

Determinants of Consumer Adoption of Online Air Ticketing in Nepal

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Abstract

This study examines the determinants of consumer adoption of online air ticketing in Nepal. Consumer adoption is the dependent variable. The independent variables are price, promotion, service quality, brand name, trust and experience. The primary source of data is used to assess the opinions of respondents regarding consumer adoption of online air ticketing in Nepal. The study is based on 103 respondents. To achieve the purpose of the study, structured questionnaire is prepared. The multiple regression models are estimated to test the relationship and importance of different variables on consumer adoption of online air ticketing in Nepal.

The result shows that price has a positive impact on consumer adoption of online air ticketing. It indicates that fair price of the airline ticket leads to increase in consumer adoption of online air ticketing. Likewise, promotion has a positive impact on consumer adoption of online air ticketing. It indicates that better promotional strategies encourage the customers to buy the tickets of the particular airline company. Similarly, there is a positive impact of trust on consumer adoption of online air ticketing. It indicates that high level of trust drives the customer to purchase airline tickets. Similarly, brand name has a positive impact on consumer adoption of online air ticketing. It indicates that renowned brand name of the airline stimulates the ticket purchasing behavior of the customers. Furthermore, experience has a positive impact on consumer adoption of online air ticketing. It resembles that good experience of the particular airline company leads to consumer adoption of online air ticketing.

Keywords: customer purchase intention, price, promotion, brand name, trust, experience

1. Introduction

The new era of information technology has brought multiple advantages to the mankind. In particular, the internet allowed us to search for goods in stores right from our apartments and find best offers in several clicks. Moreover, more and more people all over the world prefer to shop online and order all kinds of products on different websites. Apart from consumer goods sales and e-tailing, online travelling sector has been booming in recent years and the number of users booking their vacations on the Web has been steadily growing. The airline industry is one of the most important industries affecting economic growth of country. Airlines industry operates under a harsh market

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environment characterized by high operating costs and intense competition. Finding the ways to earn sufficient revenue to cover costs and to earn profits remain the challenging tasks for airlines industry. Behavioral intention of customers is a predictor of profitability and revenue generation of service firms (Saha and Theingi, 2009). In order to make suitable customer focused strategies for airlines, there is a need to predict the future behavior intentions of airline customers. Muslim and Qur'anis (2017) opined that airline industry needs a strong brand equity strategy to increase customers' purchase intention for its international flights. To stay ahead in the business, understanding the key drivers of airline choice is significant for airline managers to cope with today's competitive airline environment. Airlines need to know how passengers choose airlines and what kind of selection criteria make passengers select specific airlines from their diverse choice options. This information normally drives marketing strategies and management decisions of airlines. If airlines can identify how passengers' choice behaviour is influenced by important marketing variables such as ticket price, service quality and airline image, they can use such information for developing effective airline management strategies. Therefore, understanding the important factors that influence passengers' selection of an airline is fundamental in achieving growth in today's competitive aviation market (Fourie and Lubbe, 2006). Brand refers to a certain feature of a product creating awareness, reputation, and prominence of the product in the market (Keller, 2012). The brand has been an important criterion for consumers' purchase in many countries. Kotler (2000) stated that brand is a name, term, symbol and design which is used to distinguish one's products and services from competitors. Brand image is the way that public perceives about the company or its product. The consumer develops a set of brand beliefs about where each brand stands on each attribute. Image is affected by many factors beyond the company control. The set of beliefs about a brand make up brand image.

According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2012), the ability of online platforms to connect businesses directly to end-consumers, in a timely fashion and at a lower cost has been viewed as a greater leveler to both the industry and consumers in general. This has triggered many companies today to have pages on online platforms to supplement their traditional distribution channels. Besides, consumers have the tendency to relate much more with a company after they read various reviews and comments of other consumers who have already purchased from or used these platforms. Brand plays a critical role in consumer decision making and choice behavior (Erdem and Swait, 2004). In markets where quality is not easily observable, consumers generally make

their purchase decisions amid feelings of uncertainty which can make them reluctant to buy (Kim *et al.*, 2008). To solve this problem, companies may use brands as signals to effectively convey information about quality to consumers (Erdem *et al.*, 2002). Brand credibility refers to the believability of product or service position information contained in a brand (Erdem and Swait, 2004). The credibility signaled by a brand is considered important because it decreases consumer uncertainty and economizes decision-making cost (Akdeniz *et al.*, 2013). As such, credibility is considered the most important characteristic of a brand signal (Erdem and Swait, 1998; Spry *et al.*, 2011). Thakor *et al.* (1997) opined that through brand image, consumers are able to recognize a product, evaluate the quality, lower purchase risks, and obtain certain experience and satisfaction out of product differentiation. When it comes to experiential product evaluation, a positive brand image may make up for an inferior image of the origin country and raise the possibility of the product being selected. Strong brand in the market competition is the main goal of many organizations because it allows the creation of a wide range of benefits to organizations. This includes reduced risk, greater profits, cooperation with other parties as well as the opportunity for brand extension (Hawkins *et al.*, 2004; Assael, 2004; Schiffman and Kanuk, 2010).

Srivastava *et al.* (2001) considered brand trust as a market-based asset that are interconnected. It exists externally and lies in the relationship with the end user of the brand. Trust is a major factor for the relationship between the customer and the brand (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). A good relationship makes purchasing behavior into external assets of the company as this is often a real but not owned by the company (Ballester and Aleman, 2005; Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001). In other words, buying behavior is explicitly to be in the market and the brand association of a series of behaviors that develop in the brand study (Deng *et al.*, 2010). Choe and Zhao (2013) explored the relationship among determinants of brand equity as well as the relationships between brand equity, transition cost, and purchase intention. The study found brand equity of airlines directly influences purchase intention and transition cost directly influences brand equity. The study also found that transition cost indirectly influences purchase intention.

Khandelwal *et al.* (2012) examined the impact of online purchase intention on consumer attitude in metro and non-metro customers in India. The study depicted that higher level of online purchase intention provides higher level of positive consumer attitude among customers. Similarly, Lerrthairakul and Panjakajornsak (2014) examined the relationship between five dimensions of service quality of low-cost airlines and consumers' post

purchase behavioral intentions. The study showed that assurance dimensions, reliability dimensions and empathy dimensions display a significant influence on post purchase behavioral intentions. Simsek and Demirbag (2017) also investigated service quality, customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions in airline industry. The study revealed that perceived service quality affects customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions of customers. According to Grewal *et al.* (1998), the better a brand image is, the more recognition consumers give to its product quality. Consumers are usually limited in regards to the amount of time and product knowledge to make an informed purchase decision when facing similar products to choose from. As a result, brand image is often used as an extrinsic cue to make a purchase decision. Akaah (1988) concluded that consumers are more likely to purchase well-known brand products with positive brand image as a way to lower purchase risks.

Rao and Monroe (1988) argued that a brand with a more positive image does have the effect of lowering consumers' product perception risks and increasing positive feedback from consumers. Therefore, consumers generally believe that they can make a satisfying purchase by choosing well-known brands and also lower any purchase risks. Purchasing behavior can be regarded as a function of the relationship between the brand and the customer (Ambler, 1997). The trust is the core of the relationship variables that can enrich the understanding of buying behavior and can generate predictions and assessment of the better marketing performance (Ballester and Aleman, 2005). The main factors playing an important part in purchase and repurchase decisions were loyalty programs, frequency of flights, safety, baggage handling, customer service, timeliness, and price. It was found that timeliness primarily affected business travelers' purchase decision. In contrast, leisure travelers considered price as the key determinant of their airline choice (Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001).

In the context of Nepal, Sharma (2008) opined that new consumer product's branding and labeling are important aspects for market success. Similarly, Baniya (2017) found that there is a positive influence of celebrity endorsement elements (physical attractiveness, source creditability trustworthiness, source credibility expertise, and celebrity brand match up) on customer's attitudinal and behavioral loyalty (attitude towards a brand and purchase intention). The study also indicated that price, health and safety factors had significant impact on consumer's purchase behavior. Likewise, Thaguna and Ghimire (2013) observed that price, brand awareness and accurate information positively influence the buying behavior of consumers

to a certain extent. Age also plays a role in the purchasing decisions. Difference in the demographic factors such as personal status, religious belief, occupation and income level however do not bring difference in the buying behavior of Nepalese people. Thapa (2015) revealed that brand image, price fairness, better design, comfort, and efficiency have positive relationship with consumer buying behavior. In addition, Jha (2018) found that perceived value, perceived price, perceived quality, and perceived benefits are positively related to consumer purchasing intention.

The above discussion shows that empirical evidences vary greatly across the studies on the determinants of consumer adoption of online air ticketing. Though there are above mentioned empirical evidences in the context of other countries and in Nepal, no such findings using more recent data exist in the context of Nepal. Therefore, in order to support one view or the other, this study has been conducted.

The major objective of the study is to examine the determinants of consumer adoption of online air ticketing in Nepal. More specifically, it examines the relationship of independent variables (i.e., price, promotion, brand, service quality, trust and experience) with consumer adoption of online airline tickets in Nepal.

The remainder of this study is organized as follows: section two describes the sample, data, and methodology. Section three presents the empirical results and final section draws the conclusion of the study.

2. Methodological aspects

The study is based on the primary data. The data were gathered from 103 respondents through questionnaire. The respondents' views were collected on price, promotion, trust, brand, experience and adoption intention in Nepalese airlines industry. The study is based on descriptive and causal-comparative research designs.

The model

The study assumes that the consumer adoption depends upon different factors. The dependent variable selected for the study is customer purchase intention. Similarly, the selected independent variables are price, promotion, brand, trust and experience. Therefore, the model takes the following form:

Consumer adoption = $f(P, PR, SQ, BN, TR \text{ and } EX)$.

More specifically,

$$CA = \beta_0 + \beta_1 P + \beta_2 PR + \beta_3 BN + \beta_4 TR + \beta_5 EX + e$$

Where,

CA = Consumer adoption

P= Price

PR= Promotion

TR= Trust

SQ= Service quality

BR= Brand name

EX= Experience

Price was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include “I am price sensitive passenger”, “Price is the most important factors in buying airlines ticket” and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha = 0.732$).

Promotion was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 4 items and sample items include “I consider advertisement as an important factor while labelling air tickets”, “The message on advertisement attempts to persuade me to buy labelled air tickets” and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha = 0.703$).

Trust was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include “I have trust on e-ticketing”, “I am not betrayed by particular airlines” and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha = 0.777$).

Brand was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include “The brand of the particular airline industry is well known”, “I usually buy ticket from reputed airlines brand” and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha = 0.773$).

Experience was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree

and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include “I had good experience of advance booking”, “I never feel cheated while buying the tickets” and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha = 0.705$).

Consumer adoption was measured using a 5-point Likert scale where the respondents were asked to indicate the responses using 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. There are 5 items and sample items include “Airlines fair price drives me to purchase the ticket”, “Airlines reputation and brand drives to purchase the ticket of particular airlines” and so on. The reliability of the items was measured by computing the Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha = 0.781$).

The following section describes the independent variables used in this study along with hypothesis formulation.

Price

Price is the amount of money a buyer pays to a seller in exchange for a good or service (Kotler and Keller, 2006). Auf *et al.* (2018) confirmed that there is direct relationship between price, motivation, perceived culture importance and consumer buying behavior. Similarly, Rajput *et al.* (2012) revealed that there is a significant positive relationship among product price and consumer buying behavior. In addition, Yoo *et al.* (2000) found that price level could be positively related to purchasing intentions. Based on it, this study develops following hypothesis:

H₁: There is a positive relationship between price and consumer adoption.

Promotion

According to Kotler and Armstrong (2010), consumers buying decisions is highly affected by the promotional efforts and their huge number of sales. According to Driessen (2005), companies can create brand image and recognition through advertisement. The study also explained that by advertisement, companies mostly try to target teenagers and youth adult as they are attracted towards advertisement more easily. The study also showed that adults those who are mature shows positive reaction and quick reaction to the company’s advertisement. Likewise, advertising is a way to redirect the attention of customer to the benefit of purchasing product (Morgan and Pritchard, 2012). Based on it, this study develops following hypothesis:

H₂: There is a positive relationship between promotion and consumer adoption.

Brand name

Brand image or brand name plays a crucial role to enhance the performance of any company or business. Brand name is the tool which can positively change people's buying behavior (Shehzad *et al.*, 2014). According to Kohli and Thakor (1997), brand name is the creation of an image or the development of a brand identity and is an expensive and time-consuming process. According to Akdeniz *et al.* (2013), credibility signaled by a brand is considered important because it decreases consumer uncertainty and economizes decision-making cost. Likewise, consumers give more emphasis to the product quality of the good brand and induced them to buy that product (Grewal *et al.*, 1998). Based on it, this study develops following hypothesis:

H₃: There is a positive relationship between brand name and consumer adoption.

Trust

Purchase intention and repurchase intentions are highly affected by trust towards particular product and services. Fusaro *et al.* (2002) found that the most important issue that consumers evaluate when contemplating online exchange is trustworthiness. Olekalns and Smith (2005) opined trust is important in all spheres of social life. It binds friendships, facilitates bargaining, negotiations and reduces transaction costs in inter firm exchanges (Bharadwaj and Matsuno, 2006). The study found that trustworthiness in services stimulate the buying behavior of the customers. Organizational brand also plays crucial factor in maintaining positive relationship between trust and the customers buying behaviour (Elliott and Yannopoulou, 2007). Based on it, this study develops following hypothesis:

H₄: There is a positive relationship between trust and consumer adoption.

Experience

Learning stimulates changes in our behavior arising from experience. The stages that the consumer experiences before making the final purchase decision are included in the consumer decision-making process. Meyer and Schwager (2007) pointed out that customer experience is the internal and subjective response customers have to any direct or indirect contact with a company. According to Verhoef *et al.* (2009), customer experience construct is holistic in nature and involves the customer's cognitive, affective, emotional, social and physical responses. Good experience drives the customer to purchase that particular product (Spry *et al.*, 2011). Likewise, Nirushan (2017) revealed a positive relationship between purchase intention and past

experience. Based on it, this study develops following hypothesis:

H₅: There is a positive relationship between experience and consumer adoption.

3. Results and discussion

Correlation analysis

On analysis of data, correlation analysis has been undertaken first and for this purpose, Kendall’s Tau correlation coefficients along with mean and standard deviation has been computed and the results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Kendall’s Tau correlation coefficients matrix

This table presents Kendall’s Tau correlation coefficients between dependent variable and independent variables. The correlation coefficients are based on 103 observations. The dependent variable is CA (consumer adoption). The independent variables are P (Price), PR (Promotion), TR (Trust), BR (Brand) and EX (Experience).

Variables	Mean	SD	P	PR	TR	BR	EX	CA
P	4.495	0.512	1					
PR	3.927	0.789	0.334**	1				
TR	4.496	0.528	0.468**	0.371**	1			
BR	4.330	0.550	0.515**	0.456**	0.526**	1		
EX	4.448	0.587	0.525**	0.397**	0.609**	0.606**	1	
CA	4.566	0.454	0.582**	0.317**	0.621**	0.505**	0.585**	1

Notes: The asterisk sign (**) indicates that the results are significant at one percent level.

Table 1 shows that price has a positive relationship with consumer adoption of online air ticketing. It indicates that fair price of the airline ticket leads to increase in consumer adoption of online air ticketing. Likewise, promotion has a positive relationship with consumer adoption of online air ticketing. It indicates that better promotional strategies encourage the customers to buy the tickets of the particular airline company. Similarly, trust has a positive relationship with consumer adoption of online air ticketing. It indicates that high level of trust drives the customer to purchase airline tickets. Similarly, brand name has a positive relationship with consumer adoption of online air ticketing. It indicates that renowned brand name of the airline stimulates the ticket purchasing behavior of the customers. Furthermore, experience has a positive relationship with consumer adoption of online air ticketing. It resembles that good experience of the particular airline company leads to consumer adoption of online air ticketing.

Regression analysis

Having indicated the Kendall’s Tau correlation coefficients, the regression analysis has been carried out and the results are presented in Table 2. More specifically, it shows the regression results of price, promotion, trust, brand and experience on consumer adoption in Nepalese airlines industry.

Table 2

Estimated regressions of price, promotion, trust, brand and experience on consumer adoption of airlines tickets

The results are based on 103 observations using linear regression model. The model is $CA = \beta_0 + \beta_1 P + \beta_2 PR + \beta_3 TR + \beta_4 BR + \beta_5 EX + e$ where the dependent variable is CA (Consumer adoption). The independent variables are P (Price), PR (Promotion), TR (Trust), SQ (Service Quality), BR (Brand) and EX (Experience).

Model	Intercept	Regression coefficients of					Adj. R_bar²	SEE	F-value
		P	PR	TR	BR	EX			
1	2.248 (9.832)**	0.516 (10.203)**					0.336	0.370	104.109
2	3.852 (25.160)**		0.182 (4.756)**				0.096	0.431	22.616
3	2.166 (10.127)**			0.534 (11.300)**			0.383	0.356	127.697
4	2.762 (12.671)**				0.417 (8.341)**		0.252	0.392	69.573
5	2.558 (12.967)**					0.452 (10.270)**	0.339	0.369	105.471
6	1.218 (5.437)**	0.249 (4.766)**		0.273 (5.059)**			0.527	0.312	76.771
7	1.197 (5.354)**	0.234 (4.416)**		0.249 (4.448)**		0.088 (1.585)	0.531	0.311	58.640
8	1.205 (5.382)**	0.236 (4.454)**	0.029 (0.891)	0.252 (4.489)**		0.090 (1.614)	0.530	0.311	47.023
9	1.199 (5.281)**	0.235 (4.354)**	0.030 (0.903)	0.251 (4.446)**	0.009 (0.161)	0.088 (1.553)	0.528	0.312	38.998

Notes:

- i. Figures in parenthesis are t-values.
- ii. The asterisk signs (**) and (*) indicate that the results are significant at one percent and five percent level of significance respectively.
- iii. Dependent variable is consumer adoption.

Table 2 shows that the beta coefficients for price are positive with consumer adoption of online air ticketing. It indicates that there is a positive impact of fair price on consumer adoption of online air ticketing. This finding is similar to the findings of Auf *et al.* (2018). Similarly, the beta coefficients for promotion are positive with consumer adoption of online air ticketing. This reveals that promotion has a positive impact on consumer adoption of online air ticketing. This finding is consistent with the findings of Driessen (2005). Likewise, the beta coefficients for trust are positive with consumer adoption of online air ticketing indicating that trust has a positive impact on consumer

adoption of online air ticketing. This finding is similar to the findings of Olekalns and Smith (2005). Similarly, the beta coefficients for experience are positive with consumer adoption of online air ticketing indicating the positive impact of good experience on consumer adoption of online air ticketing. This finding is similar to the findings of Verhoef *et al.* (2009).

4. Summary and conclusion

The airline industry is one of the important industries affecting economic growth and it is the fast-growing industries in the world. One of the most important roles of airline alliances is to provide values to their consumers. Brand image does not exist only in the technology, features or the actual product itself, but is something brought out by promotions, advertisements, or users. Brand is also considered as contributing to maintain the competitiveness of the existence of offers given. The brand is usually associated with a particular image that can create certain associations in the minds of consumers.

This study attempts to examine the determinants of consumer adoption of online air ticketing in Nepal. The study is based on primary data which were collected from 103 respondents.

The study shows that perceived price, advertisement, trust, brand and experience have positive impact on consumer adoption of online air ticketing in the context to Nepal. The study concludes that fair price and better service quality have significant impact on the consumer adoption of online air ticketing. The study also concludes that the most dominant factor that determine consumer adoption of online air ticketing is trust.

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