHAPTER FIVE

# SUMMARY, CONCLUTION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section discusses the conclusion, recommendations and direction for future related literature

## 5.1 Summary of Major Findings

After employing both descriptive and inferential statistics, the major findings from the models are indicated below.

- The correlation analysis indicates that all the independent variables (travel restriction, virtual technology, being vaccinated, fear of infection and price) are positively correlated to the dependent variable (purchase decision). In another word, the direction of the relationship for all variables is positive with the dependent variable.
- The findings from the regression statistical figure conveys hat four factors (i.e. travel restriction, virtual technology, being vaccinated and price) out of the five studied independent variables come out to be statistically significantly influencing Ethiopian airlines customers to make air ticket purchase decisions.
- The T-test one variable analysis it's observed that, both female and male customers' reaction to make purchase decision is different across all the independent variables in this model. Female customers are more influenced by independent variables like being vaccinated, fear of infection and price than male customers vice versa for the rest of the variables.
- The ANOVA analysis reflects all the independent factors have different reactions to make purchase decision by all demographic profiles across all the independent variables employed.

## 5.2 Conclusion

This thesis identifies independent variables that are assumed to be significant in affecting the customers purchase decision from Ethiopian airlines during this covid-19 pandemic. These variables include travel restriction, virtual technology, being vaccinated, fear of infection & price

The study tried to meet its objectives addressing the raised research questions by employing different analysis techniques. So as to address its first objective the research through analyzing different prior studies and theories come up with five factors that are believed to affect passengers' purchase decision in the case of Ethiopian airlines.

The following objectives were met through an analysis of regression. A correlation and assumptions for regression tests were employed before moving to the regression analysis. The correlation table also prevailed that there is a positive correlation between a dependent variable and all independent variables. Then a normality test, linearity test and multicollinearity test was conducted to check normal distribution of the data and verify the consistency of the data to run the regression analysis. Regression analysis has identified the four significant variables influencing Ethiopian airlines customers to make a purchase decision during this covid-19 pandemic period. The variables were travel restriction, virtual technology, being vaccinated and price. But fear of infection was statistically insignificant to affect the dependent variable.

The final objective was met by employing one-way independent T-test and ANOVA. Both results showed a significant variation between customers of different gender, age, marital status, income level, purpose of travel, educational background and travel experience are affected different factors differently. From this one can conclude that the purchase decision determinant factors studied on Ethiopian airlines international travelling individuals highly vary across different demographic profiles of customers during the covid-19 pandemic period.

## 5.3 Recommendations

Based on the results, analysis, findings and conclusions made, the below recommendations were given:

- The airline shall invest more on state of art sanitary facilities on its hub and on board all aircrafts.
- The airline shall also avail discounted packages inclusive of tour, hotel, ground transport and air ticket to induce travel during this covid-19 period.

- Continuous improvement on the full-fledged mobile application through designing an option for passengers to exchange, reroute, and refund their tickets without going physically or calling call centres using the mobile application. Thus, full automation of the end to end process and thereby reducing agents and rental costs for ticket offices in Addis Ababa and regional offices. Automating the processes is very important within the concept of virtual technologies.

- The airline must focus on the demographic differences of its customers so as to arrange a service offering that fits to the needs and requirements of these different segments of international travellers.

- Researches shall be conducted by a designated department, which ensures uniqueness of the airline and add different ancillaries or product developments and to become proactive in the industry instead of reactive.

## 5.4 Limitations

Time and resource are the limitations of this thesis. And also as per different researches in different times, so many other factors can enhance purchase decision. Of these, the most influential factors include personal contacts, awareness, tangible cues, social influence, time saving etc.

Another limitation of the research is that it didn't take into consideration the political situation in the country during the research period which presumably may have a significant effect on customers purchase decision of their air ticket from the airline under study.

## 5.5 Directions for Further Studies

Taking a larger group of respondents, a different scenario and situation through using focus group discussion, in depth interview, and other tools; other variables can be found out impacting the purchase decision.

The researcher believes it will be wise to study the current political situation and its effect on individuals' choice of airline and purchase decision.

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# APPENDIX

# QUESTIONNAIRE

## ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS

## SCHOOL OF COMMERCE

## POST GRADUATE PROGRAM

Dear Esteemed respondents,

I am Bethelhem Fisseha, a graduate student at Addis Ababa University, School of Commerce, Department of Marketing Management. I am currently conducting research for the completion of my MA thesis with the research topic **"factors affecting passengers' purchase decisions during Covid-19; the case of Ethiopian airlines"**, by taking a survey on Ethiopian airlines international traveling customers. I request your help to spend some minutes of your time by filling the provided questionnaire.

This questionnaire is intended to gather information about the factors customers' perceive to be important in making a decision to buy a product or service from Ethiopian airlines during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The outcome of this study is assumed to benefit the Ethiopian airlines to customize its products and services to meet the needs and wants of its customers especially at this trying time.

Therefore, your cooperation in providing genuine answers to the survey questions is highly appreciated for the success of this project. There is no need of writing your name and any information you provide will be kept confidential.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation in filling the questionnaire.

Name: Bethelhem Fisseha (Ms)

Mobile: +251-913-092-928

Email: bettyfish72@gmail.com

**PART1: DEMOGRAPHICS**

**Please tick ( ✔ ) in the place where it deems appropriate.**

What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

What is your age?

- ☐ 18-35
- ☐ 36 – 45
- ☐ 46 – 55
- ☐ Over 65

What is your marital status?

- ☐ Single
- ☐ Married
- ☐ Divorced
- ☐

What's your monthly average income?

- ☐ Up to ETB 6,000
- ☐ ETB 6,001 to 12,000
- ☐ ETB 12,001 to 18,000
- ☐ More than ETB 18,000

Most of your travels are for the purpose of?

- ☐ Business
- ☐ Tourism
- ☐ Study
- ☐ Others

What is your highest level of education?

- ☐ High school and below
- ☐ Diploma
- ☐ Bachelor's
- ☐ Graduate Studies

Travel experience with Ethiopian airlines?

- ☐ Less than 5 Years
- ☐ Between 5 to 10 Years
- ☐ For over 10 Years

**PART II**

**Please tick ( ✔ ) as applicable.**

**5= Strongly Agree 4= Agree 3=Neutral 2= Disagree 1= Strongly Disagree**

| | | SD(1) | D(2) | N(3) | A(4) | SA(5) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **TRAVEL RESTRICTION** | | | | | | |
| 1 | ET implements all local and government requirements and restrictions strictly. | | | | | |
| 2 | ET advises all the quarantine measures to destinations at the time of booking. | | | | | |
| 3 | ET advises all the self-isolation requirements to destinations. | | | | | |
| **VIRTUAL TECHNOLOGY** | | | | | | |
| 4 | I can book and pay online without a need to come to airline customer contact offices. | | | | | |
| 5 | I can check-in online and drop bags without contacting any airline staffs. | | | | | |
| 6 | ET has a web based, mobile phone application and 24/7 call center to answer all of my travel queries. | | | | | |
| 7 | ET's contactless technologies reduce my fear of being infected while travelling international travels. | | | | | |
| **BEING VACCINATED** | | | | | | |
| 8 | ET has no restrictions of being vaccinated as a requirement to travel. | | | | | |
| 9 | ET staffs like ground handling staffs, cockpit crews and cabin crews are vaccinated. | | | | | |
| 10 | I feel safe as the airline is free airline from covid-19 infection. | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **FEAR OF INFECTION** | | | | | | |
| 11 | ET has full insurance coverage in case of being infected during the flight. | | | | | |
| 12 | ET flight cabins are fully sanitized and disinfected before departures, at transits and at destinations. | | | | | |
| 13 | ET's strict implementation of the physical distancing during the flight by removing the middle seats in between and by selling only half of the seats of the aircraft capacity. | | | | | |
| **PRICE** | | | | | | |
| 14 | Prices are fair at this covid-19 period. | | | | | |
| 15 | Prices are affordable at this covid-19 period compared to other competitors. | | | | | |
| 16 | I get discounts as applicable during this covid-19 period. | | | | | |
| **PURCHASE DECISION** | | | | | | |
| 17 | I always choose Ethiopian airlines to buy my tickets during covid-19 pandemic. | | | | | |
| 18 | I prefer Ethiopian airlines over the other competitor airlines to buy my air tickets during this covid-19 period. | | | | | |
| 19 | Ethiopian Airlines is my number one option whenever I purchase air tickets during this covid-19 period. | | | | | |

***Thank you!***

**አዲስ አበባ ዩኒቨርሲቲ የንግድና ኢኮኖሚክስ ኮሌጅ**

**የንግድ ትምህርት ቤት**

**የድህረ ምረቃ ፕሮግራም**

ውድ የተከበራችሁ መላሾች

እኔ ቤተልሔም ፍስሐ ነኝ በአዲስ አበባ ዩኒቨርሲቲ የንግድ ትምህርት ቤት የማርኬቲንግ ማኔጅመንት ዲፓርትመንት ተመራቂ ተማሪ። በአሁኑ ጊዜ የኤምኤ ተሲስን ለማጠናቀቅ ምርምር እያደረግኩ ነው "በኮቪድ-19 ወቅት የተሳፋሪዎችን የግዢ ውሳኔዎች የሚነኩ ምክንያቶች; የኢትዮጵያ አየር መንገድ ጉዳይ" ፣በኢትዮጵያ አየር መንገድ ዓለም አቀፍ ተጓዥ ደንበኞች ላይ የዳሰሳ ጥናት በማድረግ። የቀረበውን መጠይቅ በመሙላት ጥቂት ደቂቃዎችን ጊዜህን እንድታሳልፍ እርዳታህን እጠይቃለሁ።

ይህ መጠይቅ በኮቪድ-19 ወረርሽኝ ወቅት ከኢትዮጵያ አየር መንገድ ምርትን ወይም አገልግሎትን ለመግዛት ውሳኔ ለማድረግ ደንበኞቻቸው አስፈላጊ ናቸው ብለው ስለሚያምኑባቸው ምክንያቶች መረጃ ለመሰብሰብ የታሰበ ነው።

የዚህ ጥናት ውጤት የኢትዮጵያ አየር መንገድ ምርቶቹንና አገልግሎቶቹን በማበጀት የደንበኞቹን ፍላጎትና ፍላጎት በተለይም በዚህ አስቸጋሪ ወቅት ማሟያ ማድረጉ ይጠቅማል ተብሎ ይታሰባል።

ስለዚህ ለዳሰሳ ጥናቱ ጥያቄዎች እውነተኛ መልስ ለመስጠት ያደረጋችሁት ትብብር ለዚህ ፕሮጀክት ስኬት ከፍተኛ አድናቆት አለው። ስምዎን መጻፍ አያስፈልግም እና ማንኛውም የሚያቀርቡት መረጃ በሚስጥር ይጠበቃል.

መጠይቁን ለመሙላት ለምታደርጉት ትብብር በቅድሚያ እናመሰግናለን።

ስም፡ ቤተልሄም ፍስሀ

ሞባይል: + 251-913-092-928

ኢሜል፡ bettyfish72@gmail.com

**ክፍል1: የግለሰብመረጃ**

**እባክዎ ምርጫዎ ላይ (✔) ምልክቱን ይጠቀሙ**

**ፆታ**?

| | |
|---|---|
| | ወንድ |
| | ሴት |

**እድሜ**?

| | |
|---|---|
| | ከ18-35 |
| | ከ36 – 45 |
| | ከ46 – 55 |
| | ከ55 በላይ |

**የጋቢቻ ሁኔታ**?

| | |
|---|---|
| | ያላገባ |
| | ያገባ |
| | የፈታ |
| | |

**ወርሃዊ አማካኝ የተጣራ ገቢ**?

| | |
|---|---|
| | እስከብር 6,000 |
| | ከብር 6,001-12,000 |
| | ከ ብር 12,001-18,000 |
| | ከ 18,000 ብር በላይ |

**ብዙዉን ጊዜ የሚበሩበት ዓላማ**?

| | |
|---|---|
| | ንግድ |
| | ጉብኝት |
| | ጥናት |
| | ሌሎች |

**የትምህርት ደረጃ**?

| | |
|---|---|
| | 2ተኛ ደረጃ እና በታች |
| | ዲፕሎማ |
| | የመጀመሪያ ዲግሪ |
| | ከዲግሪ በላይ |

**በኢትዮጵያ አየር መንገድ ሲጠቀሙ የቆዩባቸዉ ዓመታት**?

| | |
|---|---|
| | ከ 5 ዓመት በታች |
| | ከ5-10 ዓመት |
| | ከ10 ዓመት በላይ |

**ክፍል II**

**እባክዎ ምርጫዎን የ (✔) ምልክት በመጠቀም ከስር ያሉትን መጠይቆች ይሙሉ**

**5=በጣም እስማማለሁ 4=እስማማለሁ 3=ሀሳብ አልሰጥም 2=አልስማማም 1=በጣም አልስማማም**

| | | በአል(1) | አል(2) | ሀአ(3) | እ(4) | በእ(5) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **የጉዞ እገዳ** | | | | | | |
| 1 | የኢትዮጵያ አየር መንገድ የሀገር ዉስጥ እና የዉጪ ሀገር የመንግስታትን መመሪያ እና ህጎች አክብሮ ይሰራል | | | | | |
| 2 | አስፈላጊ የሆኑ የመዳረሻ ሀገራትን ደንቦች በምዝገባ ወቅት ያስረዳኛል | | | | | |
| 3 | በመዳረሻ ሀገራት ላይ ራስን ለይቶ ስለማቆያ መረጃ ይሰጠኛል | | | | | |
| **የበይነ መረብ ግንኙነት** | | | | | | |
| 4 | በኢትዮጵያ አየር መንገድ በቀላሉ ወደ ትኬት ቢሮ መሄድ ሳይኖርብኝ ምዝገባ መያዝ እና ክፍያ መፈፀም እችላለሁ | | | | | |
| 5 | በቀላሉ ኦንላይን ቼክኢን አድርጌ ያለምንም የአየር መንገድ ሰራተኛ እርዳታ ሻንጣዬን ማሳፈር እችላለሁ | | | | | |
| 6 | አየር መንገዱ ላሉኝ ለየትኛዉም የጉዞ ጥያቄዎች በሰምንት 24ሰዓት በዌብ በሞባይል መተግበሪያ አገልግሎት ይሰጠኛል | | | | | |
| 7 | የተሟላ የዘመኑን ቴክኖሎጂ በመጠቀም ከንክኪ ዉጪ በሆኑ መሳሪያዎች በመጠቀም ከብክለት ይጠብቀኛል | | | | | |
| **መከተብ** | | | | | | |
| 8 | የኢትዮጵያ አየር መንገድ ለበረራ የግድ መከተብ አለባቹ የሚል ህግ የለዉም | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9 | የድርጅቱ የኤርፖርት ሠራተኞች የበረራ ሠራተኞች እና የበረራ አስተናጋጆች የተከተቡ ናቸዉ | | | | | |
| 10 | አየር መንገዱ ከበሽታው ነፃ እንደሆነ የደህንነት ስሜት ይሰማኛል | | | | | |
| **በበሽታው የመያዝ ስጋት** | | | | | | |
| 11 | አየር መንገዱ በበረራ ወቅት ድንገት በበሽታዉ ብያዝ የጤና መድህን ይሰጠኛል | | | | | |
| 12 | ሁሉም አዉሮፕላኖች ከመነሳታቸዉ በፊት በመካከል ሲያርፉ እና በመዳረሻ ቦታዎች ከበሽታዉ ፅዳት ያደርጋል። | | | | | |
| 13 | ጥብቅ የሆነ የአካል ርቀት መርህን በመከተል በሁሉም አዉሮፕላኖች ላይ የመካከል መቀመጫ በማስወገድ እና የጭነት መጠኑን በግማሽ ቀንሷል | | | | | |
| **ዋጋ** | | | | | | |
| 14 | በዚህ ከባድ የኮቪድ19 ጊዜም እንኳን ቢሆን ዋጋው ተመጣጣኝ ነዉ | | | | | |
| 15 | በዚህ አስቸጋሪ የኮቪድ19 ጊዜም እንኳን ቢሆን ዋጋዉ ከሌሎች አየር መንገድ አንፃር ተመጣጣኝ ነዉ | | | | | |
| 16 | በዚህ አስቸጋሪ የኮቪድ19 ጊዜም እንኳን ቢሆን አስፈላጊ የሆኑ ቅናሾችን አገኛለሁ | | | | | |
| **የግዥ ዉሳኔ** | | | | | | |
| 17 | በየትኛዉም ጊዜ ቢሆን የኢትዮጵያ አየር መንገድ የአለም አቀፍ በረራ ትኬት ሲያስፈልገኝ ምርጫዬ ነዉ:፡ | | | | | |
| 18 | በዚህ አስቸጋሪ የኮቪድ 19 ጊዜም እንኳን ቢሆን ከሌላ አየር መንገዶች ሳነፃፅረዉ የኢትዮጵያ አየር መንገድን በረራ ትኬት | | | | | |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | ለመግዛት እመርጣለሁ። | | | | | |
| 19 | በዚህ አስቸጋሪ የኮቪድ19 ጊዜም እንኳን ቢሆን ኢትዮጵያ አየር መንገድ የአለም አቀፍ በረራ ትኬት ለመግዛት አንደኛ ምርጫዬ ነዉ። | | | | | |

**አመሰግናለሁ።።**