

**IBN HALDUN UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
DEPARTMENTS OF AIR TRANSPORT MANAGEMENT**

MASTER THESIS

**PASSENGERS' PREFERENCES AND THEIR
ASSOCIATION WITH PERCEPTION ON COVID-19
MEASURES IN AIRLINE MARKET**

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ISTANBUL, 2021

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by

YUSUF KURT

**A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in
Air Transport Management**

THESIS SUPERVISOR

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ISTANBUL, 2021

APPROVAL PAGE

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Science in Air Transport Management.

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ACADEMIC HONESTY ATTESTATION

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

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ÖZ

HAVAYOLU PAZARINDA YOLCU TERCİHLERİ İLE COVID-19
ÖNLEMLERİNE İLİŞKİN ALGININ İLİŞKİSİ

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İnsanlar sürekli olarak ihtiyaçlarına göre lüks mallar ve temel şeyler olmak üzere birçok ürün satın almaktadırlar. Tüketiciler herhangi bir satın alma işlemi gerçekleştirirken çeşitli tarzlar, adımlar, yaklaşımlar ve ilkelerden oluşan bir satın alma sürecinden geçmektedirler. Tüketici davranışının amacı, tüketicilerin satın alma öncesi, sırası ve sonrasındaki davranışlarını öğrenmektir.

Bugün, uçmak için bir havayolu seçerken COVID-19 faktörü ve algısı çok önemli bir rol oynamaktadır. Pandemi tüm dünyaya yayıldığı için birçok kurum ve özellikle havayolu şirketleri COVID-19 salgınına karşı bir dizi önleyici tedbir geliştirdi. Bu çalışmada, havayolu pazarında tüketici satın alma davranışı ve bunun COVID-19 önlemleri ile ilişkisi incelenmiştir. Yolcuların havayolu hizmetleri ve COVID-19 önlemleri hakkındaki algısını değerlendirmek için bir anket tasarlanmış; COVID-19 algısı ile havayolu hizmetlerinin çeşitli özellikleri ve etkili seçim faktörleri arasındaki ilişki çalışılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Tüketici Davranışı, Satın Alma Kararı, Havayolları, COVID 19 Tedbirleri

ABSTRACT

PASSENGERS' PREFERENCES AND THEIR ASSOCIATION WITH PERCEPTION ON COVID-19 MEASURES IN AIRLINE MARKET

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People are continuously buying items whether these are luxury goods or basic items according to their needs. While making any purchase, consumers are going through a process of purchasing that consists of various approaches. The objective of studies of consumer behaviour is to learn the behaviour of the consumers before, during, and after such purchases.

Today, the COVID-19 factor and the perception of the impact of the pandemic plays a crucial role in the choice of which airline to fly. Since COVID-19 spread all over the world, many entities, and especially airline companies, have developed a set of preventive measures against COVID-19 outbreaks. In this work, consumer purchasing behaviour in airline market and its association with COVID-19 measures have been studied. The relationship of the COVID-19 perception and several characteristics of airline services and effective choice factors are investigated from a practical point of view. To this aim, a survey has been designed to evaluate the perception of the passengers on airline services and COVID-19 measures.

Keywords: Consumer Behaviour, Purchase Decision, Airlines, COVID-19 Measures

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The aviation industry has witnessed the biggest booms from the mid-1990s to the beginning of the millennium. Apart from other influencing factors, there has been an increasing demand for air travel that has been triggering the growth of the airlines at that time. However, since the beginning of 2000, the rapid growth of the airline industry slowed due to several crucial events. The major events that impacted on the aviation industry include the terror attacks that happened on 11 September 2001, the SARS virus in 2003, the recent COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, and the economic instability that has caused difficulties in the industry (Cento, 2009. p. 4).

During the growth years of the industry, low-cost carriers started dominating in most markets due to their business model, and they were making a good profit compared to other airline companies. Technological improvements during these years assisted in the growth of the industry and new business processes such as network management, yield management, e-commerce, e-services were also initiated. The business model of the low-cost carriers has become very popular, and nowadays, such businesses are even competing directly with full-service carriers (Cento, 2009. p. 4).

Being one of the key elements of the travel and tourism industry, air transportation is contributing to the world economy. The aviation industry employs millions of people both directly and indirectly. Direct job opportunities that are produced by the industry include jobs such as cabin crew, check-in staff, maintenance as well as employees at the airports, for example, employees at airport retail stores, airport restaurants, and hotels at the airports, and employees in aircraft manufacturing. The indirect jobs that are available due to the aviation industry include the purchases of goods and services (Hanlon, 2007. p. 1-3).

One of the most important principles in the airline industry is pricing. In general, the price factor is one of the key elements in purchasing, therefore, consumers consider it as a top priority. Airlines are making changes in their pricing strategy to survive in a highly competitive environment. A price of a ticket might show some changes based on certain criteria. So, the price might be changed according to the load factor, and according to the ticket-specific characteristics. The price differences might occur according to the date of purchase following the departure date, whether departure and arrival dates are falling into peak periods or normal times, load factor at the time of purchase. At the same time, online ticket purchases tend to be less expensive than offline purchases. There are also some market-specific variables along with cost-specific variables that have impacts on the pricing. These variables are hub presence, airline's market share, market concentration, slot-controlled airports, distance, flight frequency, average per capita income at endpoint cities, the temperature difference between the origin and destination, and a tourism index defined as the ratio of accommodation to personal income at the destination city (Peoples, 2012. p. 28).

The study of consumer behaviour investigates the ways that consumers buy and use goods and services. In this sense, consumers are going through particular steps and relevant factors are affecting the purchase decision of the consumers. Also, the reaction of the consumers towards related advertisements, prices, and other promotional materials are among the learning objectives of those who study consumer behaviour. Whenever consumers feel a need and they are looking for ways of satisfying this need the purchasing process is starting, and the consumer is going through the steps of the purchasing. Many factors, product dimensions, advertisements, promotions, recommendations, past experiences, and other variables affect the purchase decision. With that, the decision-making process for the consumer starts and ends with the measurement of the actual purchase which is called post-purchase level. The length of the decision-making process depends on the nature of the purchase that is going to be made and the product as well. From a managerial perspective, it is crucial for marketers to understand how consumers make these purchase decisions. Marketers put a lot of effort to understand consumers and their actions at different levels of the process. By understanding consumers properly, companies are able to offer the right products and services at the right time and place (East et al., 2017. p. 1-3).

1.1. Objective of the Study

Companies need to understand the behavioural patterns of the consumers while consumers are choosing and buying products and services. Different behaviour patterns are experienced during the purchase and consumer behaviour changes depending on the product or service that is going to be purchased. The main objective of this study is to understand factors that affect the purchasing process and decision of the consumers. In other words, the aspects of the product that consumers take into consideration while making a purchase and the most preferred factors are investigated in this study

Also, the perception of the COVID-19 measures implemented by airlines among consumers will be investigated. More precisely, the most preferred features by consumers and their relationship with the COVID-19 precautions have been researched.

1.2. Scope of the Study

The study focuses on consumer purchasing behaviour, the behaviour that is experienced during buying a flight ticket and choosing an airline brand. Consumer purchasing behaviour is studied based on secondary data from consumer perspective. Factors affecting consumer purchasing behaviour are grouped as social and cultural, psychological, personal, and demographic factors. All these factors are evaluated in the study and each one is discussed separately.

The purchasing intention of a consumer is affected by several factors, therefore, there is sometimes a difference between intended or desired purchase and actual purchase. The purchase can be changed even at the time of purchasing, therefore, a consumer can change his or her mind in the last minute. These factors and the ways that they are diffusing have been studied broadly within the scope of this work.

The product that has been considered in the study is a flight ticket and the researcher has studied the factors that affect the decision while buying a ticket and choosing an

airline, respectively. Accordingly, a literature review has been conducted to determine the factors that affect the choice of consumers.

Besides a theoretical overview of the topic, a survey has been conducted to understand what factors are considered relevant by consumers. Through the survey, the perception of the consumers about the COVID-19 measures and at the same time, the association of the COVID-19 precautions in accordance with the most preferred factors while making a purchase decision has been uncovered.

1.3. Hypotheses

The objective of the study is to understand consumer purchasing behaviour during buying a flight ticket and choosing an airline accordingly. Another important issue is to clarify the degree of influence of these aspects while buying a flight ticket. Since the spread of the COVID-19 outbreak has changed travel patterns, the relationship of the COVID-19 with the relevant factors for purchase has been tested. Four hypotheses were developed to answer the research questions and to draw relevant conclusions.

H1: The five most preferred factors while purchasing a flight ticket are related to the COVID-19 precautions taken by a particular airline.

H2: The employment status of passengers significantly affects the perception on COVID-19 measures of the passengers.

H3: The income level of passengers significantly affects the passengers' perception on COVID-19 measures.

H4: The education level of passengers affects the passengers' perception on COVID-19 measures.

These hypotheses are checked based on the survey carried out within this research. The survey consisting of ten questions was designed and shared with potential respondents via an online survey prepared on SurveyMonkey. The respondents are

selected based on convenience sampling due to COVID-19 conditions prevailing in the sector. To check these hypotheses, SPSS has been used to make the relevant statistical inference. Detailed analysis of the survey results is outlined in the fourth Chapter. Lastly, Chapter five concludes the study.



CHAPTER II

PURCHASING BEHAVIOUR AND PURCHASE INTENTION OF CONSUMERS

2.1. Concept of Consumer Purchasing Behaviour

People buy things to satisfy their physical and mental needs and businesses exist to provide for those needs and to distribute goods to fulfil those needs. If the businesses are eager to be successful, they should understand the customers' needs and, therefore, offer the right product, in the right place, at the right time, and at an affordable price for the consumers. This cycle is the basis of all marketing. It is highly significant for the companies to understand the ways that people purchase and consume, however, there is another understanding of consumer behaviour which is important as much as buying power of consumers (Blythe, 2013. p. 3).

All people are consumers, all consumers behave. Consumer behaviour has been defined as below:

Consumer behaviour is the activities people undertake when obtaining, consuming, and disposing of products and services (Blackwell et al. 2001).

This is a widely used definition of consumer behaviour and the definition is analyzed shortly to understand what this term is standing for. Obtaining stands for the process and activities that result in making an actual purchase, but it might not always mean an actual purchase. Because "obtaining" includes searching for information about products and services and screening available options before buying any product. On the other hand, the same "obtaining" can refer to the method of buying a product such as cash payment, credit card, bank loan, and so forth. Consuming covers the ways people use the products they purchase. Basic components of consumption are where the product is consumed, when, and how the product is consumed (Blythe, 2013. p. 5).

Consumption can be characterized as both positive and negative based on the product consumed. For instance, overconsumption of alcohol and drug abuse are negative examples of consumption. In general, consumption is essential for human health and well-being (Richins, 2001).

The process of consumer behaviour is quite complicated, dynamic, and multidimensional, and marketing activities are formulated based on consumer behaviour assumptions. The marketing strategy should be designed in order to sell the product and achieve the objective set. While building the marketing strategy, cost-benefit analysis should be conducted and taken into consideration (Khan, 2007. p. 3). A consumer is the end-user of a product or a service. The consumer is a potential buyer, but actual purchasing cannot be always guaranteed. As mentioned earlier, the consumer is the end-user who buys products or services for personal usage rather than for resale. Consumer behaviour is the decision-making process when people decide to make an actual purchase. The concept of consumer purchasing behaviour identifies the factors that influence buying decisions of people (Doyle, 2011. p. 106).

It is commonly believed that the consumer is the person who identifies a need, searches for the product, and then buys this product to satisfy the need. However, at some point, different individuals can be involved in this process therefore, a buyer and a user of a purchased product can be different. For instance, a laptop can be bought by a parent and a user would be a teenage son or daughter. Such details should be taken into consideration by companies. Also, consumer behaviour is not only about acquiring tangible products but also refers to services and activities such as booking a holiday or attending a gym (Noel, 2009. p. 12).

As a first option, products and services are purchased directly by paying the value of the product. Alternatively, goods and services can be obtained through leasing, barter, or borrowing. Barter is the exchange of products and services in return for other goods and services. Leasing is signing a contract for a specific duration of time to acquire a property, land, or services in return for payment. A satisfied consumer can encourage others to use the same product by sharing a positive review about the product. On the other hand, if the consumer is not satisfied and publishes a negative review about the

product it would definitely affect sales. Consumer behaviour also includes the experience after a product is obtained and used (Noel, 2009. p. 13).

Earlier in the history of the study of consumer behaviour, the classification of the consumers has been based on the variables used in segmentation and targeting of products such as age, gender, occupation, and income. Over time consumers started responding in different ways to marketing, product innovations, pricing, promotions, advertising, and offers and they became more involved in these processes. Hence, the classification of consumers has been reformulated to define consumers more specifically. One of the most cited typologies of consumers is proposed by Gabriel and Lang (1995, 2006) and nine types of consumers have been differentiated. These types and brief descriptions are illustrated in Table 2.1 below. Gabriel and Lang prepared this typology based on the trends and ways that people consume rather than types of people (Szmigin and Piacentini, 2015. p. 23).

Table 2.1. A Typology of Consumers

Consumer type	Description
Chooser	The rational problem-solving consumer, requiring genuine options, finance options, and information
Communicator	Uses goods to communicate: this can be functional as in the use of a burglar alarm to convey status or taste
Explorer	Consumers increasingly have places to explore, for example, from car boot sales to the internet: often we explore with little idea of what, or even if, we wish to buy.
Identity-seeker	Creating and maintaining personal and social identity through consumption
Hedonist/artist	Consumption as pleasure: consumption can fulfil needs for emotional aesthetic pleasure and fantasy
Victim	The exploited consumer: the consumer may be uneducated or unaware of choices, or they may have limited choice because of their socio-economic situation
Rebel	Using products in new ways as a conscious rebellion: this can include consuming differently, or less, or boycotting, and can also refer to active rebellion (joyriding, looting, taking over consumption spaces, etc.)
Activist	Presented historically from the co-operative movement, the value-for-money movement, especially fighting against corporate greed and political activism, seeking more ethical consumption
Citizen	Consumers are also citizens with rights and responsibilities: awareness that consumerism encroaches on areas such as housing, healthcare, and education as well as consumer goods

Individuals make decisions to buy certain products and services that are useful to their health and well-being and at the same time, will have positive impacts on their family and society. While some actions of consumers are harmless, some actions of consumers can cause negative consequences. Consumer behaviours such as excessive

drinking, cigarette smoking, prioritizing money over other values, and exposure to unrealistic goals, beauty, and success are not having positive impacts on human health and are harmful to the family and society. The cultural value placed on money can lead to shoplifting and insurance fraud. Unattainable desires of beauty, success, and goals can create dissatisfaction with the self. These issues are known as the dark side of consumer behaviour (Solomon et al., 2013. p. 23-26).

2.2. Principles of Consumer Purchasing Behaviour

Studying consumer behaviour allows for the understanding of factors that influence people while performing any behaviour during buying, using, and disposing of any product. A key component of successful marketing is to understand and identify the way people think during purchasing. In order to convince people to buy a particular product over hundreds of other products and even encourage them to refer the product to others, it is crucial to know the motivations, decision-making process, and post-purchase behaviour of the consumers. Consumers are the focal point for any business entity while studying marketing. Effective planning of communications, marketing strategy, segmentation, and targeting is coming through a proper understanding of consumer behaviour (Blythe, 2013).

Consumer psychology is not always perceived in a positive way and there are two kinds of approaches to social psychology. While some find it very useful, some consider consumer psychology morally objectionable. The term “The Hidden Persuaders” explains the role of social psychology in modern advertisement. Advertising is a crucial factor in a modern business environment and a company should know its targeted customers closely to apply psychology to advertising wisely and properly (Wanke, 2008. p. 4).

2.3. Factors Affecting Consumer Purchasing Behaviour

Even though the companies offer good products, it does not mean that sales will boom, and all the products will be sold out. Taking into consideration that consumers are loyal to certain brands, therefore, good products cannot always compete with established brands. There are several internal and external factors affecting consumer

purchasing behaviour rather than the product itself. One of the most important factors affecting the consumer buying process is advertising and companies always allocate a high budget for advertising (Kengthon, 2011. p. 1).

Whenever consumers hear or receive information about certain products and services, they start evaluating the features which is followed by the decision-making process. The evaluation process is often influenced by individual and environmental factors consisting of personal and psychological factors, and social and cultural factors respectively. Above mentioned circumstances and the marketing mix are the basic understandings for consumers to evaluate options. In case the result of this process becomes positive, still it does not mean the actual purchase will happen for the given product (Sokolowski, 2011. p. 2).

The marketing mix covers the marketing tools, referred to as 4Ps: product, price, place, and promotion (Kotler and Armstrong, 2010. p. 76). At the same time, there are 4Cs: customer needs and wants, cost to consumer, convenience, and communication from the perspective of the consumer. Proper implementation of 4Cs is crucial for companies to be successful (Sokolowski, 2011. p. 2).

Consumers' tendency of learning about the attributes of products, services, and brands in the market in order to perceive a brand and its internal factors influencing consumer behaviour. The cognition process of consumers related to their perceived brands is based on perceived memories and associated memories related to certain products and services. Social psychodynamics, need, enthusiasm for trial, benefit seeking, and obsessive behavioural patterns formulate the shopping culture of the consumers. Price, available promotions, and perceived value of the products are among the factors that influence the consumer buying process. Once consumers are convinced with the particular product and service, effectiveness, occupation, and income level of the consumer plays a crucial role in purchasing the product and willingness to pay for a product of high value. Attributes of stores and brands such as the assortment of products in the stores, color, music in the store, merchandising display, information about the products, and others motivate the perception of the consumers towards products (Rajagopal, 2019. p. 9-10).

Consumer behaviour is also affected by external impacts including market economy, social values, trends, and corporate policies for consumers. These factors also formulate consumer attitudes and perceptions. Market economic conditions define spending motifs, willingness to consume, pricing and affordability, inclination toward the brand, and product attraction. The consumer economy consisting of prices, interest rates, and credit availability that is determined by the level of income and wealth, highly influences the consumer buying power (Barnes and Olivei, 2017). Generally, consumer behaviour and preferences are affected by economic conditions but not changed. Therefore, consumers reconsider their consumption budget because of economic constraints. In this sense, consumer purchasing behaviour is adjusted according to the income and expenditure ratio (Rajagopal, 2019. p. 35-36).

While talking about the factors affecting consumer behaviour, social and cultural, psychological, personal, and demographic factors have been explained in this chapter.

2.3.1. Social and Cultural Factors

Culture plays an important role in the formulation and identification of consumer behaviour. The understanding of culture encompasses human society, the role that society plays, the behaviour of the society, and the values, customs, and traditions of the society (Lok, 2019). Cultural factors consisting of culture, subculture, and social classification have an important influence on consumer purchasing behaviour. Culture is the factor, which decisively affects the wants and behaviour of a person. A child growing up in any country is exposed to a specific set of values such as achievement and success, progress, freedom, external comfort, humanitarianism, and youthfulness. Marketers should be familiar with the cultural values of each country in order to promote their existing products within the same market and explore new opportunities for the new products (Kotler and Keller, 2012. p. 151-152).

Each culture is divided into smaller subcultures such as nationalities, religions, racial groups, and geographic regions that provide members more specific identity and socialization. Companies initiate customized marketing campaigns for these subcultures that have grown and have required quantities of financial conditions. Almost all human societies are socially classified in the forms of social classes with

members who share common values, interests, and behaviour. Seven ascending levels of social classification have been differentiated in the United States: lower lowers, upper lowers, working-class, middle class, upper middles, lower upper and upper uppers. Each class members are unique in terms of consumer preferences and behaviour (Kotler and Keller, 2012. p. 152).

On the other hand, four kinds of subcultures can be distinguished:

Nationalities such as the Irish, British, Turkish, Italians, and Cubans are established within large communities possessing similar values, ethnic tastes, and choices.

Religious groups such as Catholics, Muslims, and Jews are kinds of subcultures with common cultural views and taboos.

Racial groups such as Blacks and Orientals have different cultural values and behaviour.

Geographical regions such as California, New England, and Deep South represent subcultures with specific lifestyles (Taloo, 2008. p. 202).

Besides cultural factors, there are social factors such as reference groups, family, and social roles and statuses that affect consumer purchasing behaviour.

The groups that a person belongs to and have direct or indirect impacts on their attitudes and behaviour are reference groups. Reference groups are diversified internally based on the degree of interaction of a person with group members. Groups with a direct impact are known as membership groups. Membership groups consist of primary and secondary groups accordingly. Primary groups are family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers with whom the person is in touch closely and informally. Religious, professional, and trade union groups are secondary groups where communication is not happening less frequently and formally. The influence of reference groups appears in three ways: new behaviours and lifestyles are exposed to individuals, they affect behaviour and self-concept, and they create standards that affect product and brand choices. There are groups that people do not belong to but

they can still be influenced by these groups. Aspirational groups are the groups that a person is willing to join. Dissociative groups are rejected by individuals as group values and behaviour are different from theirs. Marketers target the groups and their opinion leaders with the strongest influence. An opinion leader is a person that leads the group and can recommend a product or service (Kotler and Keller, 2012. p. 153).

All of the people belong to different groups such as families, clubs, organizations, and others. Groups play an important role to define the standards of behaviour and at the same time, are a great source of information. Role and status define a person's position in every group. A role is a set of activities that is expected from a person. Each role implies a status. Normally, people choose products according to their role and status, therefore, marketers should take into consideration this relationship (Kotler and Keller, 2012. p. 154-155).

2.3.2. Psychological Factors

The term "Consumer Behaviour" itself is a psychological term. Purchasing is an action of human behaviour. Dimensions like perception, attitude, motivation and involvement, learning, ability, and knowledge are the components of the psychological concept.

Perception: It is the process of receiving, filtering, arranging, and translating the information to understand its meaning. Basically, it is the process of perceiving information through the senses of sight, taste, hearing, smell, or touch. Perception might be different from reality so that there is a perceptual filter that selects information before it is stored in the mind. Selective exposure, selective retention, and selective distortion functions give a broader understanding of perception. Selective exposure is the state of receiving and selecting a piece of information that is beneficial for the current needs of the buyer. For instance, if there is a prospective buyer for LCD TV, the buyer will be responsive to the promotions related to LCD TV once steps into the store. Price discount messages catch the attention of the visitors while they are in the store rather than other messages spread out in the store. Selective retention is the act of perceiving that particular information that a consumer is interested in. While a consumer is exposed to many promotions related to LCD TV sales, but the consumer

will consider the promotions according to his or her preferences. Selective distortion is the event of distorting information that is not suitable for the requirements and beliefs of a consumer (Madaan, 2009. p. 82).

Attitude: It defines the degree of feeling to any event happens in the surrounding. Attitude can be positive, neutral, and negative. Attitudes are the patterns of long-term memory and reflect in the behaviour. Consumers develop a set of attitudes while experiencing or interacting with others. If a customer is regularly using certain products or services and is satisfied with the outcome, then a positive attitude and loyalty toward those products are developed. However, there is a cautious side of the attitudes so that once attitude is built it is difficult to break it down, especially negative ones. Also, customers build positive or negative attitudes to brands based on the shopping history with the same brand. If the attitude is positive the customer is most likely to buy other products of the company. This is called the “halo effect”. It is much easier to build attitudes in an environment of less competition. By increasing competition, the brand should work harder to develop and maintain positive attitudes accordingly (Madaan, 2009. p. 84).

Motivation and involvement: Motivation is derived from the word “Motive” and correlated with the concept of needs and desire. Need is a status of deprivation and leads to the actions to satisfy this need. The level of motivation is balanced with the intensity of the need. The consumer motivations can be divided into several classifications. The first one is economic where the main aim is to save money. It is connected to value perception. Second, hedonistic is the act of getting pleasure. Third, risk-avoiding aims to reduce the level of risk of dissatisfaction after an actual purchase and remain loyal to a brand or a store. Fourth, relational stands for the built relationships with the brand or staff in the store, therefore, the consumer is expecting a VIP treatment to feel special. The last, fifth one is functional which is targeting to diminish the time and effort spent on the purchasing process. Customers are motivated through advertisements, family, and friends to make purchasing decisions. Sales promotions, displays, signage, light, music are the means used to motivate customers to spend more time in the stores and encourage impulse purchasing. Personal selling is a necessary strategy to convert customers from a low involvement situation to a high

involvement situation by creating personal touch and handling all inquiries of customers efficiently (Maadan, 2009. p. 85).

There are three best-known theories of Sigmund Freud, Abraham Maslow, and Frederick Herzberg in the field of human motivation that have different applications for consumer analysis and marketing strategy.

Learning: It is the process of exchanging information by customers which leads to a permanent change in behaviour. Sources of the information can be commercial such as advertisement and non-commercial including family members. Two types of learning are behavioural learning and cognitive learning. Behavioural learning is the result of repetitive actions. During behavioural learning includes learning with the influence of external events. Psychologists who apply behavioural learning do not focus on internal processes. Observable aspects of behaviour are studied in behavioural learning (Solomon et al., 2006. p. 62). Cognitive learning is the result of thought processes and the application of reasoning. Another methodology of learning is observational where people learn by observing the actions of others (Madaan, 2009. p. 86).

Ability: It is the capacity to learn about products. To drive impulse buying, companies should know the capacity of their customers and extend learning materials accordingly. The language used in advertisements and product information are the main dimensions of this factor. Companies should give the opportunity to customers to try the product before making an actual purchase. Personnel selling helps again to expose customers to the product features closely and make purchasing decisions.

Knowledge: It measures the level of familiarity with the product. A customer with good knowledge happens to evaluate other alternatives easily and take a decision (Madaan, 2009. p. 86).

2.3.3. Personal Factors

Personal factors that directly influence consumer behaviour are age and stage in the life cycle, occupation and economic circumstances, personality and self-concept, and

lifestyle and values. Consumers' tastes in clothing, music, food, and even vacations are shaped by the age factor. A blue-collar worker has different preferences of clothing rather than a white-collar worker. The way a person lives, that is lifestyle, expressed in activities, interests, and opinions has always been interesting to marketers as there is a core relationship between products and different lifestyle groups. The self-concept of consumers is a merger between the real self-image and the ideal self-image of a person (Andaleeb and Hasan, 2017. p. 167).

Age and stage in the life cycle: As mentioned above some preferences are related to the age. Consumption is also directly affected by the family life cycle and the number, age, and gender of people in the household. Also, consumer behaviour might have some changes by psychological life-cycle stages. Adults experience some transformations through life as they get older and, on several occasions, for instance, marriage or becoming a parent, their behaviour changes with the times. Marketers target critical life events such as marriage, childbirth, illness, relocation, divorce, first job, career change, retirement, death of a spouse as these events create new needs. Once a person is married spending patterns change accordingly, therefore, the person is obliged to put limits on spending for luxury goods. When a person is retired gets free from family responsibilities and the desire for spending money is increasing. That is why these people are called Silver Spenders (Madaan, 2009. p. 86). Related service providers should be alerted to discover new business opportunities. One well-defined and potential target market for many firms is newlyweds. Marriage means two different purchasing behaviours that merge their habits and preferences. Companies like Procter & Gamble, Clorox, and Colgate-Palmolive offer "Newlyweds Kits" to couples when they are registered for a marriage license (Kotler and Keller, 2012. p. 155-156).

Occupation and economic circumstances: Different occupational groups have different brand and product preferences, and such groups are highly targeted by marketers. For instance, computer software companies distribute various products and services for brand managers, lawyers, engineers, and physicians. Both product and brand choice are highly dependent on economic circumstances including income level and stability, savings and assets, debts, borrowing power, and patterns of spending and saving. During an economic downturn luxury brands such as Gucci, Prada, and

Burberry are the first ones to suffer from constraints. If economic constraints interpret negative outcomes, companies can consider redesigning, repositioning, and repricing their products (Kotler and Keller, 2012. p. 158).

Personality and self-concept: Personality is often described with the characteristics, such as self-confidence, dominance, autonomy, respect, sociability, defensiveness, and adaptability. Brand preferences of consumers can be analyzed with the participation of personality variables. Brands also have personalities and consumers tend to choose brands with similar personalities to theirs. Consumers often choose and use brands with a brand personality that suits their actual self-concept, how a person views oneself. On the other hand, the choice can be centralized on the consumer's ideal self-concept, how a person would like to see oneself or on others' self-concept, how a person thinks others see him or her (Kotler and Keller, 2012. p. 159).

Lifestyle and values: People from the same social groups and professions might have different lifestyles. A lifestyle is a person's way of living as expressed in activities, interests, and opinions. At the same time, a lifestyle is the person's interaction with the surrounding. The relationship between products and lifestyle groups is essential for marketers. In terms of lifestyle groups, consumers are whether money constrained or time constrained. Companies target money constrained customers by offering cheaper products and services. Walmart has become the largest company in the world with its everyday low prices. Time constrained consumers are not price-sensitive at all and the main criteria for them is the time so that they might perform two or more tasks at the same time (Kotler and Keller, 2012. p. 159). Each lifestyle is unique. Trends of consumption according to lifestyles are often consisting of components that appeared as a result of similar social and economic circumstances. Despite the similarities, each individual has his or her touches to a lifestyle chosen. For instance, a typical student most likely will dress like his or her peers, will like similar food like his or her friends but certainly will have his or her unique addition such as stamp collecting or marathon running. Lifestyles do not last forever unlike core values and consumer preferences change over time. The consumption patterns that were in favor of consumers might seem funny to them after several years (Solomon et al., 2006. p. 558).

2.3.4. Demographical Factors

Demographic is the study of the population. Ingredients of demographic include gender, age, household size, residential status, a growth rate of population, education, income level, occupation (Madaan, 2009. p. 84). Demographic dimensions are widely used by marketers, and they are associated with consumer needs and wants. On the other hand, demographic tools are easy to measure (Kotler and Keller, 2012. p. 75).

Generally, marketers differentiate six age groups of the population: preschool children, school-age children, teens, young adults aged 20 to 40, middle-aged adults 40 to 65, and older adults 65 and above. Besides this, there are groups of individuals born during the same period called cohorts in marketing, who have a similar life span and style. Therefore, such people grow together and influence their values, lifestyles, and purchasing behaviour (Kotler and Keller, 2012. p. 75-76).

2.4. The Purchasing Decision Process

The basic factors that influence consumer behaviour and actual purchasing power have been introduced in this chapter. The below table contains the list of consumer behaviour questions that marketers should focus on in terms of who, what, when, where, how, and why. Companies try to follow consumers during all stages of the decision-making process including learning, choosing, using, and disposing of a product (Kotler and Keller, 2012. p. 166).

Table 2.2. Consumer Behaviour Questions

Understanding Consumer Behavior	
Who buys our product or service?	
Who makes the decision to buy the product?	
Who influences the decision to buy the product?	
How is the purchase decision made? Who assumes what role?	
What does the customer buy? What needs must be satisfied?	
Why do customers buy a particular brand?	
Where do they go or look to buy the product or service?	
When do they buy? Any seasonality factors?	
How is our product perceived by customers?	
What are customers' attitudes toward our product?	
What social factors might influence the purchase decision?	
Do customers' lifestyles influence their decisions?	
How do personal or demographic factors influence the purchase decision?	

Source: Belch and Belch, 2009

The purchasing decision process is the decision-making process of consumers when they buy certain products and services in exchange of money in the market. Knowing consumer behaviour toward the decision-making process of a consumer helps companies successfully sell their goods and services. The consumer purchasing decision process consists of five levels: Problem recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives, purchase decision, and post-purchase behaviour. Not all consumers pass through all these five stages while making an actual purchase. While some of the consumers skip one or two steps, some consumers apply all stages accordingly. Since every human being is unique and the application of the decision-making stages varies from human to human. For example, if a consumer is buying his or her regular brand of milk, certainly, the consumer will skip the first two steps. But if a consumer is going to buy a car that is high involvement, no single step can be missed. The full process is implemented for the new product purchases and the products that need high consumer involvement (Qazzafi, 2019. p. 131).

The Figure 2.1 below explains the working mechanism of the above-mentioned decision-making process.

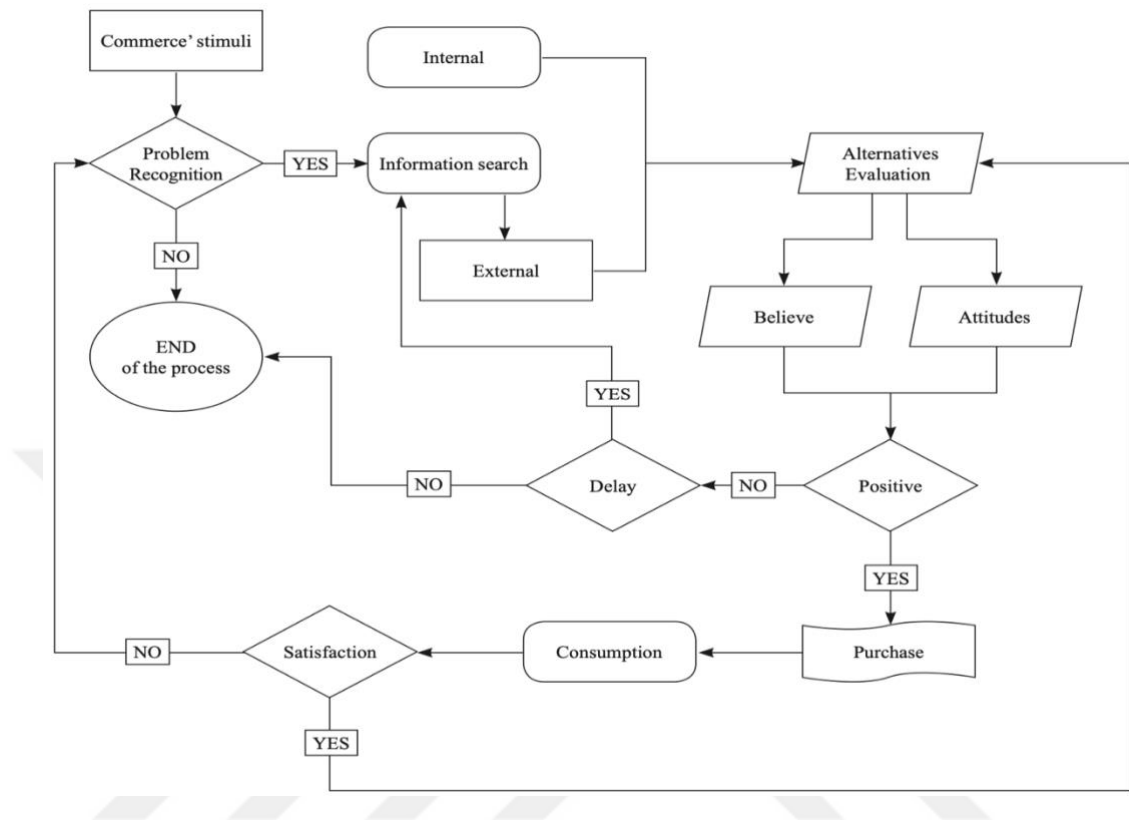


Figure 2.1. Decision Making Model

Source: Blackwell, Miniard, and Engel, 2001

Certainly, consumers accept many decisions during daily life. It is important to understand certain behaviours and course of actions behind each decision accordingly. Consumers do not choose a certain product or a brand, but they choose to purchase, consume, recommend, sell, or return one product or brand over another one. (Reynolds and Olson, 2001. p. 5-6).

The Black Box Model: In the past, it was much easier for companies to know their customers according to their daily activities. Nowadays, the high development and growth of industries make it difficult to research consumers and their buying behaviors. Companies try to find answers to the questions like who, how, when, where, and why to identify their consumers. When companies introduce a new product, they are interested in the responses from consumers towards products. The main focal point

here is the relationship between marketing stimuli and buyer comeback. The black box model of consumers consists of marketing and other stimuli and gives messages that can be relevant. The content of the black box is attention-grabbing for companies (Kotler, et al., 2005).

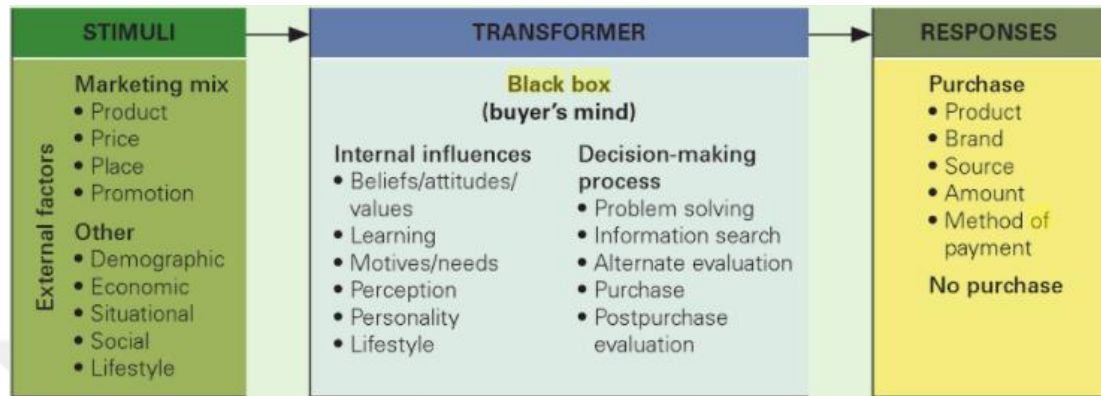


Figure 2.2. The Black Box of Consumer Behavior

Source: Hatten, 2014

The input of the black box is created by different marketing activities to turn out responses from consumers (Musadiq A. Sahaf, 2013). Marketing stimuli include the four Ps: product, price, place, and promotion while others include economic, cultural, technological, and political issues. These stimuli are in the black box to generate decisions about product, brand, source, etc. (Kotler, et al., 2005). The black box is about the buyer's mind that business providers are not able to know exactly but can partly predict with the help of this model (Hatten, 2014). Cultural, social, personal, and psychological characteristics have impacts on consumers' buying behavior. The most influencing factor is a cultural factor that needs to be learned as culture, subculture, and social class. A person's behavior and wants are shaped by culture as people belong to a certain group of society. Groups of people with shared interests and values consist of subcultures. Subcultures are significant segments for marketers to promote their products and services. Samples of subculture can be nationalities, religions, and other groups like these. Social classes are permanent groups of people with the same types of behavior. Social factors like small groups, family, social roles, and position have high impacts on behavior and companies should consider these factors. (Kotler, et al., 2005).

The Wheel of Consumer Analysis (WCA): In some cases, consumer behavior can be categorized into various components. Behavior, environment, marketing strategy and affect and cognition of consumers are four gears of the wheel of consumer behavior as it is highlighted in Figure 2.3. Consumers appear in different places for consuming certain products and services. Many environmental influences may have effects on buying decisions. These factors can be sales promotions, layout, the range of products, lighting, temperature, background music, and others. For instance, in big supermarket environmental influences can be the store layout, the area of the market, signs within the market, eye-catching promotions, and others listed above. Consumer behavior happens by reacting to the consumer environment. People show lots of manners during the process however, the most important for businesses are purchasing. The other component of the consumer milieu is the marketing strategy. In the buyer environment, several marketing strategies and promotions can be noticed. In supermarket example, of course, their lots of products and brands, in this case, these promotions, pricing strategies affect the behavior of customers. Effect and cognition are psychological answers that consumers give in different places. Effects are the actual responses of consumers however cognition is the mental thinking of consumers. These two are related to each other and can have some influence over each other and other elements of WCA (Peter and Olson, 2010).



Figure 2.3. The Wheel of Consumer Analysis

Source: Peter and Olson, 2010

2.4.1. Problem Recognition

The first step of the decision-making process, problem recognition is also referred to as need recognition. The reasons that start the purchasing process are either recognizing a problem or when the consumer is triggered by any stimuli. Stimuli can be internal and external, for instance, basic human needs such as hunger, thirst are internal stimuli that can be a driver for the buying process. External stimuli also raise the specific needs that lead to purchasing. For example, a person might like a friend's new car or see an advertisement about a vacation in the Maldives. Such factors inspire people to think about the same and encourage them to make a purchase (Kotler and Keller, 2012. p. 167).

From a psychological point of view, problem recognition is based on biological and psychogenic needs. Biological needs include the basic requirements with what humans

stay alive such as hunger, thirst, or sleep. Psychogenic needs are the ones that are not vital for life, but they are helpful, beneficial, advantageous, practical, effective, or informative. Nowadays, even if consumers have no need or problem, internet navigation displays a lot of information that triggers a need toward purchasing opportunities (Gomez-Diaz, 2016. p. 275).

2.4.2. Information Search

This is the second stage of the decision-making process and involves looking for relevant information about the product. While buying any product or service, a consumer is trying to recall the past-experience and if the previous experience is positive, it is most likely that the consumer will buy the product again and the information search ends itself. But, if the past experience is negative or is not existing at all then the consumer starts looking for information about the product (Clow and Baack, 2016. p. 76). The consumer is looking for information through several sources and can choose relevant information from any of these sources. These sources can be personal; family, friends, neighbors, acquaintances, commercial; advertising, salespeople, dealers, manufacturers, web and mobile sites, public; mass media, consumer ratings, social media, online searchers and peer reviews; and experimental sources; examining and using the product (Kotler and Armstrong, 2017. p. 156). The influence of these sources changes according to the product settings and consumer characteristics. However, commercial sources provide most of the information, the reliable data is coming from other sources since commercial sources are marketer-dominated. Each source plays a different role in the purchasing process. Commercial sources have an information function, while personal sources are supposed to be more legitimized and have an evaluation function. For instance, physicians get to know about new medicine from commercial sources, but they ask other doctors for the evaluation (Kotler and Keller, 2012. p. 167).

Based on the product consumers define the proportion of the information to search. For durables half of consumers consider only one store, and only 30 percent of consumers look at more than one brand. There are two levels of consumer engagement in information search. The milder search state is heightened attention and during this search process, a consumer is just receiving information without putting much effort.

The second one is active information search which happens with high consumer involvement including reading material, phoning friends, online search, and visiting stores to learn more about the product (Kotler and Keller, 2012. p. 167).

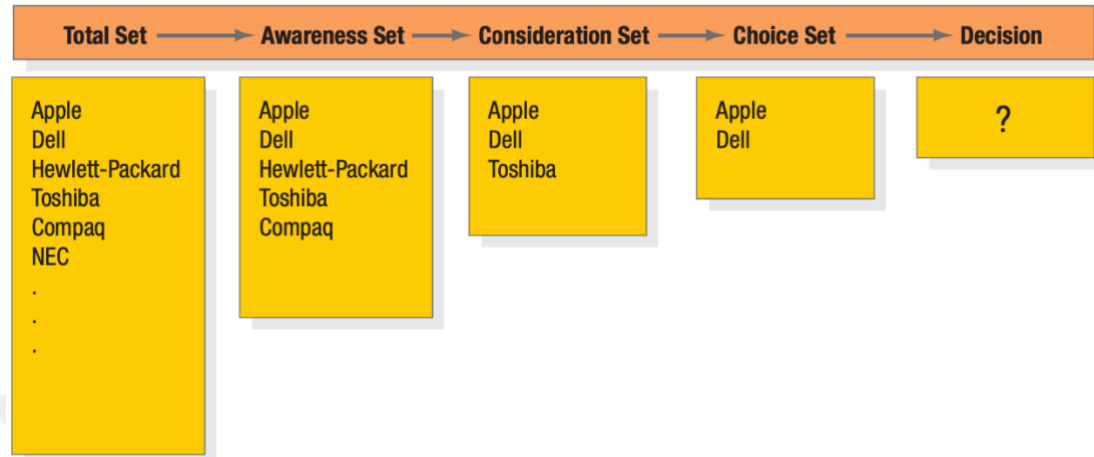


Figure 2.4. Successive Sets Involved in Consumer Decision Making

Source: Kotler, 2012

Nowadays, consumers are exposed to a massive volume of information through online channels and this volume of information does not ease the process all the time. Consumers are looking for memorized and external information on purpose to settle their consumption issues. If the buyers are highly motivated some of the online and internal information is not even considered. Additionally, the internet is always accompanied by extra online ads that appear on almost every webpage and highlight product information even though it is not searched. The feature of the internet creates accidental searches and drives both knowledge and buying intentions. Customer choices are based on behavioural inclinations that affect decisions and provoke measurement errors that should be monitored to identify consumer preferences. Because online advertisements pop up and the information is exposed, consumers make unintended choices that were not counted. Even though the information is logical and neat, previous experiences with both online and offline purchases have more inclinations to monitor the flow of the decision-making process according to consumer preferences. Preferences are internal biases and cause certain ramifications that can be both positive and negative. Overconfidence is also an internal inclination when consumers pay extra attention to strength evidence oriented to specific results,

overestimating their knowledge and judgment about the product. Advertisements, hints, subliminal messages are external biases that are considered by consumers while they are clearing their mental thinking (Gomez-Diaz, 2016. p. 277).

2.4.3. Evaluation of Alternatives

The next level after information search in the purchasing decision process is the evaluation of alternatives. When a consumer has enough information about a product or a brand, the next step is to evaluate the options before making any decision. Marketers understand that first, consumers want to meet their needs and wants and at a later stage, they are looking for other benefits of a product or a brand. Once companies can cope with this level of decision-making, they can take an advantage of the process (Kotler and Keller, 2016. p. 197). After gathering enough information, consumers evaluate the information to accept the best decisions. However, if available information from the market is more than the processing capacity of humans, other tactics are used to make decisions easily and quickly. Especially, online consumers apply many criteria to evaluate brands and attributes before making any decision. These tactics aim to foster the process of decision-making by ignoring some part of the information. The basic criteria used are representativeness, availability, simulation, anchoring and adjustment, and affect. These heuristics play an important role in the decision-making process by easing the process itself with fewer efforts and saving more time (Gomez-Diaz, 2016. p. 278).

Consumers associate each product with several attributes that deliver benefits. These attributes differ from customer to customer depending on which benefits are expected from a consumer perspective. For example, attributes for hotels would be location, cleanliness, ambiance, price. The sought-after benefits are the most preferred attributes among consumers (Kotler and Keller, 2012. p. 168).

2.4.4. Making a Purchase Decision and Purchasing

The consumer is already formulating certain preferences among several brands and might intend to buy the most preferred brand in the evaluation stage. During a purchase intention, the consumer develops five sub decisions: brand, dealer, quantity, timing,

and payment method (Kotler and Keller, 2012. p. 170). In this stage, the consumer has already decided after collecting relevant information from different sources and evaluating this information, what to buy and where to buy. Consumer buys the product or brand that is ranked highest among the options and this behaviour is affected by the surrounding environment (Qazzafi, 2019. p. 133).

Purchase is the most important stage in the decision-making process for the marketers and companies not because of the money exchange but for other determinants while purchasing is done. One interesting nuance in the decision-making process is the time assumption of a consumer that can change the process. For some consumers, the time factor is less important and focused on a solution. At the moment of payment, consumers prefer to finish this transaction as soon as possible, and therefore, online payment is more efficient to save more time. Online payment applications can reduce complaints and even can avoid them at all. In terms of online shopping, web page designs have become one of the most important decision variables. The most common features of website performance that have been characterized by consumers are design, functionality, responsiveness, content quality, technical adequacy, specific content, and appearance (Gomez-Diaz, 2016. p. 279).

2.4.5. Post-purchase Behaviour

Consumer behaviour is important during the decision-making process and purchase, but it is more critical after purchase. A satisfied customer is an extra advertisement for the company however if the product does not meet the expectations, it directly affects the brand name and reputation. Therefore, the mission is not done with the purchase. Marketers should monitor post-purchase satisfaction, post-purchase actions, and post-purchase uses and disposal.

Post-purchase satisfaction is about meeting the expectations of a consumer after an actual purchase happened. If the performance of a product is below the expectations, then the consumer will be disappointed. If the expectations are met then the consumer is satisfied, in case the expectations are exceeded the consumer would be delighted. The satisfaction level of the consumer determines if the customer will buy the same

product again, and spread a positive message about the product and brand and recommend it to friends (Kotler and Keller, 2012. p. 172).

Post-purchase actions are actions that happen after buying a product and measuring the performance versus consumer expectations. A dissatisfied customer can act in different ways to express his or her feelings. Consumers can just abandon or return the product or ask for information that proves the high value. Some consumers might take public action by complaining to the company, asking for legal help from a lawyer, or complaining to other groups such as businesses, private, or government bodies. Post-purchase actions have two variants in case of dissatisfaction, exit option, and voice option. The exit option is a decision to stop buying the same product, the voice option is warning friends. In this sense, post-purchase communications with consumers are crucial so that Customer Relationship Management (CRM) programs have been introduced to build long-term brand loyalty (Kotler and Keller, 2012. p. 172).

Post-purchase uses and disposal ways of consumers are one of the study topics for marketers. The below figure explains the ways consumers consume or dispose of products. Consumption rate is a key driving factor of sales frequency, therefore, the more quickly the product is consumed, the sooner the buyers will consider repurchase the same product. One strategy to encourage product replacement is to connect the process of replacing to certain occasions such as holidays, events, or certain times of year (Kotler and Keller, 2012. p. 172).

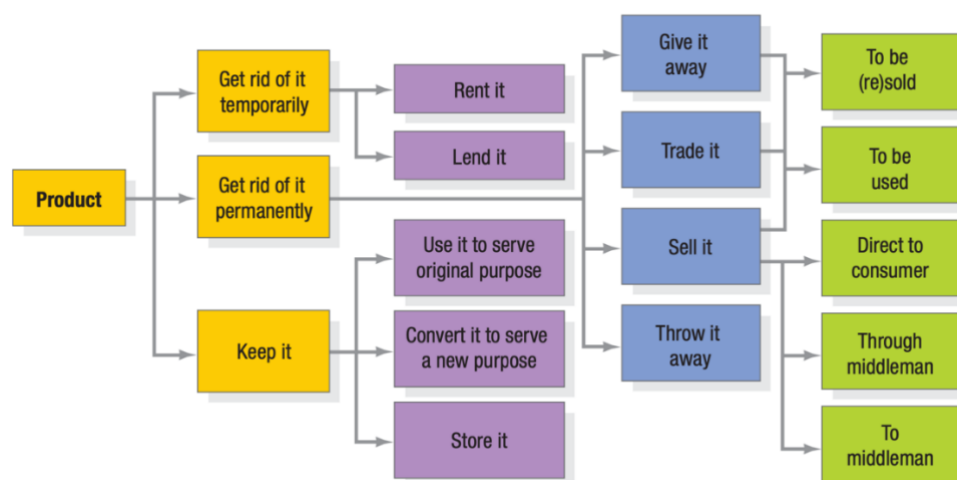


Figure 2.5. How Customers Use or Dispose of Products

Source: Kotler and Keller, 2012

2.5. Concept of Purchasing Intention and Affecting Factors

The preference of consumers to buy any product or service is called consumer purchasing intention, more precisely, purchase intention is the act of buying the product or service after evaluation. The intention of the buyer to purchase is always affected by several factors such as the price of a product, design, packaging, knowledge about the product, quality, celebrity endorsement, fashion, and sometimes family influence (Younus, Rasheed, and Zia, 2015. p. 9). Internal and external environment factors influence the decision-making process of the consumer about a specific brand. Internal information is gathered from previous experiences which normally happen due to advertisements. External information can be collected from peers and the market (Blackwell et al., 2001). Recently, purchase intention has been more complicated since consumers can access information about different products and brands easily and at the same time, the high rate of competition makes it more difficult (Madahi and Sukati, 2012. p. 153).

Purchase intention is of high importance because companies aim to achieve profit maximization through the sales of a specific product. Also, purchase intention is characterized as customer retention. By learning driving factors of the purchase intention of consumers, companies are getting insights about customer wants and needs, and at the same time, they are able to forecast the production quantity for the specific products (Powrani and Kennedy, 2018. p. 4).

Today, customers have become more demanding due to the diversity of the products and brands available in the marketplace. Perceived price, quality, confidence, social influence, brand image, and many more factors have impacts on the purchase intention of consumers. Another factor that is of high necessity is responsiveness and this factor is gaining more importance in recent years. Customers expect companies to handle their inquiries and meet expectations in a timely manner and find availability of the required products at any time. In this sense, responsiveness is supposed as an important determinant of buying intention and at the same time, customer satisfaction. Pricing strategy is quite critical therefore, it can both attract customers and drive them away from the product and most customers see price as an indicator of quality (Yusuf et al., 2015. p. 430). Customers perceive the high price as high quality, however, this

algorithm is not performing and sometimes people are confused with the high price and doubt the quality. Some companies publish facts about the pricing such as the product cost, transaction cost, and accessibility to avoid negative perception and encourage customers for the purchase. Most experts accept the price as a determinant of product quality (Roberta and Quester, 2009. p. 134-144).

Product quality involves the physical characteristics and performance of the product. At the same time, product quality is about the usability and suitability of the product for the users. Durability, appearance, performance, and perfections are the main aspects of product quality. Perceived product quality is supposed by many researchers to be a more appropriate term to qualify product quality and can be measured much easier. Moreover, perceived product quality has a positive impact on consumer's purchase intention (Wonggotwarin and Kim, 2017. p. 224).

Brand image is an identity and understanding of how customers perceive and remember the products and services of each brand. Differing from product quality, brand image is not associated with the attributes of the product and creates through marketing activities such as advertising, sales promotion, etc. Perceptions of the brand image have three dimensions: product involved benefits, benefits from product usage; non-product involved benefits, an image of consumers; and experience benefits, feelings while using the product. Brand image affects purchase intention in a positive direction (Wonggotwarin and Kim, 2017. p. 225).

Product design is a factor that differentiates a certain product from others. Product design includes the features such as benefits regarding the usability of a product, shape, color, and smell, etc. that consumers enjoy while using (Hanzaee and Baghi, 2011). Many studies prove that design factors also have positive impacts on the purchase intention of consumers (Wonggotwarin and Kim, 2017. p. 225).

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) theory is set to investigate the factors that influence online purchase intention. TAM is consisting of independent variables of perceived usefulness, perceived ease-of-use, and perceived risk (Meskeran, Ismail, and Shanmugan, 2013. p. 308).

2.6. The Concept of Repurchase Intention

Repurchase intention is the act of buying again a specific product or service from the same company based on the prior experience of a consumer. Customer satisfaction and attitude are the two major components of customer repurchase intention. A state of satisfaction is the overall pleasure of the customer as a result of an experience with a particular product or service. Attitude is the customer's positive, neutral, or negative output from past evaluative experiences toward a particular product, service, company, or brand (Hellier et al., 2003. p. 1764).

Repurchase intention includes implications about the same company that meets customer expectations and assesses the current status of the need for the same service or product. Customers intend to purchase again the same product or service based on the values gained from the prior experience such as performance, benefits, competition, and cost considerations. In general, the repurchase intention of consumers happens based on the values gained from past transactions, and on the other hand, benefits gained are playing an intermediary role for the expectations of the future purchase (Ariffin et al., 2016. p. 393).

Post-purchase is the final stage and a key element in the decision-making process. It is a primary task for marketers, and companies become successful when consumers trust their products. Identifying consumer behaviour during the post-purchase evaluation processes helps marketers to understand customer wants and needs thoroughly (Sophapan, 2013. p. 35). Consumer attitudes are related to consumer emotions and feelings and consumers express their loyalty in different ways such as repurchase intention, spreading positive feedback among others, and spending more money on one product over another one (Vazquez et al., 2009. p. 2275).

According to Kotler and Armstrong (2011), post-purchase behaviour can be distinguished into two subgroups being post-purchase satisfaction and post-purchase actions. Repurchase intention is an action of post-purchase actions and happens as a result of satisfaction and loyalty. It is stated that repurchase intention is triggered by loyalty and satisfaction. However, customer satisfaction does not always create loyalty to a product. In this sense, marketers must work hard to bring consumers back to the

purchase process. Thus, post-purchase behaviour is very critical for marketers and they need to prepare marketing strategies to control this behaviour and serve customer needs and wants (Sophapan, 2013. p. 36).

Furthermore, consumers set a habit that is related to consumer memory and leads to the routine behaviour of consumers. The habit is transformed into repurchasing behaviour, meaning that habit and routine are correlated with each other and certain mental and psychological changes and influence repurchase intention. Loyalty or habit results in choosing similar brand names. However, many consumers prefer to buying the same brand or products not because of loyalty just being lazy for exploring something new. Whenever, consumers decide to buy a new product, in most cases, they become price sensitive so that the new product is cheaper than the previous one or the product is out of stock (Sophapan, 2013. p. 36-37).

The Figure 2.6 below demonstrates the steps of the post-purchase evaluation that consists of four stages: decision confirmation, experience evaluation, satisfaction and expectation, and future response which is repurchase intention.

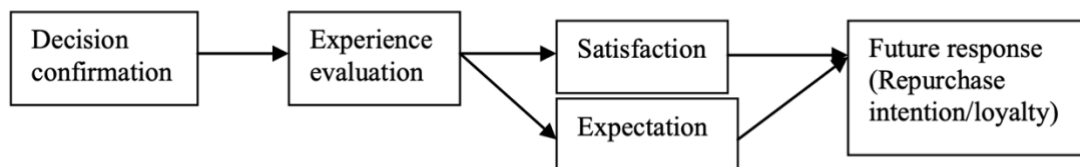


Figure 2.6. Steps of the Post-Purchase Phase

Source: Sophapan (2013. p. 37)

Once the decision-making process is finalized, a consumer makes a final decision and confirms the selection. Here the consumption process is starting, and consumers focus on product benefits that affect future response and enters the post-purchase evaluation phase. Post-purchase evaluation criteria influence repurchase intention. Satisfaction and expectation gained from decisions and purchases made are the main points that encourage customers to purchase the same product again. Satisfied consumers will create a word-of-mouth effect and recommend the same product or service to friends (Palmer, 2009). Expectations lead to repeat purchases and brand loyalty is sustained

toward a brand. Gained brand loyalty sheds light on new marketing ideas and strategies to serve these customers (Sophopan, 2013. p. 37).

There are two approaches to loyalty: behavioural and attitudinal approaches. The behavioural approach is a more traditional way of defining brand loyalty. Loyal customers are those who purchase a brand again, consider only that brand, and do not seek sophisticated information about the brand. The level of such loyalty is measured by the frequency of repurchase or volume of purchases for the same brand. Another perspective to define loyalty is the attitudinal approach that includes cognitive, affective, and conative aspects of loyalty. From a cognitive aspect, loyalty is based on the information gained from prior experiences or knowledge. Affective loyalty is a liking or attitude toward a brand based on positive usage occasions. Conative loyalty is somehow resembling affective loyalty and it is the intention of the consumer to repurchase the same product in the future. Finally, action loyalty is the stage where the consumer is ready to act, and it is related to the behavioural approach. The measurement for a behavioural approach is possible with the help of repurchase probability and a long-term choice probability for a brand (Li and Ya, 2004. p. 354).

CHAPTER III

SERVICE PRACTICES OF AIRLINE COMPANIES

The main components of aviation that deliver various services are airports, airlines, and aircraft. Besides this, there are some support elements such as baggage services, travel agents, and others. Services of aviation are not limited to the above mentioned and there are many more services that are, directly and indirectly, related to the aviation industry. With its effective air express service the aviation industry has helped other industries to provide an improved delivery experience with guaranteed time frames. Air transportation provides many benefits along with its expanded services such as time and cost advantages, shorter lead times, quick customer response, and flexibility (Wensveen, 2011. p. 36-37).

The core product and therefore, service of airlines is transportation and there are some other supporting services on top of the core product. As a service, air transportation is intangible, perishable, inseparable in terms of production and consumption, and highly variable in delivery standards. These are the characteristics of airline services, and they influence airlines to attract, serve, and retain customers. These characteristics of airline services distinguish them from the delivery of goods. However, even though the service of the airline is intangible, customer service cannot be characterized with the same criteria. Customer service is offered in support of the core product (Holloway, 2016).

Airline customer service policy might change from country to country. On the other hand, airlines should adhere to the policies of destination in terms of embarkation and disembarkation. International Air Transportation Association (IATA) reports that nearly 60 countries are committing to customer service policies that are applicable for both domestic and foreign airlines. The United States, European Union, and IATA have regulated international standards, and all airlines flying to and from or within

these regions are subjected to these policies since airlines voluntarily accepted IATA regulations (Colin, 2018. p. 116).

3.1. The Place of Services in the Competition of Airline Companies

The competition among airlines has been increased after the deregulation of airline markets. For this reason, airlines started to compete more aggressively by lowering rates and improving service levels. There are different aspects of competition in different airline markets based on relative criteria (Wolf et al., 2016). Airlines differentiate their products based on the services provided. By nature, aviation services are not consisting of parts all of the same kind. However, airlines offer the same product of airline seat but quality of the service leads to the differentiation among them. Different customers are looking for certain characteristics of the services provided including seat availability on-demand, more suitable flight timings, better check-in process, waiting lounge service, better in-flight food, and prompt baggage handling. Also, airlines distinguish services for first-class passengers from others to make first-class passengers feel more comfortable and important. Airlines differentiate seats according to different tiers and classes, and this differentiation is reflected in pricing. Airline companies are trying to diversify their services by offering alternative routes for passengers' primary and ultimate destinations. The possibility of these options depends on the bilateral agreements between countries (Weisman, 2017. p. 51).

In recent years, the service aspect has become more important for businesses and therefore, for airlines. A service is a key element to understand the value proposition and customer satisfaction. Service quality is a cognitive assessment of a service. Service quality is a tool to measure the consumers' perception of the actual performance of the service or to measure the difference between customer expectations and service performance. The most common model that is being used to measure service quality is called the SERVQUAL model. This model is working based on the comparison between the actual performance of the service provider and the expectations of consumers from that service. During the implementation of this model, the measurement is fulfilled based on five attributes including reliability,

responsiveness, assurance, tangibility, and empathy (Saglietto and Cecile, 2017. p. 293).

The airline industry is generally characterized by high rates of development, low-profit margins, and dynamic competition from different perspectives. Two measurable extents are taken into consideration while talking about competition among airlines. The first dimension is the network structure of air carriers that contains major services such as route network, stage lengths, various types of complementariness offered by airlines, and connecting flights. The other dimension covers all operational extents, for instance, labor and fuel (Samenderu, 2020. p. 214).

The development of the internet has created opportunities for airlines to sell tickets directly to end-users without any intermediaries. Most airlines are benefiting from this advantage to encourage their customers for the self-serviced online buying of the tickets. Internet-based sales is another way for airlines to create a competitive advantage and upgrade global competitiveness, at the same time by ensuring a smooth online experience to maintain high levels of customer satisfaction. Some airline companies have shifted to full online sales offering full-fledged e-services without any manual power. However, some airlines offer partial e-service and besides offer manual services. The benefits of established e-services for airlines include implementation without any physical contact, lower costs, and faster service. Some airline companies have succeeded in offering online ticket selling, for instance, JetBlue and Southwest Airlines of the United States sell 90 percent of the tickets online on their websites. European carriers such as Ryanair and EasyJet are following the same trend and selling the majority of the tickets via internet-based channels. On the contrary, some developing countries have not applied full e-services therefore customers in such countries are still using offline purchasing means such as travel agents along with online services. Air carriers of such countries have developed their e-services with some limitations (Mohammad and Woodside, 2015. p. 11).

3.2. General Services of Airlines

A full-service airline company provides a broad range of services during all aspects of customer experience being pre-flight, in-flight, and post-flight services. It is common

practice that passengers evaluate their satisfaction level according to their experience during flight. There is an interaction between the cabin crew and passengers during the flight. In this sense, the performance of the cabin crew onboard is an essential criterion while measuring the satisfaction level of customers. In this regard, airlines should focus on creating a friendly image and spreading a message of friendly hospitality through cabin crew (Santos and Silva, 2020. p. 199).

From a marketing perspective point of view and to survive against the competition, it has been a major task for airlines to deliver the highest level of service. In recent years, service quality has become the most important factor for airlines among other competitive variables such as fares, frequency, equipment, service quality, market share, and advertising. Customers value and distinguish airlines based on the service quality among competitors and this feature determines an airline's share in a respective market and certainly, profitability. Airline companies should understand customer needs and expectations to improve service quality since standards of service quality are consisting of customer expectations (Ahn and Lee, 2011. p. 2).

The US Department of Transportation adopted customer service guidelines to protect consumer rights in 1999 while the European Union accepted such policies only in 2004. These guidelines are applied to all air carriers of the respective region accordingly and at the same time, airlines flying to these regions are asked to adhere to the same policies. The customer service plan protects the rights of consumers in terms of fares, delays, cancellations, baggage handling, refunds, and complaints. The main focus of the program is customer benefits and compensation once they encounter any issues while receiving a service from any air carrier. IATA consisting of 265 airlines or 83 percent of world air traffic suggested core principles of customer service plan for the governments in 2013. It was voluntary for member airline companies to adhere to IATA's Core Principles of Consumer Protection. These accepted consumer protection policies are somehow similar for EU, US, and IATA and are defined during the stages including before flight, during flight, and after flight. Compensation is another chapter of the guidelines that is based both on the rights of customers and the procedures of airlines. Within the policy, the airlines are set to certain responsibilities toward affected customers (Colin, 2018. p. 117).

3.2.1. Pre-Flight Services

There are certain services related to the flight to be delivered by airlines before the actual flight happens when a customer buys or planning to buy a ticket. The airline that will be an operating air carrier should be communicated to customers at the time of booking. Especially, in the event of code-sharing passengers might be confused about the identity of the actual air carrier. The lowest possible rates should be accessible to customers through booking channels and agents at the sales office should communicate the lowest available rate according to the travel itinerary. Once a ticket is confirmed and purchased by a customer, airlines have no right to amend the rate in the future. At the same time, customers should be granted a certain duration of time after reservation to cancel an air ticket without any penalty. In case there is a cancellation the amount should be refunded back to the customer within a reasonable time frame. The period of money refund has been set as twenty days for cash refunds and seven days for credit cards. Airlines are responsible to inform passengers about the commercial and operational conditions of the flight including flight schedule, departure and arrival terminal, airport, number of stops until reaching the final destination, change of aircraft, terminal, or airport, price breakdown, carrier code, and flight number. Airlines are obliged to offer optional or mandatory insurance while making a booking and compensation should be sustained by airlines in the event of insolvency. Passengers must be informed about any flight disruptions or amendments in the schedule at the earliest. Airlines should have a contingency plan, customer service plan, and contracts of carriage and all this information should be published officially on their website. The same information should be communicated to customers verbally during offline purchases (Colin, 2018. p. 118-120).

3.2.2. Services During Flight

While customers are taking a flight based on code-sharing, both participants of the code-sharing are responsible to maintain service standards. Code-sharing has been more common in recent years, and it is an agreement between two different air carriers that offer services on one aircraft. Within such an agreement both airlines should agree on a common customer service plan where customers are protected equally. Customers should be notified about any possible delays, cancellations, and diversions immediately. Sometimes aircraft experience difficulties taking off and aircraft should

not stay more than three hours on the tarmac and aircraft should be back to the parking area. Here customers are disembarked from the aircraft and taken back to the terminal. During such delays, airlines should provide food and water, and medical assistance in case it is needed. If the flight is cancelled or denied, it is the responsibility of the airline to provide a full refund or arrange alternative transportation. When the delay is happening for five hours or more, customers can claim a full refund if they refuse the alternative arrangement. If the flight is delayed for more than two hours, a proper explanation should be communicated to passengers along with customers' rights. In the instances of extended delays or cancellations, airlines should offer services such as refreshments, free communications, an overnight stay if required. Such services are determined based on the flight distance and length of the delay. There are denied boarding customers who are not accommodated on a flight due to overbooking. Overbooking is a common happening for airlines due to over sales or operational reasons. During overbooking, if passengers do not agree to the exchange of their seats voluntarily, airlines are obliged not to accommodate passengers on the flight and should offer reasonable compensation or arrange alternative transportation to affected passengers. Besides passengers, airlines are committed to carrying their baggage on the aircraft during flight. In the instances of delay in baggage handling, airlines should do their best to return any delayed baggage within 24 hours and. Compensate the loss of the passengers accordingly. Disabled passengers and those with special needs should be recognized by airlines and proper service should be provided according to the policy. Accessible facilities should be maintained at the airports and in the aircraft including wheelchairs and portable medical electronic devices (Colin, 2018. p. 121-125).

3.2.3. After Flight Services

Both in the US and Europe, airlines are committed to submit a monthly report to the authorities such as the US Department of Transport and the EU European Commission respectively. This report should contain information about flight delay data, mishandled baggage statistics, customer complaints, and other incidents that happened during the flight. The information provided by airlines will be compiled by relative bodies and be accessible to the public. Airlines are responsible to handle complaints reported by customers after using the service. As per policy, any complaint should be

acknowledged within 30 days from the day of reporting and proper feedback should be provided within 60 days (Colin, 2018. P. 125).

3.3. The Place of Airports in Airline Services

After deregulation in 1978, functions of airport management have been reformed as a result of the increasing demand for air travel. Airport managers have been more involved in service and customer satisfaction rather than just providing infrastructure. Nowadays, customers are more demanding, and they are looking for someone who would ensure smooth operation and seamless service regardless of the service provider. The focal point of customer expectations is the airport and other participants are dependents on the airport. The major player in this chain is the airline that provides service itself and offers core products to passengers (O'Connell and Williams, 2016).

Being an important element of air transportation, airports centralize a wide range of services and facilities. Besides this, airports are strategically significant to the regions they serve. They contribute to the economy and create plenty of employment opportunities. Previously, airports were serving customer needs and were not contributing from the perspective of marketing. Airports are being more proactive in today's airline industry and the approach to airport management has been totally changed. Airports are now having their marketing department and are attracting customers by applying pricing tactics and promotional campaigns (Almeida, 2011). The services that are provided by airports through their partnership with relevant participants include ground transportation service, check-in service, security inspection service, information service, baggage handling, and others. Again, the goal of airports is to meet passenger needs and expectations to the greatest extent by providing services (Miquel, 2020. P. 13).

Airports are important components of the service chain of airline companies. Operation of airports to ensure high levels of service is challenging due to several factors. First, the demand is not stable, therefore, airports are not busy all the time, for instance, there is a difference based on the seasonality, public holidays, and school holidays and even according to the time slot of the day airports become busier or less

busy. Such fluctuation of the demand toward airports influences the passengers' perception of service quality (Graham, 2018).

It is complicated to measure impacts of the service that passengers experience at the airports since several players are participating in the overall service provided including airlines, handling agents, customs and immigration, concessionaries and so on. These different entities have various objectives and impacts on the overall service quality that is why determining factors of service quality are always contradicting. The airport operator does not have full control over the whole process however, areas of responsibility should be clearly defined, and goals should be set to maintain service quality. Passenger requirements are changeable like the demand factor. Some passengers are looking for a smooth process with minimum interactions while other passengers are using other facilities at the airports like shopping and dining. Even the same passenger might have different requirements based on the time they are traveling and the purpose of the travel (Graham, 2018).

An airport service quality model called ASQual has been developed to measure the service quality in the airport industry. There are eleven aspects distinguished of ASQual including physical layout, aesthetics, employee, eateries, shopping, transit support, information, security, customs and passport control, baggage, business facilities, and miscellaneous. There is also an airport service quality (ASQ) model that contains six dimensions such as check-in, security, convenience, ambiance, basic facilities, mobility, and prices (Munoz et al., 2019. P. 39).

CHAPTER IV

COVID-19 MEASURES IN AVIATION AND PURCHASING BEHAVIOUR

4.1. COVID-19 Precautionary Measures of Airlines

The COVID-19 outbreak started in early December 2019 and its first cases were reported in Wuhan, China. On the 11th of March, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the virus a pandemic. During the first week of December 2019, a few cases were reported in China and by December 31, the number of cases increased dramatically. In January 2020, the virus spread to many provinces of China, and as of the end of January, some regions outside of China reported their first cases, including Hong Kong, Thailand, Japan, South Korea, and the USA (Chelan, 2021. P. 3).

Starting from the early stages of the disease, the WHO has taken actions to support anti-epidemic work around the globe. The work of the WHO has focused on three aspects, mainly. To begin with, they have targeted strengthening country readiness and response. In early August 2020, WHO sent personal protective equipment to 148 countries including one million goggles, 3.51 million gowns, 7.2 million face shields, 18.2 million respirators, 2.1 million gloves, and 101.2 million medical masks. Also, COVID-19 treatment centers were initiated in 15 countries under the guidance of WHO. On the other hand, to fight against the virus, the WHO Academy has prepared 125 technical guidance documents and made them public on their platform. Additionally, WHO has started intensive research and development. WHO has supported 167 candidate vaccines with the participation of about 5000 patients from 100 countries. To avoid misinformation, WHO has cooperated with IT companies and social media platforms such as Facebook, Google, WhatsApp, and YouTube, to promote science-based health messages. Finally, the WHO has arranged different activities across regions to evaluate, react, and diminish risks. A partner platform has

been created on COVID-19 and 153 countries have joined this community (Chelan, 2021. p. 13).

As a result of the spread of the COVID-19 outbreak, the airline industry started suffering in terms of passenger volume and all airlines have issued an income loss in 2020. During this period air carriers have been affected by fleet groundings, economic qualms, travel bans, and market instability. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, airlines were concerned about the health and safety of both passengers and staff in flights and airports (Gowreesunkar et al., 2021).

Different health precautions were applied in line with the COVID-19 spread in flights and airports concerning the health and safety of travelers and at the same time, of staff. Several preventive measures have been implemented such as sanitization of the entire aircraft after every flight, proper airflow and provision of clean, filtered air in the aircraft, placement of handwashing and sanitization stations at the airports, proper disinfection tunnels at the airports, regular health check of airline employees, wearing of PPE kits by the cabin crews, sustaining all passengers with face shields, avoiding food services in the flights, displaying social distancing signs in the airport and aircraft, usage of online applications for contact tracing of travelers, proper maintenance of air quality, ventilation, and humidity levels in the aircraft by the airline companies (Gowreesunkar et al., 2021).

Basic preventive measures are implemented by airlines regarding the personal protection of crew, maintenance personnel, and cleaners. As a part of personnel protection, several measures were applied. It has become mandatory to wear a mask all the time during the duty. The mask should be close to the face, covering the mouth and nose completely. The crew should be attentive and avoid touching the mask not to cause hands contamination. Once a mask is dampened or contaminated, it should be changed with a new one immediately. Normally, it is advised to replace the mask at least once every four hours. Hands should be clean while replacing the mask, and the hands should be sanitized before and after the replacement (ICAO, 2021).

Goggles were used by the cabin crew during the flight, and the crew should wear gloves. Reusable goggles should be sterilized and dried after every usage immediately.

Also, it was instructed that crew members should reduce entry/exit of the cockpit and use electronic devices for communication in order to avoid close contact.

Another important implementation is the temperature screening that is being applied at different phases of flights. Calibrated or non-contact infrared thermometer should be used to measure the body temperature of passengers and the symptoms should be recorded for the immediate action. The passengers that are identified as having symptoms such as fever, fatigue, and dry cough should be reported immediately. In case, the suspicious passenger is found in the aircraft during the flight, the cabin crew should contact the destination airport and process the handover of the passenger after landing (ICAO, 2021).

In-flight operational considerations during the COVID-19 outbreak include reduced aircraft weight, aircraft arrival at destination, minimum contact with cabin crew, unruly passengers, passenger announcements, suspected case of COVID-19 in the cabin, and use of PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) during the flight. Some airport runways are closed due to limited number of flights during COVID-19. As a result, many airports have been functioning with single runway operations. However, this increased the risk of a collision or near miss with parked aircraft on a blocked runway during low visibility (IATA, 2020).

It is instructed that in person interactions should be minimized with the cabin crew. No cabin crew member should enter the flight deck unless it is not urgent and the communication among cabin crew members should be using interphone system. Especially, on high-risk flights, cabin crew members should avoid interaction with other cabin crew members and passengers (IATA, 2020).

Whenever there is a suspected case of COVID-19 in the cabin, existing procedures for communicable diseases should be followed accordingly. Cabin crew should contact the relevant ground operations teams and inform them about the case, therefore, they can be prepared. Ground operations team should be well prepared in terms of cleaning contractors and the team should be ready to meet the aircraft with the appropriate PPE and equipment (IATA, 2020).

During the COVID-19 outbreak, airlines have implemented a strict usage of PPE in the flight deck. PPE mainly includes face masks, gloves, goggles, biohazard attire and others. Besides safe operation of the flight, effective CRM should always remain priority. Wearing PPE might have some side effects such as diminished senses (sight, hearing, touch, smell), challenge with physical workload including proper aircraft handling, inhibit the donning of oxygen masks, and impede communication among flying crew in the plane. That is why it is recommended to understand the effects of wearing PPE on flight deck duties for specific aircrafts (IATA, 2020).

Following the COVID-19 impact on the global aviation, IATA has prepared a set of documents regarding personnel work, training, health, and different duty obligations in the time of pandemic. Since most of the international flights were suspended during the COVID-19, majority of the cabin crew has not worked actively in this period. In its turn, that might lead to diminished skills and less effective situational awareness. IATA has proposed an in-house awareness program for return-to-work crew members. Besides this, several other guidelines have been published by IATA on the areas covering quarantine requirements of cabin crew, new planning, occupational health and safety policies related to the COVID-19 (IATA, 2020).

Airlines should provide a proper guidance and instructions to crew in order to prevent them from infection of the virus while on duty and down route in areas. IATA guidance has been published covering all aspects of cabin and flight crew health preventive measures during and post pandemic (IATA, 2020).

While transmission of the virus is ongoing, there are several layers of the protection from the virus based on the situational environment.



Figure 4.1. Layers of Protection from Infection (IATA)

Airlines should assess these measures according to their risk assessment procedures to identify the level of protection to be applied in different situations and environments. Health Authorities might require from airlines to implement some of these layers and these requirements might vary based on the local transmission rates. Airlines should make a proper planning in terms of their operation processes and procedures to be able to increase or decrease precautions according to the latest development of the virus which might vary by route, airport, and destination of operation (IATA, 2020).

4.2. Survey Results

To answer the research questions, a survey has been done along with data collection from secondary sources. The main objective of the survey is to understand criteria while purchasing a flight ticket and identify which factors are playing a determinant role and their relationship on perception of passengers on COVID-19 measures taken by airlines. The survey has been designed via SurveyMonkey and was shared online with the participants to respond. Ten questions were directed to respondents covering socio-demographic questions to understand the characteristics of the group. Totally, 200 people have participated in the survey. Socio-demographic questions are asked to collect data on the age, occupation, education level, income, and gender of the participants. Participants have been chosen based on convenience.

The majority of the respondents are falling into the age group of 30 to 50 years old. The below chart demonstrates the age group of the respondents with percentage.

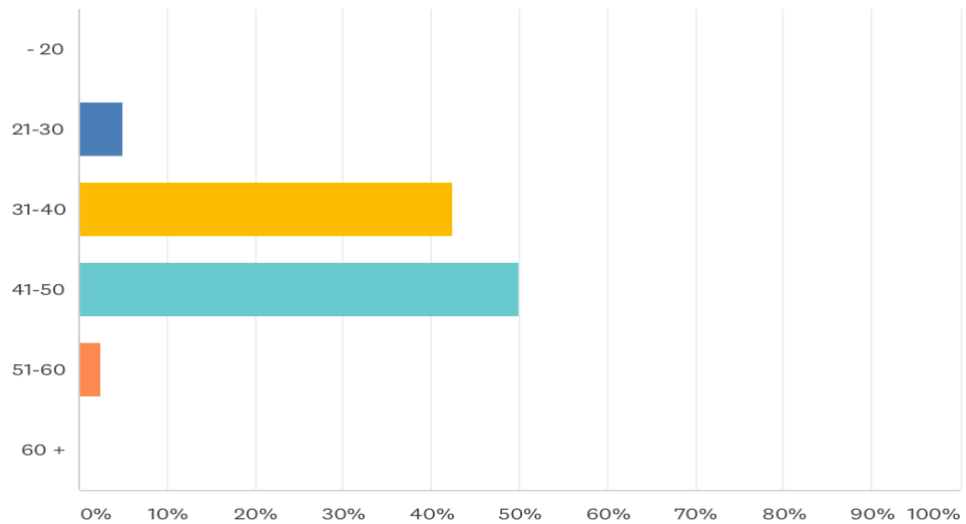


Figure 4.2. Age Group of the Respondents

More precisely, 50 percent of the respondents are aged between 41 and 50 years old. More than 40 percent of the respondents are within the age group of 31 and 40. The remaining ten percent belongs to the age groups of 21-30 and 51-60.

All the respondents are working, whether employed in a company or self-employed. According to the survey statistics, 85 percent of the participants are employed in any company and receiving a salary every month. While 15 percent of the respondents are self-employed and have their own business.

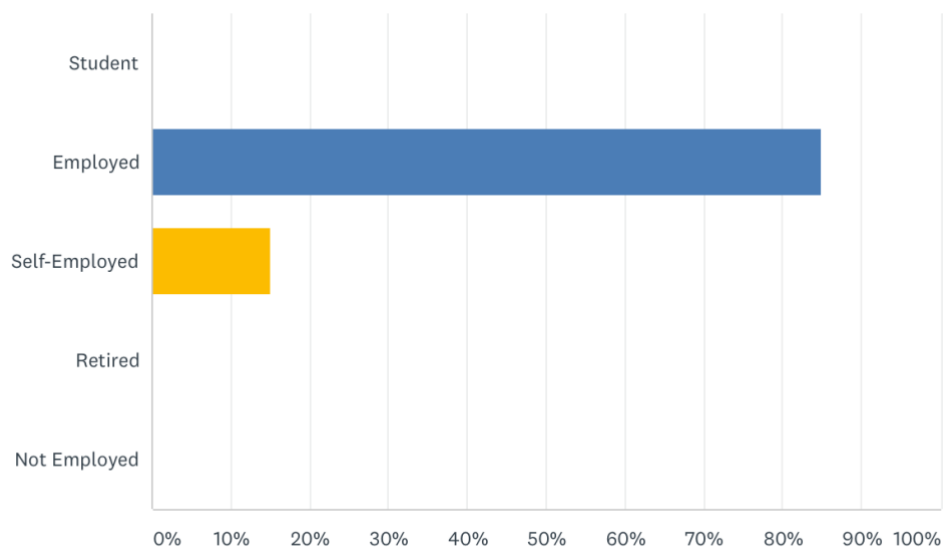


Figure 4.3. Occupation of the Respondents

The income levels of the respondents are diverse. The below chart shows the statistics about the income level of this sample.

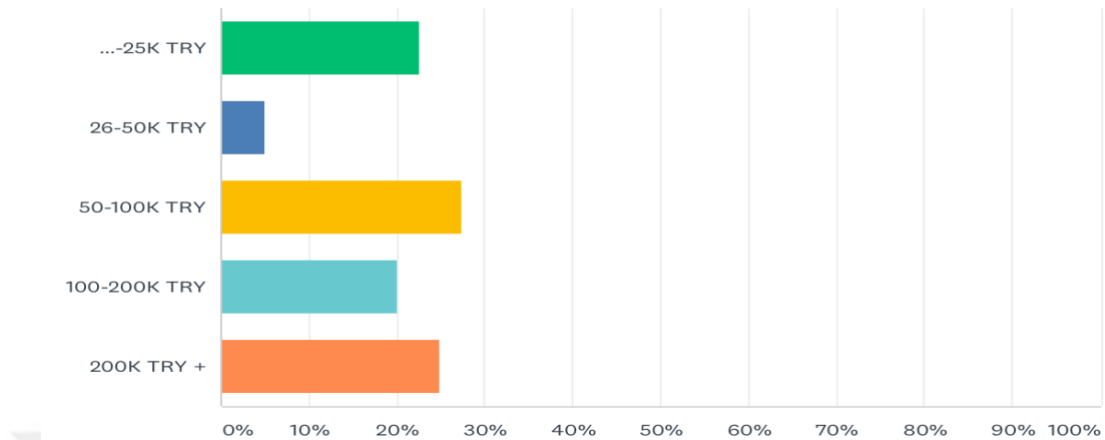


Figure 4.4. Income Level of the Respondents

Another question was asked to identify the education level of the respondents. The following chart gives data on the education level of the people who responded to this survey.

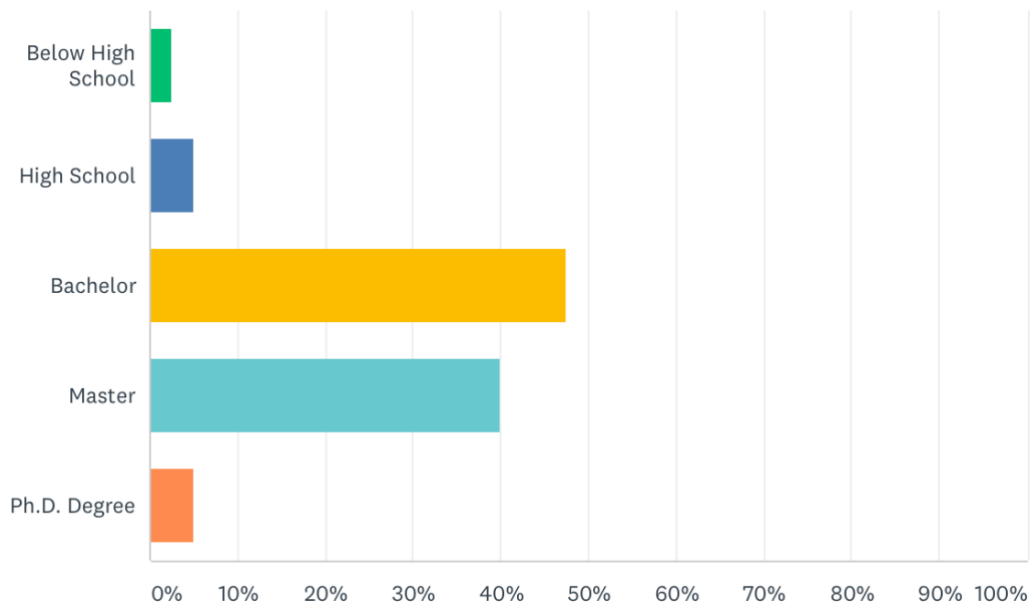


Figure 4.5. Education Level of the Respondents

Almost half of the respondents are educated and are holding at least one bachelor's degree diploma. The other 40 percent of the participants are holding master's degrees. Less than ten percent of the respondents are Ph.D. degree holders. People without any university degree that have completed high school or are below the level of education are consisting of less than ten percent of this sample together. In general, participants of this survey are well educated, and this is also another factor that shows the availability of the people to travel and can choose air transportation.

The participants of this survey are mainly consisting of people who are traveling a few times a year using air transportation. The below statistical chart illustrates the data about the travel frequency of the respondents within the year. Accordingly, only ten percent of the respondents are not traveling by air in a year. The rest of the respondents that is counted as another 90 percent of the group are traveling at least once a year.

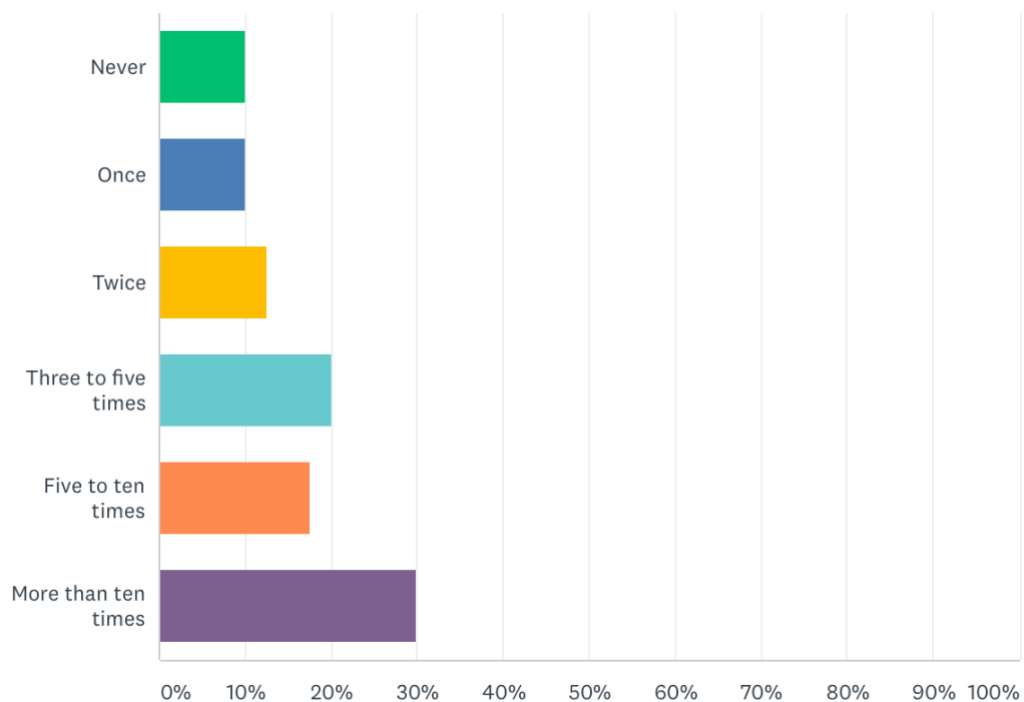


Figure 4.6. Frequency of Travel

Thirty percent of the respondents can afford to travel by air more than ten times within a calendar year. Less than 20 percent of the respondents are traveling from five to ten times a year while the other 20 percent are using airplanes from three to five times

within one year. Ten percent of the respondents are traveling only once a year and 12.5 percent are traveling two times every year.

The next question will determine the purpose of the travel of the respondents. The question is set to understand whether these people are using air transportation for business or leisure purposes or both.

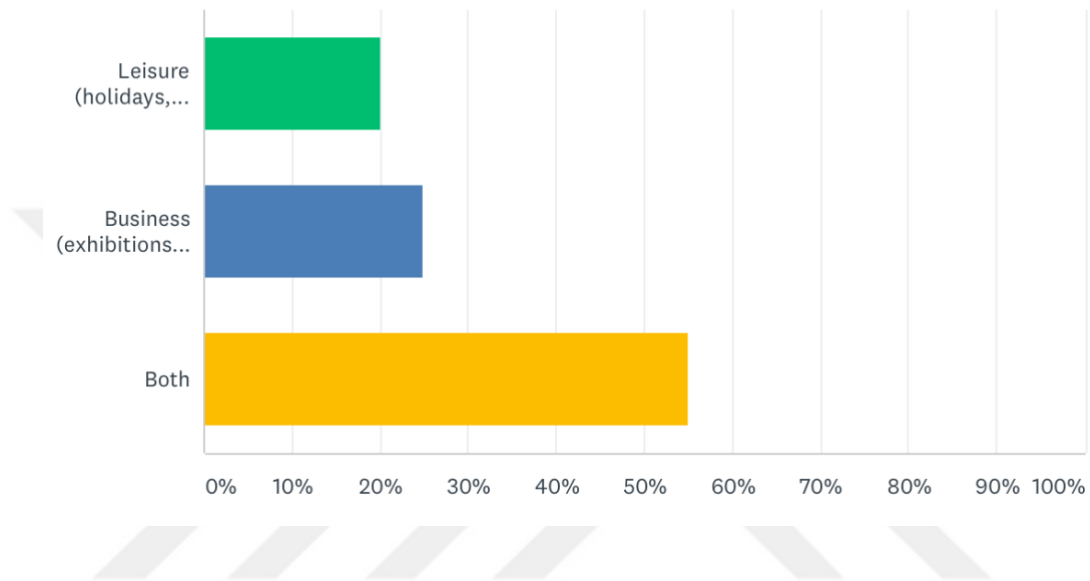


Figure 4.7. Purpose of the Travel

The participants of the survey are traveling both for leisure and business purposes. Leisure travel includes holidays, vacations, visiting friends and relatives. Business travelers are flying to attend their business meetings, or they are attending exhibitions, conferences, or they are participating in incentive programs. Twenty percent of the members of this sample are traveling only for leisure purposes while the other 25 percent are using air transportation while going on business trips. Fifty five percent of the respondents are buyers of flight tickets to travel both for leisure and business purposes. This means that more than half of the survey participants are using air transportation for their holidays and business trips as well.

It is obvious that many factors are affecting the airline selection of consumers while they are considering buying a flight ticket. The respondents were asked a question about the influencing factors while buying a flight ticket and options were proposed

for them to choose from the list. The below chart shows the list of factors proposed and the frequencies of the options accordingly.

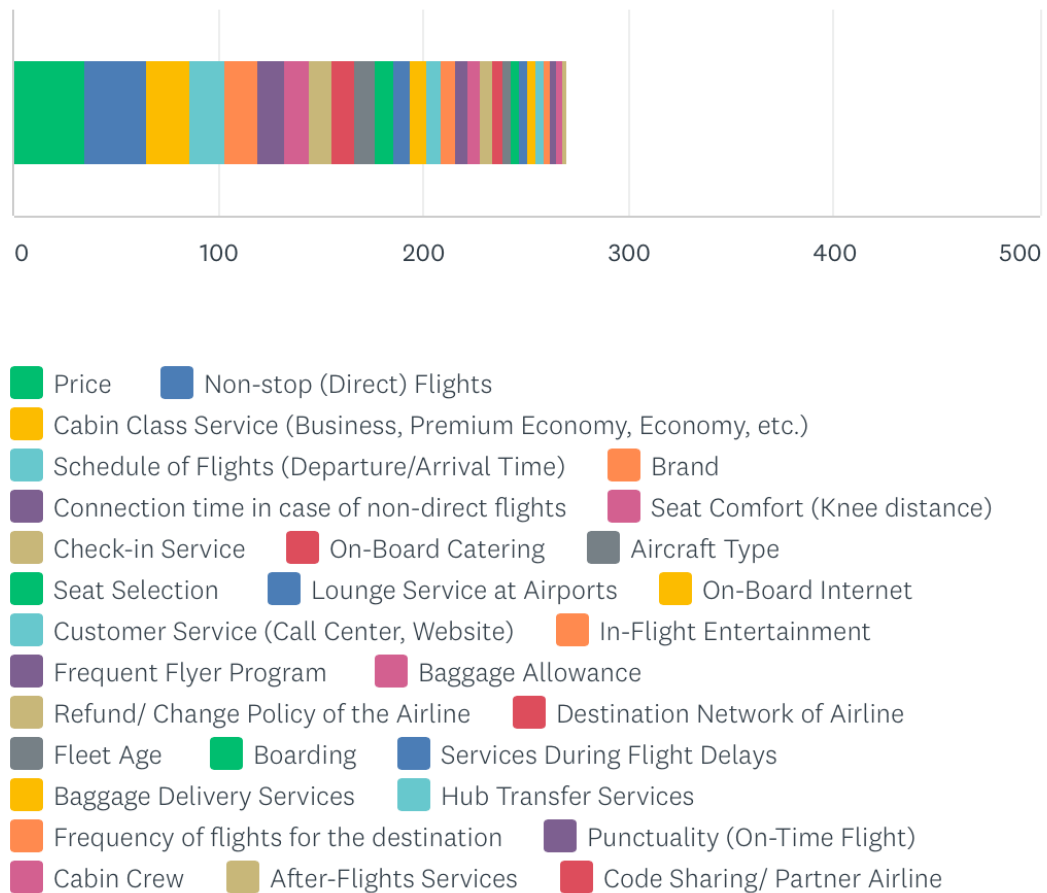


Figure 4.8. Features Considered While Choosing an Airline

The price factor is leading in this list according to the responses collected from the participants and 87.5 percent of the respondents have marked the price as a priority while purchasing a flight ticket. The second most preferred feature is non-stop flights and 75 percent of the respondents have chosen this attribute as a priority as well. The other features that are top listed are cabin class service being business, economy, or premium economy, flight schedules including departure and arrival times, the brand of the airline, connection time in case of connecting flights, and seat comfort that are followed by percentages such as 52.5, 42.5, 40, 35, and 30 respectively. Non-price services such as in-flight entertainment, ground services, onboard internet, onboard catering, lounge services, and customer service have been preferred by 20 percent on average that allows us to say that these services are not of great importance for the

consumers while purchasing a flight ticket. Even aspects such as cabin crew, after-flight services, fleet age, boarding, baggage delivery, and others are less important according to the statistics. Code sharing or partner airline feature has not been marked by anyone who participated in the survey and this feature is not important at all for the consumers while buying a flight ticket.

Another dimension has been included in the survey is the consideration of the recommendations by customers. Some people are relying on their previous experiences while others are asking for friends for a piece of advice. On the other hand, the role of intermediaries should be underlined. The below chart illustrates the responses collected regarding recommendations that the respondents are looking for while buying a ticket.

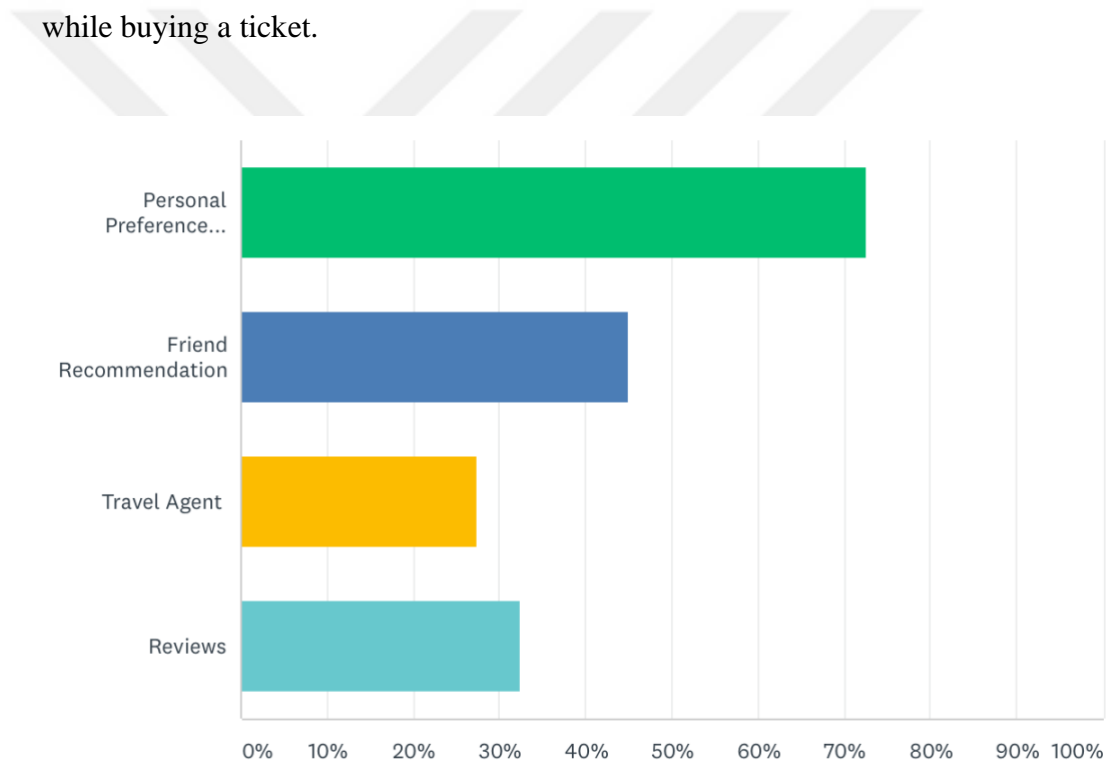


Figure 4.9. Recommendation Types

More than 70 percent of the respondents are considering their past experiences whenever they are planning to purchase a flight ticket. Personal preferences are followed by friend recommendation with 45 percent and still has power over the purchase decision. More than 30 percent of the participants are reading reviews as well

before making an actual purchase. Only 27.5 percent of the respondents have answered they could rely on travel agencies and would consider their recommendations.

The last question is related to the COVID-19 outbreak since the airline industry was hit harder among other industries during the pandemic. Since international travel was banned for some time due to the pandemic, after partial opening there are still some people that are not confident traveling long distances or even are not traveling at all. The face of international travel requirements has changed with the COVID-19 precautions. People take into consideration the COVID situation and special requirements while planning a trip. The question was asked how these precautions affect the purchase decision while choosing an airline.

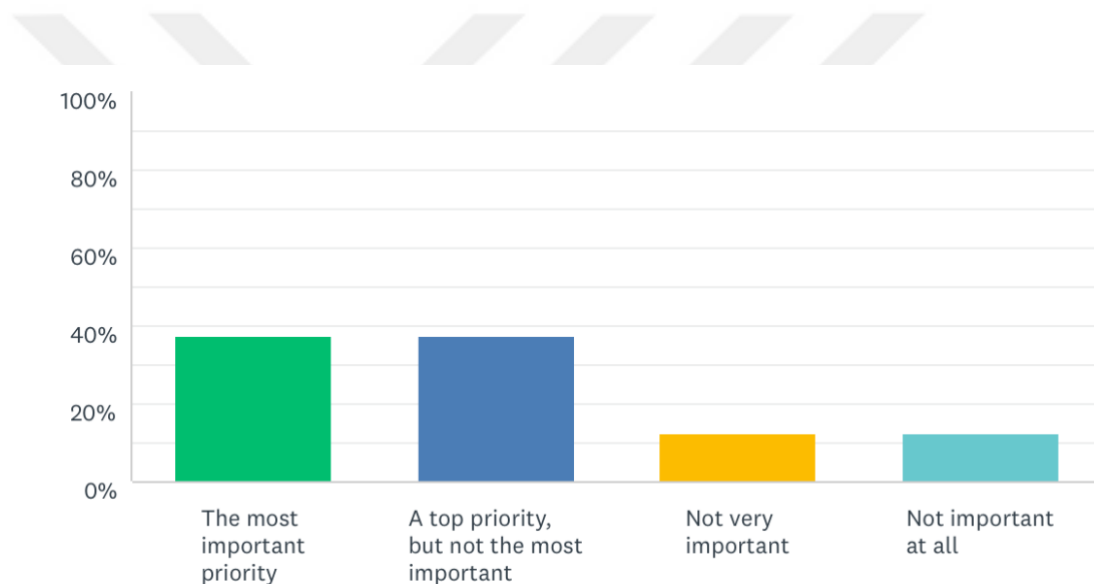


Figure 4.10. Influence of the COVID-19 Precautions

According to the survey results, the first two answers are equally chosen by the respondents. Therefore, 37.5 percent of the participants put the COVID-19 precautions taken by the airline as a top priority. The other 37.5 percent find the COVID-19 precautions as a top priority, but not the most important. The rest 25 percent either consider the COVID-19 precautions not necessary or do not think about the COVID-19 at all while purchasing a flight ticket.

4.3. Factors Affecting the Purchase and COVID-19 Measures

Three different tests have been run using SPSS: One-Way ANOVA, T-test, and Correlation tests. Three hypotheses out of five have been checked using the One-Factor Analysis of Variance (One-Way ANOVA). The first hypothesis is measured using the Point-Biserial Correlation test.

H1: The five most preferred factors while purchasing a flight ticket are related to the COVID-19 precautions taken by a particular airline.

In this hypothesis, the top five factors have been considered as the most influencing factors in the purchase decision of the passengers while buying a flight ticket. These factors are price, direct flight option, cabin class services being business, economic, premium economy and others, schedule of flights, and an airline brand. These factors have been identified as the most affecting factors in the purchasing decision according to the survey results. The first hypothesis is proposing that these factors are correlated to the COVID-19 perception of the passengers and is tested using a correlation test.

Table 4.1 shows all correlations between the considered variables. The most important outcome here is to identify how these five factors are correlated to the COVID-19 perception. According to the results illustrated in the above table, it is possible to say that the second factor is significantly positively correlated to the COVID-19. However, the first and third factors are negatively correlated with the COVID-19 variable. Pearson correlation is showing 0 for the fourth and fifth factors which are interpreted as no association at all. Based on the correlations the first hypothesis is partially supported as proposed.

In sum, non-stop flight is positively correlated with perception on COVID-19 measures, while price and cabin class services are negatively associated with COVID-19 measures. Furthermore, schedule of the flight and brand are not associated at all. When it comes to the COVID-19, people target to reach their destination as fast as possible and minimize the time spent in the airplane and airports. Thinking of the COVID-19, the factor of direct flight option becomes much more important.

Table 4.1. The Point-Biserial Correlation Test for H1

		Correlations					
		Importance of COVID-19 precautions	Price factor effect to buy a ticket	Non-Stop Flight	Cabin Class Service	Schedule of flights	Airline Brand
Importance of COVID-19 precautions	Pearson Correlation	1	-.238**	.302**	-.250**	.000	.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001	<.001	<.001	1.000	1.000
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200
Price factor effect to buy a ticket	Pearson Correlation	-.238**	1	-.220**	.109	.332**	-.170*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001		.002	.126	<.001	.016
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200
Non-Stop Flight	Pearson Correlation	.302**	-.220**	1	-.542**	-.663**	.465**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.002		<.001	<.001	<.001
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200
Cabin Class Service	Pearson Correlation	-.250**	.109	-.542**	1	.311**	-.654**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.126	<.001		<.001	<.001
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200
Schedule of flights	Pearson Correlation	.000	.332**	-.663**	.311**	1	-.702**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	1.000	<.001	<.001	<.001		<.001
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200
Airline Brand	Pearson Correlation	.000	-.170*	.465**	-.654**	-.702**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	1.000	.016	<.001	<.001	<.001	
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200

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

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

The next hypothesis is about the relationship between employment status and the COVID-19 perception of passengers.

H2: The employment status of passengers significantly affects the COVID-19 perception of the passengers.

The occupation level of consumers who participated in this survey are consisting of employed and self-employed ones. One-Way ANOVA Test which is done to test the second hypothesis shows that P-value is .325, that is $P > 0.05$, and there is no significant difference between employed and self-employed passengers. In the light of this information, this hypothesis is rejected.

Table 4.2. Descriptive Statistics of H2

Descriptives								
Importance of COVID-19 precautions								
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Employed	170	.97	1.017	.078	.82	1.12	0	3
Self-employed	30	1.17	.913	.167	.83	1.51	0	3
Total	200	1.00	1.003	.071	.86	1.14	0	3

Table 4.3. One-Way ANOVA Test of H2

ANOVA

Importance of COVID-19 precautions

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.980	1	.980	.975	.325
Within Groups	199.020	198	1.005		
Total	200.000	199			

H3: The income level of passengers significantly affects the passengers' perception on COVID-19 measures.

Table 4.4. Descriptive Statistics of H3

Descriptives

Importance of COVID-19 precautions

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
-25K	45	1.00	1.430	.213	.57	1.43	0	3
26-50K	10	3.00	.000	.000	3.00	3.00	3	3
50-100K	55	.64	.485	.065	.51	.77	0	1
100-200K	40	1.00	.000	.000	1.00	1.00	1	1
200K+	50	1.00	1.010	.143	.71	1.29	0	2
Total	200	1.00	1.003	.071	.86	1.14	0	3

Table 4.5. One-Way ANOVA Test of H3

ANOVA

Importance of COVID-19 precautions

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	47.273	4	11.818	15.089	<.001
Within Groups	152.727	195	.783		
Total	200.000	199			

According to the results, there is a statistically significant difference between the income level and the COVID-19 perception (p-value is < .001). Since the p-value is lower than the set alpha, which is 0.05, this hypothesis cannot be rejected.

The last and fourth hypothesis is set to identify the relationship between the education level and the COVID-19 perception. The hypothesis is outlined below, and the One-Way ANOVA test is used again to check this hypothesis.

Table 4.6. Post-Hoc Tests of H3.
Multiple Comparisons

Dependent Variable: Annual income level

LSD

(I) Importance of COVID-19 precautions	(J) Importance of COVID-19 precautions	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
The most important	A top priority, but not the most important	-.667*	.182	<,001	-1.03	-.31
	Not very important	-2.133*	.257	<,001	-2.64	-1.63
	Not important at all	1.467*	.257	<,001	.96	1.97
A top priority, but not the most important	The most important	.667*	.182	<,001	.31	1.03
	Not very important	-1.467*	.257	<,001	-1.97	-.96
	Not important at all	2.133*	.257	<,001	1.63	2.64
Not very important	The most important	2.133*	.257	<,001	1.63	2.64
	A top priority, but not the most important	1.467*	.257	<,001	.96	1.97
	Not important at all	3.600*	.315	<,001	2.98	4.22
Not important at all	The most important	-1.467*	.257	<,001	-1.97	-.96
	A top priority, but not the most important	-2.133*	.257	<,001	-2.64	-1.63
	Not very important	-3.600*	.315	<,001	-4.22	-2.98

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

H4: The education level of passengers affects the passengers' perception on COVID-19 measures.

Table 4.7. Descriptive Statistics of H4

Descriptives

Importance of COVID-19 precautions								
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Below High School	5	3.00	.000	.000	3.00	3.00	3	3
High School	10	3.00	.000	.000	3.00	3.00	3	3
Bachelor	95	.68	.926	.095	.50	.87	0	3
Master	80	1.06	.752	.084	.90	1.23	0	2
Ph.D	10	.50	.527	.167	.12	.88	0	1
Total	200	1.00	1.003	.071	.86	1.14	0	3

Table 4.8. One-Way ANOVA Test of H4.

ANOVA

Importance of COVID-19 precautions

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	72.286	4	18.072	27.593	<.001
Within Groups	127.714	195	.655		
Total	200.000	199			

According to the test results, it is seen that the significance or P-value is lower than 0.05 which is the set value for the test. The P-value is < .001 which is lower than alpha and based on this information, it is obvious that this relationship is not statistically significant, and therefore, this hypothesis is not supported.

Table 4.9. Post-Hoc Tests of H4.

Multiple Comparisons

Dependent Variable: Education Level

LSD

(I) Importance of COVID-19 precautions	(J) Importance of COVID-19 precautions	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
The most important	A top priority, but not the most important	-.200*	.098	.042	-.39	-.01
	Not very important	-.600*	.138	<.001	-.87	-.33
	Not important at all	1.200*	.138	<.001	.93	1.47
A top priority, but not the most important	The most important	.200*	.098	.042	.01	.39
	Not very important	-.400*	.138	.004	-.67	-.13
	Not important at all	1.400*	.138	<.001	1.13	1.67
Not very important	The most important	.600*	.138	<.001	.33	.87
	A top priority, but not the most important	.400*	.138	.004	.13	.67
	Not important at all	1.800*	.169	<.001	1.47	2.13
Not important at all	The most important	-1.200*	.138	<.001	-1.47	-.93
	A top priority, but not the most important	-1.400*	.138	<.001	-1.67	-1.13
	Not very important	-1.800*	.169	<.001	-2.13	-1.47

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Consumer purchasing behaviour has a long history and many models and definitions of consumer behaviour have been developed during these years. All businesses are relying on the sales of their products or services. People are making purchases to satisfy their needs and are affected by several factors during this process. Consumer behaviour is affected by factors such as social and cultural factors, psychological, personal, and demographic factors. The level of involvement of these factors depends on the environment and surroundings of a consumer.

People are consuming different kinds of goods and services. There are some goods that are basic needs and people are buying such products more frequently. In such instances, consumers are making routine purchases and they are deciding without thinking and evaluating other available options. In most cases, consumers are just buying some products on the spot and there is not enough time to go through all the stages of the decision-making. As a result of such purchases, consumers become loyal to the brand and the same products. However, loyal customers are not guaranteed buyers for companies, therefore, there might be changes at the time of purchase and such changes are similar products with more advanced features. In such instances, some stages of the decision-making are skipped or happen very fast.

The airline industry and the services offered by airlines were the focal points of this thesis. Consumer purchasing behaviour in aviation has been studied based on the dominant service factors. From the point of view of passengers, the significant aspects of the services of the airlines are pricing strategies, service quality, and other technical details related to the flight. Whenever consumers are deciding to travel by air, evaluative criteria depend on the purpose of the travel. The purpose of the travel might be leisure or business and alternatively, the same person can travel for both purposes. The results of the research and the survey show that most consumers are price-sensitive, and they are looking at the prices first while looking for airfares. Therefore,

in most cases, it does not matter which airline is realizing the flight, but the price of the flight is much more important.

An important feature of air transportation is its speed since air transportation is the fastest transportation mode and can carry both people and freight from one destination to another destination easily and fast. Consumers also focus on this feature while choosing an airline and it is very important that they are flying directly from origin to the destination rather than having stopovers. Even if there is not a direct flight between two destinations, consumers will look for a connecting flight with at least one stop. Another important feature pointed out by consumers within this study is cabin class. Such consumers prefer to having at least business and economy classes in the aircraft and this feature is most preferred after price and non-stop flight options. Even punctuality of the departure and arrival times of flights are less important than the price. If different airlines are flying to the same destination on the same route, most of the consumers will choose the cheapest option regardless of the brand and service quality of the air carrier. Some groups of consumers prefer the service quality and brand, as well as the reputation of the airline, which are very important to such consumers.

According to the survey results, other features such as ground services, baggage handling, on-board catering, onboard internet, and in-flight entertainment are being considered by consumers but are not determinants in the decision-making process while consumers are buying a flight ticket.

Another significant factor that has revolutionized the purchasing behaviour in aviation is COVID-19, which dramatically changed traditional service patterns of airlines. Therefore, this thesis addressed the relationship between COVID-19 measures and significant service factors for purchasing from the lenses of passengers. Their perception on both issues have been collected via a survey questionnaire.

A separate question was asked in the survey regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and the influence of the pandemic on purchase decisions. At the same time, it was discovered that consumers would take a close look at the COVID-19 precautions that airlines take. It is approved that the COVID-19 precautions implemented are quite

important for most consumers while they are looking for a flight ticket and choosing an airline. Accordingly, the top five factors, selected by respondents have been used in the first hypothesis to check the relationship to the COVID-19 perception of passengers. The impacts of several demographic variables, income level, education level, and occupation, on the perception of COVID-19 measures were tested. The results indicate that the income level and education play a significant role on the perception of COVID-19 measures while occupation was not identified as an important determinant.



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