



Factors influencing consumers' attitude toward online shopping for airline tickets

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: Due to the increase in Internet usage, the e-commerce industry has been booming as more consumers shop online. The purpose of this study is to determine the factors that influence consumers' decision to shop online for airline tickets.

Design/methodology/approach: A survey method was used to collect data from 200 airline ticket shoppers. The data were analysed via the Exploratory Factor Analysis and Multi-Regression Analysis.

Findings: This study found that contrary to earlier studies in online shopping, the ease-of-use of websites and price are not primary drivers of consumers shopping online. The usefulness and convenience of shopping online are, however the key drivers of airline tickets shopping online. Another key finding is that privacy and security no longer deter consumers to shop for airline tickets online.

Recommendations/value: This study adds both theoretical and practical contributions for e-commerce practitioners and airline companies as it revealed that it is important to add more useful features to their e-commerce websites and applications to increase airline ticket sales online.

Managerial implications: To provide superior customer service, airline companies need to provide customers with useful features on their websites in a convenient way. Therefore, frequent monitoring of the consumers' expectations of the convenience of online websites and applications is compulsory for continuous success in the airline industry.



Keywords

Convenience; Ease-of-use; Online shopping; Pricing; Privacy; Technology Acceptance Model; Usefulness

JEL Classification: L81, L93

1. INTRODUCTION

Online shopping has drastically increased across the globe in the past decade (Natarajan & Kasilingam, 2017; Pawełszek & Bajdor, 2020). Online shopping is also offered by airlines to gain a competitive advantage by enhancing their online booking systems to increase their online airline ticket sales (Suki & Suki, 2017). To survive in the highly competitive airline market (Simarmata *et al.*, 2017), role-players in this industry have applied new strategies, from intensive marketing of low-cost carriers (Simarmata *et al.*, 2017) to cost-cutting measures such as introducing online purchasing (Jeng & Lo, 2019; Lee *et al.*, 2018; Long & She, 2017; Neger & Uddin, 2020).

Technology has brought about major changes in the airline industry in South Africa (Smit *et al.*, 2018). In South Africa, the number of Internet users increased by 1.7 million (4.5%) between 2020 and 2021 (Datareportal, 2021), resulting in a rise in online transactions (Datareportal, 2021). This increase may have been accelerated by COVID-19 restrictions and the associated online grocery shopping (Ali, 2020; Bhatti *et al.*, 2020). However, even before the COVID-19 pandemic, most South African consumers preferred buying airline tickets online rather than via traditional physical stores (Effective Measure, 2017; Terblanche & Taljaard, 2018). As such, it is important to investigate the factors that could influence online airline ticket shopping.

Current research on the acceptance and use of technologies for shopping can broadly be classified into two streams (Roux *et al.*, 2020; Willems *et al.*, 2017). Studies in the first stream examined consumers' readiness for the major technology formats in the traditional offline retail setting, namely: (1) digital displays, such as digital signage installed in retail stores and in the general areas of shopping malls (Garaus & Wagner, 2019; Roux *et al.*, 2020), (2) mobile applications, such as mobile chatbots allowing consumers to interact with a chatbot through a chat interface (Kasilingam, 2020), tap-and-go mobile payment adoption (Bailey *et al.*, 2017) and (3) hybrid in-store systems, such as unmanned smart shops that integrate physical stores and smart technologies such as facial recognition, self-service checkout, interactive displays and smart inventory systems (Chang & Chen, 2021) and location-aware recommendation systems that automatically generate product customised marketing messages and product collocation recommendations (Landmark & Sjøbakk, 2017). Studies in the second stream

investigated factors influencing consumers' acceptance and usage of online shopping across industries, such as banking (Khan *et al.*, 2016), fashion (Ribeiro *et al.*, 2017), tourism and hospitality (Huang *et al.*, 2019), grocery shopping (Driediger & Bhatiasev, 2019) and commerce platforms, such as mobile applications (Chi, 2018) and websites (Wu & Song, 2021). The current study falls within the second stream since it examines the influences on consumers' attitudes toward online shopping within the South African airline industry. This summary of past research revealed copious research on the acceptance and use of technologies for shopping in various industries. However, factors that drive online shopping in the airline industry have rarely been explored in South Africa. As such, research needs to be conducted to determine which factors influence consumers' decision to shop for airline tickets online in South Africa.

Furthermore, various international studies regarding the behaviour pertaining to the choice of airport and airline across the globe have been published (e.g. Atalık *et al.*, 2019; Carstens & Heyns, 2018; Lamb *et al.*, 2021; O'Connell *et al.*, 2020; Shen & Yahya, 2018; Woo, 2019). However, only a handful of studies attempted to examine the online shopping tendency for airline tickets, with the exceptions being the cultural effects on online ticket decisions in Spain and the Netherlands (Mafe *et al.*, 2013), the impact of advertising on online shopping trends for airline tickets in Iran (Abayi & Khoshtinata, 2016) and the usability of online shopping for airline tickets in Indonesia (Guritno & Siringoringo, 2013). However, these few recent exceptions have not considered the influences on consumers' attitudes toward online shopping for airline tickets in a South African context.

Despite the global increase in online sales, little is known about the factors that affect online airline ticket sales in South Africa (Febel, 2015; Makhitha *et al.*, 2019; Pentz *et al.*, 2020). Studies conducted in the South African domestic airline industry mainly focused on traditional channels, such as passengers' perceptions regarding the service quality delivered by airports and airlines (De Jager *et al.*, 2012; Lubbe *et al.*, 2016; Mantey & Naidoo, 2016) as well as the potential benefits obtained via travel agents (Terblanche & Taljaard, 2018). However, only a few scholars have considered the use of online delivery systems provided in the South African airline industry, such as the adoption of mobile self-service technologies (Smit *et al.*, 2018), online servicescape dimensions (Kühn *et al.*, 2015) and price. A systematic search via scholarly search engines (e.g. Google Scholar, Sabinet and Research Gate) did not offer any studies that shed adequate light on the acceptance and use of online shopping for airline tickets in South Africa. This indicates a gap in research to be closed by the current study. The current study aims to investigate the factors that influence online airline ticket shopping. The objectives of this study are, therefore, to:

1. To determine the influence of website usefulness on consumers' decision to shop for airline tickets online
2. To determine the influence of ease-of-use websites on consumers' decisions to shop for airline tickets online
3. To determine the influence of convenience on consumers' decision to shop for airline tickets online
4. To determine the influence of price on consumers' decision to shop for airline tickets online
5. To determine the influence of privacy and security on consumers' decision to shop for airline tickets online.

The rest of the article is structured as follows: the theoretical background and literature review are presented, followed by the research methodology, data analysis and results. The discussion of results is followed by recommendations, limitations and concluding remarks.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Technology Acceptance Model

The current study is grounded on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) developed by Davis in 1986 to explain the acceptance of information technology for different tasks (Davis *et al.*, 1989). The TAM proposes perceived usefulness and perceived ease-of-use as cognitive beliefs and major determinants for attitude towards a given technology (Davis *et al.*, 1989) and is regarded as one of the most influential models guiding the measurement of consumer's acceptance of technology (Brusch & Rappel, 2020; Driedige & Bhatiasev, 2019). Various researchers have applied this model to examine and predict consumers' attitudes towards technology in traditional or offline retail settings, such as mobile chatbot interaction via smartphones while shopping in India (Kasilingam, 2020) and tap-and-go mobile payment adoption in the USA (Bailey *et al.*, 2017), and online shopping in different contexts, such as grocery shopping in Thailand (Driedige & Bhatiasev, 2019), sources of information for online buying decisions in India (Fernandes *et al.*, 2021) and adult shopping continuance intentions in the United States (Wu & Song, 2021). It has also been applied in the airline industry to examine passengers' level of technology readiness to adopt mobile self-service technologies in South Africa (Smith *et al.*, 2018). The universal acceptance of the TAM in these various sectors and contexts verifies the importance of the model. These studies have applied the TAM using different constructs to fit their respective context.

The TAM model offers several benefits to scholars by providing a well-recognised theoretical basis and a consistent tool for measurement and empirical soundness (Chang & Chen 2021),

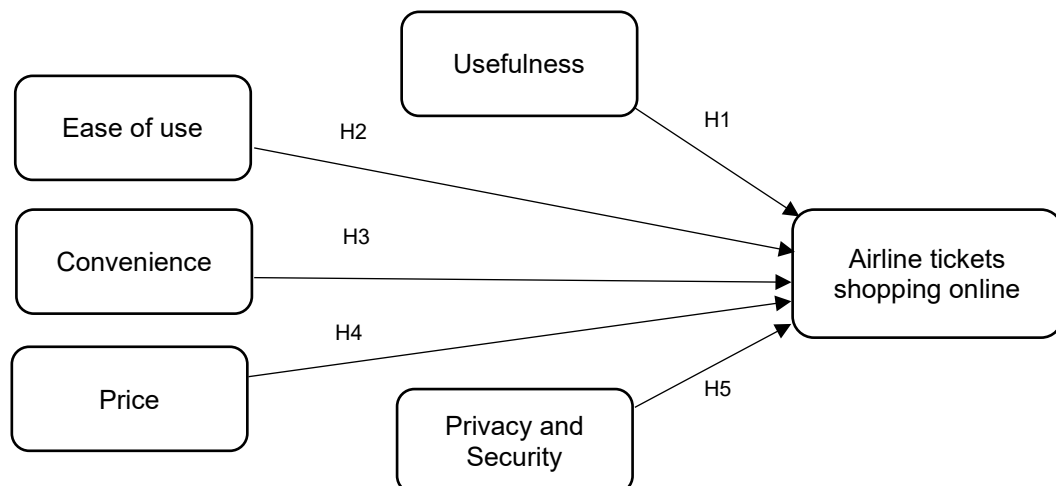
offering a validated inventory of measurement scales and helping explain major variances in usage intentions (Driediger & Bhatiasev, 2019). Benbasat and Barki (2007) argued that TAM disregards the social processes of information systems. As such, Legris *et al.* (2003) propose the need to incorporate additional variables to fit various research contexts, which is also supported by recent studies in the area of online shopping (Ofori & Nimo, 2019; Wu & Song, 2021).

In the context of online airline ticket shopping, perceived usefulness and ease of use (Liang & Shia, 2018; Smith *et al.*, 2018), online price and convenience (Jeng & Lo, 2019; Shen & Yahya, 2021), and privacy and security (Cui *et al.*, 2018; Wu & Song, 2021) were found to influence consumers' intentions to shop online. As such, based on these studies, the current study incorporated the following constructs: usefulness of online shopping, ease-of-use of online shopping, convenience of online shopping, online shopping prices and online shopping privacy concerns into the TAM to fit the context of the study. As such, the research model of the current study is presented in the next section.

2.2 Model and hypothesis development

The purpose of this model (Figure 1) is to determine the influence of the aforementioned research constructs on airline ticket shopping online.

Figure 1: Conceptual model



Source: Own compilation

The research model in Figure 1 is adapted in this study to investigate the factors influencing consumers' attitude toward online shopping for airline tickets. The hypothesis development, as indicated in the figure, is discussed next.

2.2.1 Usefulness of online shopping

Perceived usefulness is defined as the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would enhance their task (Davis *et al.*, 1989). Usefulness in the context of online shopping refers to consumers' perceptions that using online shopping adds value to their shopping experience (Monsuwe *et al.*, 2004). In the current study, usefulness is defined as the ability of airlines' online shopping websites to provide relevant products and information to add value for customers. This can help consumers to view a broader product selection and information to assist them in making a well-informed purchase decision when shopping for airline tickets. Past research has shown that online shopping offers consumers access to a wider product assortment than traditional stores (Kloppers, 2017; Kumar & Kashyap, 2018; Li *et al.*, 2017). Recent studies affirm that the usefulness of online shopping positively influences consumers' decision to shop online (Chang & Chen, 2021; Driedige & Bhatiasev, 2019; Li *et al.*, 2017). In the airline industry, usefulness has been proven to strongly predict consumers' online ticket-buying behaviour (Lin & Filieri, 2015). It is therefore hypothesised that:

H1: The usefulness of online shopping has a positive influence on consumers' decision to shop for airline tickets online.

2.2.2 Ease-of-use of online shopping

Perceived ease-of-use refers to the degree to which an individual believes using a certain system would be easy and require little effort (Chang & Chen, 2021) and that complicated websites can deter consumers from buying online (Huang *et al.*, 2019; Ofori & Nimo, 2019; Wu & Song, 2021). Online retailers, therefore, need to simplify and design their websites to attract customers. However, some scholars noticed that ease of use does not influence consumers' intentions to shop online (Brusch & Rappel, 2020; Gibreel *et al.*, 2018). This might be due to consumers now being familiar with browsing and navigating various websites and applications. This contrasts sharply with Hamad *et al.* (2017) and Kasilingam (2020), who reported that consumers shop less online if the online store lacks ease in searching and comparing products. Several other studies also found that ease of use does indeed influence consumers' attitudes and encourage them to shop for airline tickets online (Hasan, 2016; Smith *et al.*, 2018). The above literature has highlighted the importance of ease-of-use of websites when shopping for airline tickets and guided the following hypothesis:

H2: Ease-of-use of online shopping has a positive influence on consumers' attitude toward online shopping for airline tickets.

2.2.3 Convenience of online shopping

In the context of online shopping, Palacios and Jun (2020) define convenience as the time and effort saved when consumers shop online. Research has proved that convenience plays a key role in shaping consumers' attitudes toward online shopping (Kumar *et al.*, 2020; Loketkrawee & Bhatiasevi, 2018; Palacios & Jun, 2020). The benefits of shopping online, which include ease of access, time-saving and search convenience, are some of the major reasons behind consumers' positive attitude towards online shopping (Meixian, 2015; Palacios & Jan, 2020). This is supported by findings from recent studies, which showed that consumers can save time when shopping for airline tickets online (Eryigit & Fan, 2021; Liang & Shia, 2018). Also, the findings of Bruschi and Rappel (2020) found that convenience has a positive influence on consumers' decisions to shop for airline tickets online. Based on these findings, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H3: The convenience of online shopping has a positive influence on consumers' attitude towards shopping online for airline tickets.

2.2.4 Online shopping prices

Price is what is given up to acquire a product or service (Lamb *et al.*, 2015). Findings regarding the influence of prices in an online context and for airline tickets are contradictory. Some studies conducted in the United States and Vietnam show that prices have no influence on consumers' decisions to shop for airline tickets online (Almendros & Del Barrio-Garcia, 2016; Rodríguez & Trujillo, 2013). Lee *et al.* (2017), on the other hand, found that price plays a major role in consumers' decision to shop online. Pappas *et al.* (2017) showed that when shopping online, consumers focus on finding the cheapest products or wait for promotions in order to buy products or services at a lower price. A recent study by Shen and Yahya (2021) on Malaysian and Chinese airline passengers found that lower airline ticket prices lead to more satisfied and loyal customers. Jeng and Lo (2019) confirm that online shopping websites allow easy comparison of prices across airlines. This implies that online shopping enables consumers to locate lower-priced airline tickets online as they compare prices.

It is therefore hypothesised in this study that:

H4: Online shopping prices have a positive influence on consumers' attitudes toward shopping online for airline tickets.

2.2.5 Online shopping privacy and security concerns

Information privacy and security involves the securing of any personal information of customers (e.g. banking details and financial data) when making purchases online (Changchit *et al.*, 2019; Pandey *et al.*, 2015). Thakur and Srivastava (2015) revealed that privacy and security have a very low influence on consumers' decisions to shop online in India. Bandara *et al.* (2020), however, revealed that privacy has become a critical part of the endeavour to encourage consumers to shop online in Sydney, Australia. This may be attributed to the alarming increase in cybercrime in Australia in recent years (Theunissen *et al.*, 2021). Other previous studies also postulate that online shopping users are reluctant to shop at online stores with less privacy and security (Rahman *et al.*, 2018; Weber & Badenhorst-Weiss, 2018) since consumers are concerned their data could be stolen by cyber-criminals or misused and sold to third parties (Kaur *et al.*, 2018).

When shopping for airline tickets online, concerns about financial security, lack of control over the information given to businesses and fear of sharing personal information online are among the reasons that might deter consumers from embracing online shopping (Liang & Shiau, 2018). Some might have the perception that their personal information may be easily accessible to cybercriminals (Kim *et al.*, 2019). This indicates that consumers lack trust in online shopping, making it difficult to fully embrace it. Based on the above literature, it is hypothesised that:

H5: Online shopping privacy and security concerns have a positive influence on consumers' attitudes towards airline ticket shopping.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study followed a quantitative research approach to determine the influence of research constructs derived from the Technology Acceptance Model (i.e., Usefulness, Ease-of-use, Convenience, Price, Privacy and Security) on online shopping for airline tickets. The research instrument used was informed by previous studies (Amaro & Duarte, 2013; Mafe *et al.*, 2009) and adjusted to fit the purpose of the current study.

3.1 Data collection and sampling

Data collection was done through a self-administered questionnaire. Consistent with a study conducted by Lu *et al.* (2013) and Shen and Yahya (2021), a convenience sampling method was applied to survey 200 online ticket shoppers. In non-probability sampling, the generalisation of the sample size is based on theory rather than the population (Saunders *et*

al., 2019). This sample size allowed the statistical tests (factor - and regression analysis) and is similar to other online shopping studies conducted in a South African (e.g., Hung *et al.*, 2019) and international context (e.g., Lorenzo *et al.*, 2009), The sample of the current study comprised of 200 airline passengers at the Polokwane International Airport requested to complete a self-administered questionnaire while waiting to board their specific flights. Screening questions served to identify respondents who qualify on the basis of being between the ages of 18 and 65 and having shopped for airline tickets online in the past six months. This is in line with other studies on online shopping for airline tickets that also screened consumers and followed a non-probability sampling approach (Jeng & Lo, 2019; Suki & Suki, 2017).

3.2 Measuring instrument

The questionnaire used measured five factors influencing consumers' attitudes toward online shopping for airline tickets and their attitudes toward online shopping for airline tickets on a six-point Likert Scale (ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree). The items for the usefulness of online shopping (4 items) and the ease of use of online shopping (4 items) were derived from a similar study that investigated drivers and barriers of airline ticket shopping online in Spain (Mafe *et al.*, 2009). The items for online shopping prices (4 items), convenience of online shopping (4 items) and online shopping privacy and security (4 items) were based on a study by Amaro and Duarte (2013) that investigated the factors that influence online airline ticket shopping.

4. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS version 24) was used for data analysis. In this section, demographic data were highlighted, followed by reliability, factor- and regression analysis.

4.1 Sample profile

The sample comprised a total of 200 respondents, 53% of whom were female and 47% male. The minimum age of the respondents was 18, and the maximum was 63. The age distribution had a high standard deviation of 9.98 years, indicating the extent to which the ages of the respondents are apart. The average age of the respondents was 37 years, making the majority of the sample from Generation Y (people born between 1977 and 1994). Generation Y consumers are the most adept with computers and digital and Internet devices (Kotler & Armstrong, 2016), and therefore, consumers are likely to accept online shopping methods.

With regards to the education level of the respondents, the majority of the online shoppers surveyed for this study have a Bachelor's degree (24%), followed by those with a national diploma (21%) and an Honours degree (19%). The remainder of the respondents indicated that they have some kind of further education (6%) or a matric certificate (2%).

4.2 Reliability and validity

All the variables in this study were subjected to a reliability and validity test to check the internal consistency of the construct related to shopping online for airline tickets. Validity implies that the research instrument measured what it was intended to measure. The validity of the current research instrument was enhanced by using validated questionnaires from previous studies (Amaro & Duarte, 2013; Mafe *et al.*, 2009). Cronbach's alpha was applied to test the reliability of each of these research constructs. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the current study ranged from 0.81 to 0.86, thereby exceeding the suggested threshold of 0.7 (Malhotra 2004).

4.3 Explorative factor analysis

Explorative Factor Analysis (EFA) was used to determine which items should be grouped based on statistical similarity. EFA is a multi-variable analysis type that enables a summarised presentation of data based on the relationships among the data (Zikmund & Babin, 2010). To determine the adequacy of the sample for factor analysis, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) tests were conducted. The KMO value was 0.85, which exceeded the recommended minimum value of 0.6 (Hair *et al.*, 2010), and Bartlett's test of sphericity was statistically significant ($p < .001$). The explorative factor analysis was then conducted to identify potential factors that have an influence on online shopping. All the items of this scale were subjected to the Principal Components Analysis method to determine the underlying factorial structure. Table 1 shows the factor loadings of the research constructs.

Table 1: Factor analysis results

	Factor				
	1	2	3	4	5
I shop online when I can reduce my efforts in travelling and walking.	0,83				
I find it convenient to shop online at any time.	0,72				
I shop online as I do not have to leave home to shop.	0,65				
Online ticket shopping is convenient.	0,60				
I am concerned about my security when I shop online.		0,85			
I would be more likely to shop on the Internet if credit card security was ensured.		0,80			
I am concerned about the possible interception of financial information by an unidentified third party.		0,72			
I am concerned about my privacy when shopping online.		0,72			
Promotions (e.g. sales, gifts, etc.) offered online are attractive to me.			0,84		
I shop online because of better promotions and discounts.			0,71		
When considering where to shop for tickets, price is my first consideration.			0,68		
I usually find better prices when shopping online.			0,41		
Finding the right product online is easy.				0,80	
Online shopping procedure is worry-free and effortless.				0,80	
Using the Internet to shop online requires no mental effort at all.				0,76	
It is easy to shop for airline tickets online.				0,58	
A help section is useful to address most of my shopping questions.					0,74
I find useful information about the different choices when shopping for airline tickets online.					0,73
I find a wide range of functionalities that enhance my shopping experience when shopping for airline tickets online.					0,69
The performance of the website meets my expectations.					0,60

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.

Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization.a.Rotation converged in 8 iterations

Source: Own construction

Internal consistency coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) were calculated for the items constituting the 20-item scale for factors affecting consumer decisions to shop online. Each of the five research constructs consisted of four items. All items included in the usefulness, ease-of-use,

convenience and privacy constructs had a factor loading above 0.6. Under the pricing factor, one item loaded 0.41. According to Kline (1994), factor loadings above 0.6 are considered high, and factor loadings above 0.3 are considered moderately high. Negative factor loadings show the variable is related to the opposite direction of the factor. However, both positive and negative loadings are equally important (Kline, 1994). All the items in the five research constructs had factor loadings above 0.40. As such, it was decided that no item should be removed from the analysis. The Kaiser's criterion was used to extract the eigenvalues larger than 1. The total variance results show the five factors identified in explorative factor analysis have eigenvalues larger than 1. These five factors explained a total variance of 67.69%.

4.4 Multiple regression

During this phase, the contributions of the five identified independent variables were assessed. Whereas the model summary and the ANOVA focused on the overall regression analysis results, the coefficient table considered the variables individually. These results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Regression results

Model	Standardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	T	Sig
	B	Std. error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.58	0,81		3.71	0,002
Usefulness of online shopping	0,53	0,15	0,27	3.41	0,001
Ease-of-use websites	-0,06	0,12	-0,03	-0,49	0,622
Prices online	-0,07	0,12	0,04	0,60	0,544
Convenience of online shopping	0,47	0,17	0,23	2,72	0,007
Privacy when shopping online	-0,02	0,11	-0,01	-0,23	0,815

Source: Own construction

Table 2 shows the regression results for each independent variable. The column marked 'sig' indicates whether the unstandardised regression coefficients were significant. If the p-value of the coefficient was less than 0.05, such a variable is a significant predictor of consumers' attitudes towards online shopping for airline tickets. Only usefulness and convenience are significant at 0.001 and 0.007, respectively. There is thus support for H1 and H3 as the usefulness and convenience of online shopping had positive influences on consumers'

decisions to shop for airline tickets online. There was no support for H2, H4 and H5 in the results, as the ease of use, prices, and privacy did not have a positive influence on consumers' attitude toward online shopping for airline tickets.

The Beta coefficient indicates the contribution each independent variable has on the dependent variable and must be within the range of -0.1 and 1 to be acceptable (Zikmund & Babin, 2010). All the Beta values were acceptable as they are within the range of -0.1 and 1. The Beta coefficient results also show that only usefulness and convenience had a positive influence on attitude towards online shopping for airline tickets at 0.27 and 0.23, respectively.

5. DISCUSSION

There have been numerous global studies on consumers' acceptance and usage of online shopping across industries (Chi, 2018; Driedige & Bhatiasev, 2019; Huang *et al.*, 2019; Khan *et al.*, 2016; Ribeiro *et al.*, 2017; Wu & Song, 2021). Other scholars inspected airline passengers' online shopping behaviour in Europe (Mafe *et al.*, 2013), Iran (Abayi & Khoshtinata, 2016) and Indonesia (Guritno & Siringoringo, 2013). They have, however, not considered the influences on consumers' attitudes towards online shopping for airline tickets in a South African context. The current research, therefore, contributes to online shopping literature by identifying factors that influence consumers' decision to shop online for airline tickets.

The findings of the current study imply that consumers value the usefulness of online shopping. This is evidenced by previous research, which also found that usefulness positively influences consumers' attitudes toward online shopping (Chang & Chen, 2021; Driedige & Bhatiasev, 2019; Li *et al.*, 2017). This reflects that if consumers find useful information when shopping online, chances are they will continue to prefer online shopping to buying airline tickets at traditional brick-and-mortar stores.

Consistent with the previous studies on online shopping in other contexts (Kumar & Kashyap, 2018; Palacios & Jun, 2020) and in the area of airline ticket shopping (Brusch & Rappel, 2020; Eryiğit & Fan, 2021; Liang & Shiau, 2018), convenience has a positive influence on consumers' decision to shop for airline tickets online. This indicates that convenience is a major predictor of online airline ticket shopping. Based on this finding, consumers are more likely to continue shopping online due to the convenience they find. The ability of online shoppers to purchase airline tickets from anywhere at any time makes online shopping more convenient than physically buying airline tickets at traditional stores.

The results, however, showed that ease of use has no influence on consumers' attitudes toward online shopping. This finding is contrary to previous studies in the area of online shopping (Huang *et al.*, 2019; Ofori & Nimo, 2019; Smith *et al.*, 2018). However, the results of the current study confirm the studies by Bruschi and Rappell (2020) and Gibreel *et al.* (2018), which found that ease of use does not influence consumers' decisions to shop online. The findings of the current study may be a result of consumers' familiarity with technology. Many consumers, particularly airline passengers, use technology on a daily basis, either from their personal devices or computers at work. Also, the level of education of the airline passengers surveyed in this study is relatively high, enabling this group of the population to use technology easily.

Prices were found to have no influence on consumers' decisions to shop for airline tickets online. This contradicts some past findings (Jeng & Lo, 2019; Shen & Yahya, 2021), but are aligned with other previous airline industry studies also reporting no significant influence (Almendros & Garcia 2016; Rodríguez & Trujillo 2013). The contrasting views on the importance of airline ticket prices online might be due to some novice users being more concerned about prices when shopping for airline tickets online (Almendros & Garcia, 2016) or consumers not necessarily having favourable attitudes toward lower prices online (Cheah & Liang 2015). This might also be partly due to several medical insurance companies in South Africa offering their members discounted airline tickets through partnerships to attract and retain customers and promote wellness. Consumers who qualify for these savings on travel-related expenses are, therefore, not as concerned about the higher ticket prices offered on airline websites.

Privacy and security concerns were found to have no positive influence on consumers' decisions to shop for airline tickets online. This is similar to the findings regarding online shopping in different industries (Gurung & Raja, 2016; Mafe *et al.*, 2009; Thakur & Srivastava, 2015) but contradictory to other past findings (Bandara *et al.*, 2020; Rahman *et al.*, 2018; Weber & Badenhorst-Weiss 2018). The potential explanation for these conflicting results may be the level of cybercrime in these different countries and the type of online shopping. The current study was conducted in South Africa, where cyber-attacks on online airline providers are relatively low compared to these other countries. As such, airline ticket shoppers in South Africa might be less concerned about privacy and security issues when shopping online.

5.1 Recommendations

This research found that of the five hypotheses measured, only usefulness and convenience have an influence on consumers' decisions to shop for airline tickets online. Thus, the more

useful or convenient the online shopping website is, the more likely consumers are to shop for airline tickets online. Airline companies, therefore, need to prioritise usefulness and convenience for consumers when shopping for airline tickets online. With regard to ease of use, contemporary consumers seem to no longer struggle with the use of technology. The rapid global increase in internet usage has enabled consumers to familiarise themselves with web applications and subsequent ease in shopping online. Consumers who regularly use online shopping are more educated to detect suspicious activities online. As such, they are more likely to identify and trust credible online retailers with their private information. The findings of this study also show that price is not a major driver of shopping for airline tickets online. As such, this study shows that although price remains an important factor to be given attention by airline companies, airline ticket shoppers are primarily driven by convenience and usefulness when deciding to shop for airline tickets online.

5.2 Managerial implications

This study offers several managerial contributions to benefit the aviation industries and other organisations practising e-commerce in South Africa. To deliver convenience and usefulness when consumers book airline tickets online, it is critical to enhance the user experience and streamline the booking process. Considering the high mobile phone penetration in this country, optimisation of the websites for when using mobile devices is essential. This can be done via a responsive design and seamless functionality to enable users to access and book flights conveniently on the go. They must also design and deliver responsive customer support platforms, such as live chat, email, or phone, to assist users with inquiries, changes, or issues during the booking process. Other useful features that consumers may have are the ability to check in online before boarding their flights and the flexibility of changing boarding times on these applications and websites without physically visiting their premises.

The drastic advances in Artificial intelligence (AI) can also be used to enhance convenience and usefulness for airline tickets online by implementing intelligent chatbots for instant assistance, personalised flight recommendations based on user preferences, voice-activated interfaces for hands-free interactions and even fraud detection systems.

Although this study shows that consumers have begun to trust online shopping with their personal and private information, airline ticket sellers must remain vigilant in ensuring that the purchase of these tickets is safe from cyber criminals with malicious intentions. As the study also found online shopping is convenient, airline companies must encourage all their customers to buy airline tickets online to create a win-win situation for both the consumers and

the airline companies. This will serve as a cost-cutting approach for airline companies and time-saving for consumers.

5.3 Limitations and further studies

Although the study has produced a number of important findings about online shopping in the airline industry, it is not without limitations. The findings include the realisation that Airline ticket shoppers are no longer deterred from buying airline tickets online. Previously, online shoppers were concerned about privacy and security when buying online. Also, another key finding shows that airline ticket shoppers are not buying airline tickets online due to possible low prices. However, it is the convenience of buying these tickets online that drives consumers to shop online. Finally, this study reveals that airline ticket shoppers are not driven by the ease of use of websites and applications to shop online, as found in previous studies. The lack of a sample frame from airline companies led to the use of a non-probability convenience sampling method to select the respondents for this study, which is considered to affect the generalisability of research findings.

This study has focused on online shopping for airline tickets in South Africa. Further studies may focus on understanding consumers' attitudes towards online shopping in other industries. Future studies should also concentrate on consumers who currently do not shop online to determine what discourages them from shopping for Airline tickets online. Also, a qualitative can be conducted in the future where open-ended questions are used to determine what useful features can be added to online shopping applications to increase online shopping usefulness and convenience. Such focus areas will indicate the factors that discourage these consumers from shopping online and what measures can be applied to promote online shopping.

6. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this article was to determine the factors that influence consumers to shop for airline tickets online. The purpose was fulfilled by using inferential statistics to determine how online decision-making takes place. The study found that convenience and usefulness are the main drivers of online airline ticket shopping. This implies that for airline companies to succeed in the area of online shopping, they should invest more in ensuring that online shopping is more convenient and useful. This study has added a significant theoretical and practical contribution to both the airline industry and e-commerce practitioners. With empirical evidence, this study has identified usefulness and convenience as the most important factors driving airline ticket sales online. These findings will assist online retailers in adjusting their online marketing strategies to meet the specific requirements of their customers.

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