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School of Graduate Studies

Assessment on Performance Challenges of COVID-19 Pandemic and Management Responses in the Ethiopian Advertising Industry

**A Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies of St. Mary's University in
Partial Fulfillment for the Degree of Masters of Arts (M.A) in Marketing
Management**

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Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that Kidist Hailu Geressu has carried out her research work on the topic entitled **“Assessment on Performance Challenges of COVID-19 Pandemic and Management Responses in the Ethiopian Advertising Industry”**. The work is original in nature and it is appropriate for the submission for the reward of Degree of Masters of Arts (M.A) in Marketing Management.

Advisor:- **Dr. Mesfin Werkinch (PhD):** _____

DECLARATION

I, Kidist Hailu hereby declare that this study entitled “**Assessment on Performance Challenges of COVID-19 Pandemic and Management Responses in the Ethiopian Advertising Industry**” is my own work. All the data and information in this document have been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conducts. This study has not been submitted for award of any degree or diploma program in this or any other institution and, I have fully cited, acknowledged and referenced all materials and results that are not original to this work.

Researcher - Kidist Hailu Geressu: _____

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Kidist Hailu Geressu

ABSTRACT

The worldwide stretch of the virus and its effects in economies has been described in various research outputs and other reports. Several academic papers have been published throughout the globe. This research was designed to assess on Performance challenges of COVID-19 pandemic and Management Responses in the Ethiopian Advertising industry; through focusing on ten systematically selected sample advertising companies' in Addis Ababa. Using a questionnaire and in-depth interview methods of data collection, data was gathered and analyzed predominantly in a qualitative approach and figures have been also analyzed quantitatively. As the government implemented necessary quarantines and social distancing practices to contain the pandemic, the efforts to reach customers was difficult. Therefore, the business performance challenges of the sample advertising companies has been in a problem for almost one year and half since the pandemic was declared in the country. The data from this survey proved that the business performance in general; sales volume, and the employees' job satisfaction have been boldly affected by the pandemic. Most of the respondents suggest that even though sales volume has been increasing at a slower rate after the first six months since the pandemic was discovered, the companies couldn't still restore their former sales volumes prior to the pandemic. Even when all the protective measures were handled, the emotional effect the pandemic caused was immense, and as a result employees were too afraid to work in the beginning. The study recommends that the advertising companies should have to be engaged in new marketing strategies and practices such as identifying potential new products and services needed to meet clients' needs and expectations in relation with the pandemic, to be tactful and empathetic to consumers' plight, conduct charitable sales promotions, and safeguarding the health of employees and ensure employee and customer safety.

Key Words: Advertising companies, business performance, job satisfaction, management challenge, Operational challenge and sales volume.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1. INTRODUCTION

1.2. Background of the Study

The Corona virus disease (COVID-19) has been affecting the world economy since it was first identified in December 2019 in the city of Wuhan, China. The pandemic has also had significant economic consequences globally. Different sectors, if not all, are affected by this pandemic. In addition to this the corona virus pandemic has also led to an immediate drop in advertising spending. (Cathy Li & Stefan Hall, 2020).

Ethiopia is among the countries which are victims of this pandemic. Anyone could imagine the effect of the disease on the overall economy of the country. This researcher made a brief observation on different advertising companies; their business performance, their incomes have been decreasing, their management has been challenged and employees have been also affected emotionally and income-wises. As data from the Ministry of Health show, there have been close to 275 thousand cases up to the end of June, 2021. There have also been some reflections and reviews conducted on how the pandemic is spoiling the economy. And the pandemic's effect on any business has been reflected in many ways and platforms. But, vivid data are still missing.

Since this thesis is about a business performance, it would be good to introduce what it is. Business performance is defined differently. Yadin (2002, p. 281) explains it in the following way. "Also termed [as] performance analysis or appraisal, an audit of the performance of a product in the marketplace, [is] measuring it against the marketing plan, its targets and performance estimates.

Management response is a formal mechanism that helps ensure that evaluations are used, contributing to organizational effectiveness, learning and accountability.

Companies always struggle to improve their products and services through different business mechanisms. But, some risks such as the COVID-19 pandemic are out of their controls. Frame (2003) explains this issue in the following way:

Risk has its origins within and outside a given organizational environment. For example, many of the risks you face lie outside your control because they arise outside your realm of operations. Government regulations fall into this category.

The lockdown and limited movements of people and products because of the disease are believed to affect most companies in Ethiopia in general. Advertising businesses couldn't be out of these effects. The restrictions have been challenging almost every business activity in the country, since most of business transactions are taken place with the buyer and seller's presence in person.

Several business companies have faced losses and a decrease in sales. Currently, based on the primary assessment of this researcher, many advertising companies are in a position of market uncertainty. COVID-19 has also affected these selected advertising companies' in Addis Ababa – companies at the center of this research's inquiry - business performance/activity.

For several marketing scholars, advertising is an economic communication system aimed at achieving fast payoff of marketing investment/s. For other scholars in other relevant professions, anyone might find different perspectives. The 10 advertising companies or the center of this inquiry are taken taking the earlier view of advertising as a generic description for the companies.

These advertising companies have been selected based on the research methodologies mentioned later in this research paper. According to American Marketing Association advertising is “any paid form of non-personal presentation of ideas, goods and services by an identified sponsor (Yadin, 2002, p. 38).

The centers of this survey, the ten privately owned companies, are established in different years, but with proximate time of business survival. They are all head quartered in Addis Ababa. These Companies currently have an average of 60 employees. Their products/services include light-emitting diode (LED), light box, reflective signage, streamer and reflective banners, display stand, stickers, acrylic, silk screen printing, fabric print, car branding, wall branding, posters, giveaway or promotional items and etc.

This thesis entitled, **“Assessment on Performance Challenges of COVID-19 Pandemic and Management Responses in the Ethiopian Advertising Industry”** then tries to show the impact

of the pandemic on the challenges of business performances; sales volume and employees' job satisfaction of companies, specifically on those advertising businesses. The advertising service sector and its relations with management responses will be assessed. These Companies, companies in this inquiry, should be also seen as shadows of the scenes to portray the trends of business performance trends in the Ethiopian economy during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The urge to scrutinize the challenges of COVID-19 on world economy and different businesses have been in the making. This thesis focusing on advertising companies in Addis Ababa, analyzes the actual business performance and management challenges of the pandemic on the selected sample advertising companies in the given time since the pandemic was first discovered.

1.3. Statement of the Problem

The world wide spread of the virus and its effects in economies have been described in various research outputs and other reports. A number of research papers have been published since the outbreak has come to surface.

A survey made by Alaam (2020) describes that with regard to the impact of COVID-19 and the looming recession, there is a need to redefine economic systems to ensure that there is accountability and continuity post-virus. This way, target policies may be computed and weighted against both the short-term and long-term impacts on the economy, both at local and global levels (Ibid, P. 104).

Moreover, a research carried out by UNICEF (2020, P. 93) entitled as “*COVID-19 Socio-Economic Vulnerability Assessment of Ethiopia*” shows that the level of vulnerability to drop of income from remittances is considered as medium. The drop-in remittances are to be significant possibly lasting if the global economic crisis is prolonged, but on the other hand the dependence on remittances is relatively low compared to many other countries”.

There are other researches on the effect of the pandemic on business operations, but it is difficult to see a research on how this pandemic is challenging the advertising companies' business performance; sales volume and employees' job satisfaction and management responses regarding this issue particularly in Ethiopia.

This researcher believes that, even though the Ethiopian government has been working to manage the pandemic issues and its effects, it is widely acceptable that tangible researches are mandatory in order to commit concrete business models.

However, a research regarding to assessment on performance challenges of COVID-19 pandemic and management responses, specifically on advertising industry in Ethiopia do not exist, this create an opportunity to this researcher to do a preliminary survey. And this researcher couldn't find any selective research paper related to this research topic has risen; in relation with assessment on performance challenges of COVID-19 pandemic and management responses in the Ethiopian advertising industry.

Therefore, this research gap was considered as a milestone to design this research paper and to conduct a research or investigation on methodologically selected advertising companies in an attempt to see the management responses and performance challenges of COVID-19 pandemic on advertising businesses in Ethiopia, and specifically on the selected 10 advertising companies. It was based on this stated problem that this research thesis was designed. It tries to discover how the pandemic has been challenging the advertising companies' business performance and management responses with a specific focus on advertising companies in Addis Ababa there by provide a leading study outcomes in the area for consecutive business and economic researches in the country.

1.4. Research Questions

Standing from the topic of this thesis - Assessment on Performance Challenges of COVID-19 Pandemic and Management Responses in the Ethiopian Advertising Industry– this study attempts to answer the following basic questions:

- What managerial challenges of the pandemic have been revealed on the business performances of the advertising companies?
- How have the challenges related with COVID-19 pandemic been affecting the sales volume and employees' job satisfaction in advertising industry?
- How did managers respond to the operational challenges of COVID-19 pandemic?
- What are the major Operational challenges with regards to business performance faced in advertising industry, while dealing with COVID-19 pandemic?

1.5. Objectives

1.5.1. General Objective

- The **general objective** of the study is to determine how the COVID-19 pandemic has been challenging the business performance of the advertising businesses in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; and focusing on ten systematically selected advertising companies' management responses on operational challenges of COVID-19 Pandemic in their business performances; employees job satisfaction and sales volume and thereby to provide data for marketing and management team/s to effectively keep using strong mechanisms and see the gaps in the efforts of selling their companies' product/s or service/s.

1.5.2. Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of this study are;

- * To assess the Performance challenges of COVID-19 pandemic on advertising companies in Addis Ababa.
- * To find out the management responses on operational challenges surfacing on advertising companies during the pandemic.
- * To show how COVID-19 pandemics have been challenging the management on advertising companies.
- * To identify the employees' perception on job satisfaction and employees' safety during COVID-19 pandemic.

1.6. Significance of the Study

The aim of this paper is to investigate the performance challenges of COVID-19 pandemic and management responses on operational challenges; sales volume and operational employees' job satisfaction on advertising businesses in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

It tries to bring the current situations with such companies as well as the prevailing problems, and thereby come up with possible, manageable and significant solutions. In general, the study will have the following significances.

- Companies, advertising companies in particular, can adopt the specific impacts and/or results of the pandemic identified in this paper and thereby carry on the deliveries of their

products and/or services with possible sustainable management tactics, by improving their business performance; with increasing the company sales volume and sustaining the employees' job satisfaction.

- The findings of the paper can specifically provide a framework for the advertising companies selected in this research to take them as roadmaps for directions in the future and adjust their goals and objectives as per real opportunities and challenges.
- Decision-makers and managers of the companies under this survey will have an opportunity to consider and evaluate the missed opportunities and challenges observed in the existing practices, and then take appropriate and corrective measures.
- Government bodies related with regulating and supervising advertising companies, advertising associations, and even trade associations can also take the results and factors pointed out in this study, as ingredients in their efforts to deal with the pandemic.
- Finally, the study serves as an additional source or reference for successive thesis projects. It will also serve as a spring board for other researchers who want to conduct detailed researches on this current and bold issue. It would help such researchers to undertake a broader and meaningful investigation/s by enlarging the scope of the topic and survey size.

1.7. Scope of the Study

It would be of high importance if several successive and broad researches are conducted regarding the impact of COVID-19 on different business companies in Ethiopia. As one contribution in the efforts to assess such research questions, this study focuses on an assessment on performance challenges of COVID-19 pandemic and management responses on operational challenges in the Ethiopian advertising industry specifically in Addis Ababa with regards to sales volume and operational employees' job satisfaction.

The scope of this study is confined to assess the current, opportunities and challenges in the business performances of advertising companies in Addis Ababa, where all these selected samples and all the companies identified based on the sampling techniques and sample size are basically located in the city.

Hence, this study has its own delimitations. The study is not about any other business types but the advertising business, unless it will have any implication. And other advertising companies

are not considered, but it is a survey study on selected advertising companies using a set sampling methodology.

Regarding with the boundary of the title of this study, it mainly rests on the business performance challenges of COVID-19 pandemic and management responses on operational challenges on those selected advertising companies; the socio-political impacts and the effects on the employees' livelihood also are slightly concerned not in bold. And of course, the social implications of the pandemic on the employees could be implied indirectly here and there in this study.

The study is also limited to a time frame from the time the outbreak was identified in December 2019 up to March 2021.

1.8. Limitations of the Study

Numerous limitations have been seen as difficulties in the effort to make this survey successful. While undertaking this study, to mention some limitations; absence of well-organized and documented information on the outcome of the pandemic on businesses, shortage of reference materials about the pandemic's impact on Ethiopian companies, and specifically on advertising companies etc. were much bigger obstacles.

Moreover, slight inconsistency of the respondents in their answers on the questions in the questionnaire and similar problem while interviewees provide views towards the questions forwarded were found as expected limitations.

Insufficient secondary sources to get data on the performance challenges of the pandemic and managerial responses on operational challenges with regard to the sales volume and operational employees' perception on job satisfaction on advertising companies were also considered as factors that have affected the research. Similarly, the limited financial and human power had been key elements to hinder the effort to make the survey more pointed and broader.

Definition of Key Terms

Advertising companies: These are companies engaged in the services sector providing advertising products and services.

Business performance: Is an audit of the performance of a product or a service in the marketplace.

Job satisfaction: Among the indicators of business performance of a company, job satisfaction reveals the view/s of employees' satisfaction in their work.

Management challenges: An experience of a leadership of a company and their practices in a given time.

Operational challenges: any kind of problem that arises which can render a business less profitable.

Management response: a formal mechanism that helps ensure that evaluations are used, contributing to organizational effectiveness, learning and accountability.

Sales volume: Is a measurement which shows how many units of a product/s or service/s a given company sells during a specific reporting period.

Organization of the Paper

The first chapter provides the introduction, statement of the problem, main objectives and questions of the research, significance of the study, and the scope of the survey.

Ample relevant and related literature is reviewed in the second chapter. Here, the major points in relation with the study title.

The third chapter is concerned with specific methodologies of data collection, sampling methods and sample size, and data analysis methods.

The findings of this survey are provided in the fourth chapter of this thesis in detail. Finally, the fifth chapter is about summery, conclusion, and recommendations of the researcher.

CHAPTER TWO

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

It has been stated in the background sub section of the previous chapter that this survey attempts to find out how the pandemic has been contributing to the performance challenges and managers respond on operational challenges faced in relation to sales volume and employees' job satisfaction of advertising companies in Addis Ababa, specifically on the selected companies in the given time since the pandemic was first discovered. In an attempt to discover the effects of the pandemic on the companies, this chapter provides the relevant views from different books, research papers, reports and journals.

2.1. Relevant Theoretical Models and Frameworks

Since this thesis is all about assessing the management challenges of COVID-19 on advertising companies' business performances, this researcher assessed and identified more related theoretical models and frameworks. Therefore, the following theories have been selected from the identified relevant theoretical models and frameworks; Hierarchy of effects model and management theory.

2.1.1. Hierarchy of Effects Model in Advertising

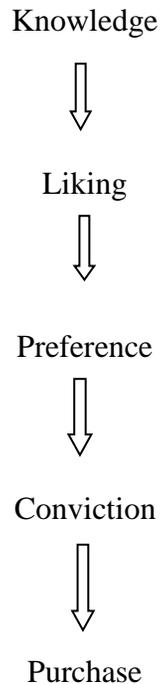
The theory of Hierarchy of Effects is one of the major theories/models which explain the function of advertising in marketing business.

According to this model customers do not switch from being completely uninterested to become convinced to buy the product in one step. Lavidge and Steiners Hierarchy-of-effects model is created to show the process, or steps, that an advertiser assumes that customers pass through in the actual purchase process (Barry & Howard, 1990). The model is based on few steps, which as with the other models must be completed in a linear way.

The following figure shows the simple manifestation of the theory/model:

Awareness





The big difference between this model and the others is not only the steps, but also the view on how to pass them. Lavidge and Steiner (1961) write that the steps has to be completed in a linear way, but a potential purchaser sometimes may move up several steps simultaneously (Lavidge & Steiner, 1961, p. 60) which is supported by Munoz (2002) who writes that normally ultimate customers do not switch directly from being interested to become convinced buyers.

This model also has as a premise that advertising occurs over a period of time, and may not lead to immediate response and purchase. It is rather a series of effects that has to occur, with each step fulfilled on the way towards the next stage (Lavidge & Steiner, 1961) Behind this model is according to Belch & Belch (1998) the premises that advertising effects occur over time and advertising communication may not lead to immediate behavioral response or purchase, but rather, consumers must fulfill each step before s/he can move to the next stage in the hierarchy (Belch and Belch 1998, p. 146).

2.1.2. Management Theory

One major challenge that managers have is not being able to detect a good theory i.e. a theory that fits into their situation. Now, because managers do not know how to detect a good theory, or relevant theory to their situation, they resort to trial and error, by trying a new idea to see if it works.

Management theory is useful to the manager by helping him to explain the dynamics of organization and shedding light on the problems often faced by him in practice, such as those related to motivation, productivity, satisfaction etc. In specific terms, management theory is useful in the following ways: It increases efficiency. A manager becomes more effective and efficient as he/she uses established guidelines to help solve problems; It improves managerial learning and development, because it provides an established structural framework of knowledge, which would appear to be useful, and which managers can fall back on to crystallize the nature and process of management and to simplify the process of learning [2]. Without theories and principles learning managerial practice would depend upon haphazard trial and error. (https://scholar.google.com/scholar?q=management+challenge+theory&hl=en&as_sdt=0&as_vis=1&oi=scholart)

2.1.2.1. Scientific Management Theory

According to American mechanical engineer Frederick Taylor, this theory is emphasized on the fact that forcing people to work hard wasn't the best way to optimize results. Instead, Taylor recommended simplifying tasks so as to increase productivity. And money was the key incentive for working, which is why he developed the "fair day's wages for a fair day's work" concept. Since then, the scientific management theory has been practiced worldwide. The resulting collaboration between employees and employers evolved into the teamwork that people now enjoy.

2.1.2.2. Systems Management Theory

Systems management offers an alternative approach to the planning and management of organizations. The systems management theory proposes that businesses, like the human body, consist of multiple components that work harmoniously so that the larger system can function optimally. According to this theory, the success of an organization depends on several key elements: synergy, interdependence, and interrelations between various subsystems.

Employees are one of the most important components of a company. Other elements crucial to the success of a business are departments, workgroups, and business units.

In practice, managers are required to evaluate patterns and events in their companies so as to determine the best management approach. This way, they are able to collaborate on different programs so that they can work as a collective whole rather than as isolated units.

2.1.2.3. Contingency Management Theory

According to Fred Fiedler, the contingency management theory is that no one management approach suits every organization. There are several external and internal factors that will ultimately affect the chosen management approach. The contingency theory identifies three variables that are likely to influence an organization's structure: the size of an organization, technology being employed, and style of leadership. And he proposed that the traits of a leader were directly related to how effectively he led. Since, there's a set of leadership traits handy for every kind of situation. It means that a leader must be flexible enough to adapt to the changing environment.

2.1.2.4. Theory X and Theory Y

Douglas McGregor is the theorist credited with developing these two contrasting concepts. More specifically, these theories refer to two management styles: the authoritarian (Theory X) and participative (Theory Y).

Theory X holds a pessimistic view of employees in the sense that they cannot work in the absence of incentives. Theory Y, on the other hand, holds an optimistic opinion of employees. (<https://corporatefinanceinstitute.com/resources/careers/soft-skills/management-theories/>)

2.1.3 Business Performance

2.1.3.1. Definitions

Business performance is defined differently. Yadin (2002) explains it in the following way. "Also termed [as] performance analysis or appraisal, an audit of the performance of a product in the marketplace, [is] measuring it against the marketing plan, its targets and performance estimates (p. 281).

Assessing marketing performance is an increasingly important task for managers and other corporate stakeholders. First, many firms are looking to provide fresh growth in profit through increasing sales after years of downsizing (Sheth and Sisodia, 1995). Second, multi-disciplinary perspectives on performance measurement, such as the balanced score card are increasing the attention given to non-financial measures of performance in general, raising the issue of which marketing measures, if any, should be included in such schemes. Third, investors and

analysts are increasingly asking for information on the marketing performance of firms (Mavrinac and Siesfeld, 1997, p. 78).

Unfortunately, assessing marketing performance is also very difficult to do. Unlike purely internal measures of performance, such as defects per million, marketing performance depends on external, largely uncontrollable actors, such as customers and competitors. Further, it acts as a mediator between these external actors and various internal corporate processes, such as accounting, manufacturing, research and development, and finance. Bonoma and Clark (1988, p. 2), cited in Nelly (2004), “observe that these factors make marketing’s outputs lagged, multi-vocal, and subject to so many influences that establishing causes- and-effect linkages is difficult.” (p. 22).

2.1.3.2. Business Performance Indicators

According to David Parmenter, performance indicators are measures that can be tied to a team or a cluster of teams working closely together for a common purpose. Good or bad performance is now the responsibility of one team. These measures thus give clarity and ownership (2015, p. 3).

Performance indicators (PIs) are those indicators that are nonfinancial (otherwise they would be result indicators) that can be traced back to a team. The difference between performance indicators and KPIs is that the latter are deemed fundamental to the organization’s wellbeing. Performance indicators, although important, are thus not crucial to the business.

The performance indicators help teams to align themselves with their organization’s strategy. Performance indicators complement the KPIs; they are shown on the organization, division, department, and team scorecards (Ibid, p. 7).

Every performance measure can have a negative consequence or an unintended action that leads to inferior performance. Well over half the measures in an organization may well be encouraging unintended negative behavior. In order to make measures work, one needs to anticipate the likely human behavior that will result from its adoption, and endeavor to minimize the potential negative impact (Ibid, p. 26). It is important therefore to see what the effect will be without anticipating any desired result.

2.1.3.3. Key Operational Performance Variables

A **performance variable** is a measured outcome for an experiment for a single component, process, or possibly an entire system. A factor is a **variable** that may have an impact on the **performance variables** and typically represents items that can be varied during an experiment. (<https://www.sciencedirect.com>)

The key operational variables for performance evaluation are sales and profitability. To what extent you achieved the sales volume predicted in your planning and how changes in your sales volume compare to the changes at your competitors are accurate measures of company performance. The percent profit margin indicates how much of each dollar earned from sales your company keeps as profit and is a good indicator of overall performance. (<https://smallbusiness.chron.com>)

2.1.3.3.1. Overall Market Performance

While overall performance is important, it depends on company performance in particular areas of activity. Performance in the marketplace influences profitability, which is one of the most important company financial health indicators. The key indicators of market performance are market share and market ranking by sales volume.

Many companies, for example, have a dedicated a marketing budget with the hope that it will increase market share, but don't examine its effectiveness. As Edmund Ingham writes in Forbes such budgets aren't "for real" but are just "for show." If you have a substantial market share and rank in the top two suppliers, you have market influence on pricing and are more likely to be profitable.

2.1.3.3.2. Performance in Customer Satisfaction

Performance in customer satisfaction is a key factor in long-term success. The key performance variables are repeat orders and the rate of customer acquisition. If you have satisfied customers, you retain those you have and get new ones at a rapid rate. Your evaluation of performance in customer satisfaction highlights potential problems for overall performance.

2.1.3.3.3. Product Quality and Returns

Quality products lie at the root of superior company performance. Two variables indicating whether your products are high quality are returns and warranty claims. These product indicators measure company performance on quality but also impact profitability directly. High rates of returns and warranty claims cut into profitability.

2.1.3.3.4. Employees' Job Satisfaction and Training

Two indicators of a company's performance internally are employee job satisfaction and training levels. These impact overall performance through the ability of the company to offer high levels of service to its customers. You can evaluate employee job satisfaction by measuring changes in the average length of service. A measure of training levels is the percent of employees who received training each month.

2.1.3.3.5. Numerical and Financial Factors

In addition to numerical factors such as profit margin, other indicators allow you to evaluate your company's performance on purely financial terms. Liquidity and solvency ratios evaluate your company's performance with regard to ensuring that it can continue its operations. Liquidity is the ratio of current assets minus current liabilities divided by total assets and measures how quickly a company can raise cash. (<https://smallbusiness.chron.com/key-performance-indicators-management-consulting-industry>)

2.1.3.4. Sales Volume

Sales volume measures how many units of a product/s or service/s a given company sells during a specific reporting period. On its own, sales volume doesn't break down how much revenue a certain company is bringing in from product sales. However, understanding the company's sales volume can tell what products are and aren't selling, which is valuable information for business growth (David Parmenter, 2015, p. 49).

Unlike total sales, the sales volume metric focuses on the number of products sold rather than monetary profit. It may seem that a sale volume is not so important compared to total sales but it's not the case. Sales volume is an essential indicator of business health. It allows tracking the

performance of marketing campaigns, evaluating the efforts of sales representatives, and estimating the territories chosen for physical stores (Ibid, p.50).

Evaluating total sales, marketers endeavor to increase their revenue, while monitoring sales volume makes them look for strategies to sell more products.

To find out a company's sales volume, it needs to multiply the number of items it sells per month by the necessary period - a year, for example. If any business firm sells 300 light bulbs a month, its sales volume would be 3,600.

2.1.3.5. Operational Challenge

In any kind of business, operational issues are any kind of problems that arises which can render a business less profitable. As this article will make clear, there are many different categories which make up operational issues, each with their own undesirable results. (<https://www.gazprom-energy.co.uk>)

2.1.4. COVID-19 and its Impacts

The pandemic has affected enterprises of all sizes and types in unprecedented ways, including a substantial decline of economic activity, and disruption of supply chains. Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises are particularly vulnerable, due to their limited cash reserves and assets compared to larger businesses, as well as lower levels of productivity (Aragie, et al, p. 12).

The COVID-19 pandemic took the world by and unfolded extremely rapidly. It began relatively slower, and only a little is documented on its actual first case, with claims as from November, while others link it to on December 1.

Besides not knowing when it began, there was also very little known on the many issues about the virus, including its mode of transmission, its incubation time, and the medication among many other elements.

Even up to late January 2021, there still remain some gray areas about the virus including its origin and whether it could have permanent impacts on patients, and whether it is possible for patients to develop immunity, among many other areas that are still being looked into.

Following these uncertainties, there had been numerous health policies with a number of those being rendered ineffective as more knowledge about the virus despite the virus is revealed. For instance, at the beginning, the World Health Organization (WHO) advised that masks should only be worn by health professionals or patients while in hospital, but later on, after it established that there were possibilities of human-to-human transmission, it became apparent that everyone need to wear a mask while in public to prevent transmitting or contracting the virus (Allam, 2020).

It would be more important if the impacts of the pandemic are listed in their categories. Then, I here under put the economic, social, health related, and environmental effects of COVID-19.

2.1.4.1. Economic

Donthu and Gustafsson (2020, p. 284) state that “the limited studies that do exist indicate that the major historical pandemics of the last millennium have typically been associated with subsequent low returns on assets”. For a period after a pandemic, we tend to become less interested in investing and more interested in saving our capital means negative returns, it is not at all certain that we will be as conservative as we have been in the past”.

The global economy is taking a blow as supply chains are impacted. The future looks uncertain. Flights have been restricted, and lockdowns have been hindering people and business organizations to conduct their formal tasks.

But the certainty is that the situation in least developed, and developing, economies, will be dire. The same journal states “the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak has forced many businesses close, leading to an unprecedented disruption of commerce in most industry sectors. Retailers and brands face many short-term challenges, such as those related to health and safety, the supply chain, the workforce, cash-flow, consumer demand, sales, and marketing.

However, successfully navigating these challenges will not guarantee a promising future or any future at all. This is because once we get through this pandemic; we will emerge in a very different world compared to the one before the outbreak” (Donthu and Gustafsson, 2020, p. 284).

China has seven out of the nine busiest ports in the world, where 80 percent of trade of world goods by volume is carried by sea. Global maritime shipping volumes have decreased heavily because of COVID-19—already the equivalent of 1 percent of total global volume has been lost,

amounting to \$350 million loss in revenue per week. Global air freight has also experienced decreased capacity because of the travel ban and reduced air travel worldwide. Land transport velocity has also slowed down and led to overstocking in a number of ports. The COVID-19 impact on global logistics will take an extended period to correct. Inbound container volumes at U.S. seaports are projected to be down 12.9 percent in February and 9.5 percent in March, compared with the same time a year ago (Bouey, 2020, p. 11).

In Ethiopia, measures taken to control the outbreak, nationally and globally, as well as the associated economic downturn have a significant employment effect, in particular for individuals working in sectors highly affected (travel, tourism, hospitality), which results in lost income for households. Most (around 80-90 %) of the short-term economic impact of the outbreak comes not as a result of people falling ill but from the disruption to economic activity associated with public health restrictions and social distancing required to control its spread (Cancedda et. al., 2020, p. 76).

Aversion behavior leads to bans on activities, business closures, and reduced economic activity that significantly reduce income-generating activities, in particular employment. The majority of job losses are expected in the service sectors, in particular travel, retail trade, accommodation and food services, as well as in manufacturing sectors with complex/global value chains. Estimates are also that job losses will be higher in sectors employing a high level of informal workers (Ibid, p. 76).

2.1.4.2. Social

The recent corona virus has forced immediate, far-reaching lifestyle shifts for consumers around the world, and these changes are likely to stay beyond the period of pandemic itself. The global retail industry is experiencing an unprecedented crisis in the wake of the COVID-19 lockdown and its economic recession or ER (Vafiinia, 2020, p. 2).

Behavioral changes related to pandemic outbreaks seem to be connected with personal protection such as the use of face masks, rather than general behavior changes. Our lives, as humans in a modern society, seem to be more centered at around convenience than around worrying about what might happen in the future (Donthu and Gustafsson, 2020, p. 284).

As previously mentioned, people have been confined. There has also been a constant stream of news on this invisible external threat from which we cannot protect ourselves. We have been occupied trying to figure out how best to protect ourselves and our loved ones. On top of that, many feel pressure due to losing their jobs or due to working in close proximity to potentially infected people, as society depends on them fulfilling their duty (Ibid, p. 285).

Overall, 26% of Ethiopian women age 15-49 have experienced either physical or sexual violence, or both. A worrisome trend detected in the initial phase of the Covid-19 crisis has been a decreased number of calls to various services by GBV victims, while in other countries the opposite happened.

The causes of this decrease are not clear, but it is reasonable to expect that an increase in time spent at home (even without a full lockdown) and a decrease of contacts with social support networks might have worsened the sense of isolation and fear of women to report intimate partner violence.

Due to COVID-19, some women have not gone to the police immediately after the incident, in time to collect medical evidence and press charges against the perpetrator. They thought that such services were not available during the pandemic. As a result, many rape cases went unreported and many had to endure repeated violence (Cancedda et. al., 2020, p. 50).

Religious events such as funerals and weddings in Ethiopia are very important. The population has a high worship attendance rate and considers religion very important.

The suspension of these ceremonies is therefore a likely cause of lowered morale. On a positive note, Christian and Muslim religious authorities have shown a responsible attitude by organizing broadcasted lectures and prayers and encouraging the population to pray at home and follow Covid-19 preventative measures.

This responsible attitude “might mitigate the most negative effects of the impossibility to celebrate religious rites and maintain some degree of cohesion among and between religious communities. This might be truer for urban areas where there is better access to television. Overall, the vulnerability to this impact is [was] assessed as medium” (Ibid, p. 59).

2.1.4.3. Health

“Health infrastructure in those places [developing countries] is not as developed as their western counterparts. Africa for instance, for its 1.2 billion populations, has 1 doctor for 2000 people versus Europe which has 1 doctor for 500 people for a population of 741 million” (Allam, 2020, p. 97).

According to World Bank’s series of reports on Ethiopia, close to 70 percent of firms provided hand sanitizers (soap/alcohol) at the workplace, 42 percent provided personal protective equipment (such as masks or gloves) to their employees, and 35 percent established strict social distancing requirements as part of the work routine (No. 1, May 2020, p. 15).

Healthcare services are at the frontline of the COVID-19 response. Expanded healthcare access serves as a significant resilience factor as it increases access to care across the country. On the contrary, distance to healthcare facilities, out-of-pocket costs, and poor understanding of the virus continue to play a role in limiting access to these resources. New obstacles to access have arisen due to emergency measures, such as transportation bans. Additionally, the pandemic is also causing lower healthcare demand as people fear contracting the disease.

A publication produced by the UNICEF shows that the likelihood of hospital infections and poor understanding of the virus in some segments of the population pose additional risks to the population as it might result in a higher number of cases as well as the possible complication of severe cases that need hospital treatment. This is both true for more rural regions with lower service capacity, and for highly dense urban centers (with a higher capacity) where the virus might spread faster. These factors could act to further limit access to health care during the pandemic (Cancedda et. al., 2020, p. 15).

“If the country does not manage to contain the outbreak, the healthcare system is at high risk of being overwhelmed. Access to healthcare could severely suffer as a result of the pandemic; therefore the level of vulnerability is assessed as high” (Ibid, p. 16).

2.1.4.4. Environment

It is worth noting that, besides the corona virus, the world is still under serious threats from other sever threats such as climate change and hunger. And, already, the World Food Program have

indicated that by the end of the year, following the emergence of corona-virus, those facing acute hunger globally would double to reaching over 265 million people (Anthem, 2020).

Similarly, in respect to climate change, if history was to repeat itself, it would be disastrous as the gains already achieved, especially in regard to Paris Agreement, and others would be watered-down as nations try to restore their economies (Allam, 2020. P. 125).

However, one recent good data, among all this chaos, is that emissions have been on the decline. This was expected as factories and airports are closed, and mobility is reduced due to lockdowns (Ibid, p. 97).

2.1.5. Effect/s on Ad and Marketing Companies

There is an opportunity in maintaining advertising spending during an economic recession (ER) in order to keep or increase the brand's share of voice. It is even cheaper to access higher quality marketing communication during an ER (Vafainia, 2020, p. 6).

This implies that, in general, the effect on advertising companies throughout the World has been minimal.

The COVID-19 outbreak is likely to cause bankruptcy for many well-known brands in many industries as consumers stay at home and economies are shut down. In the US, famous companies such as Sears, JCPenney, Neiman Marcus, Hertz, and J. Crew are under enormous financial pressure. The travel industry is deeply affected; 80% of hotel rooms are empty, airlines cut their workforce by 90%, and tourism destinations are likely to see no profits in 2020 (Donthu and Gustafsson, 2020, p. 286).

During an ER, one of the most common reactions of marketing managers is to cut marketing costs to the minimum, mainly to protect short-term profits (Deleersnyder et al., 2009, p. 3). However, there is a body of evidence indicating that cutting on marketing is not necessarily the best decision, especially if the focus is on the long-term (Ibid, p. 4).

More recent academic studies have also supported a proactive marketing approach, by maintaining or even increasing marketing spending during an ER. The main reason favoring a proactive marketing strategy during a recession is that as other firms in the industry reduce their marketing activities during a recession, a proactive firm could achieve a superior

competitive edge and market share by keeping its marketing budget at the same level as before the ER (p. 5).

Companies, especially start-ups, have implemented an indefinite hiring freeze. At the same time, online communication, online entertainment, and online shopping are seeing unprecedented growth (Donthu and Gustafsson, 2020, p. 284).

2.1.6. Managing Advertising and Marketing Companies

Marketing is so all-encompassing that a single, handy definition cannot be entirely adequate. The Chartered Institute of Marketing defines it as follows: “[it is] the management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer requirements profitably” (Yadin, 2002, p. 19).

For marketers, advertising is an economical communication system, aimed at achieving fast payoff of marketing investment. For agency account management, “it is a means of reaching and influencing a chosen group of people quickly and cost-effectively” (Ibid, p. 13).

Without much effort, you can see that marketing encompasses the total commercial activity of an enterprise – itself a viable definition. In considering marketing activity, it is important to understand a number of widely accepted factors.

Marketing operates on the belief that a business, and its decisions, should be governed by its markets and customers, rather than by its own motives, technology and production capability.

It is an orderly, systematic process of business planning, decision-making, implementation and control. Yadin (2002) further explains it in the following way:

“[Marketing] is a form of management by objectives, and places strong emphasis on innovation. It is considered a means of employing dynamic business strategy, and demands commercial acumen and organization of a high order. It [also] employs advanced techniques and systems based on scientific principles, among many others” (P. 226).

Managing marketing companies encompasses various activities. Several practices are included under the umbrella of marketing. It is “the activity in which the team is involved is itself termed marketing management; it [marketing] includes all a company’s marketing functions and responsibilities, from planning to implementation, evaluation and control” (Ibid, P. 229).

Organizing for effective risk management has two dimensions to it: one entails implicit organization for risk and the other explicit organization. With implicit organization, an enterprise has arranged its operations in such a way that if it carries them out in a prescribed way, it will lessen the chance that it will encounter troublesome events. Simply stated, good organization yields good management, and good management means fewer problems (Frame, 2003, P. 40).

2.2. Empirical Review

Some studies published in the past three years (before and after the pandemic was discovered) were reviewed, excluding studies on other topics and non-empirical studies. Here under follows the review.

A study conducted by Aragie et.al., (2020) states that “globally, according to ILO estimates, full or partial lockdown measures are affecting almost 2.7 billion workers, representing around 81 per cent of the world’s workforce. Working hours will decline by 6.7 per cent in the second quarter of 2020, which is equivalent to 195 million full-time workers (p. 26).

Large reductions are foreseen in the Arab states (8.1 per cent, equivalent to 5 million full-time workers), Europe (7.8 per cent or 12 million full-time workers) and Asia and the Pacific (7.2 per cent or 125 million full-time workers (Ibid, p. 27).

Enterprises in the travel, tourism, hospitality, food service, retail and manufacturing sectors have been especially hard-hit, with large portions of their workforce vulnerable to layoffs.

The ripple effect of mounting unemployment is compounding the stress on economies and is expected to lead to a global recession.

According to the World Bank (2020), economic activity in the Middle East and North Africa is expected to contract by more than 4 per cent in 2020 as consumption, exports, and services activity such as tourism are severely disrupted by the pandemic. This is compounded by the plunge in oil prices affecting not only fiscal revenues in oil producing countries but also countries depending on remittances from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries (p. 10).

A research conducted by Vafainia (2020) shows that “with uncertainty about the future, many firms are responding to recession by adapting their marketing strategy to changing consumer

behavior, Google, among many other firms, has recently announced a cut in marketing budgets by as much as half, while before the pandemic, they expected to increase marketing spending from the previous, as they did after the economic recession of 2008” (p.1).

Similarly, a consecutive studies being conducted by World Bank on Ethiopia suggest that the business companies are unpredictable and anyone couldn't assume their continuity. According to Report No. 1 of these series, “approximately 13 percent of firms are new firms (did not exist one year ago), 30 percent are between 1 and 2 years, and 19 percent between 3 and 4 years. Only 16 percent of firms are 10 years or more. The youthfulness of firms in the sample closely matches the data on the population of firms and is a common pattern in most low-income countries.

Most firms are own-account firms (only the owner works in the firm and there are no payroll employees), followed by micro-firms (1 to 5 payroll employees). Given the low prevalence of small (6 to 30 employees), medium (31 to 100 employees), and large (100 or more employees) firms, these three categories are lumped together for analytical reasons. The average (median) firm has 5.8 (1) payroll employees, with firms in industry being bigger than those in services (the median number of employees in industrial firms is 3 and in services) (WB, No. 1, May 2020, p. 2).

COVID-19 pandemic has caused a perceptible decline in demand, severe disruptions to supply chains and fall in equity markets that have affected current operations as well as prospects of firms across the globe. Indeed, firms in Ethiopia are no exception. The survey confirms that firms' operations have been heavily affected by the consequences of COVID-19 (Ibid, P. 3).

When directly asking about impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, almost all firms (94 percent) indicate being affected by the COVID-19 crisis. Firms are mainly affected by a collapse in demand of goods and services (62 percent), restricted movement of workers (27 percent), the forced closure of businesses (26 percent) and the closure of marketplaces and shops (14 percent) (Ibid, P. 7).

A publication organized by UNICEF and conducted by Cancedda et. al., in August 2020 which is entitled “COVID-19 socio-economic Vulnerability Assessment of Ethiopia” also focuses on

vulnerability assessment, identifying the most vulnerable groups and settings, and implications of the socio-economic shocks stemming from the crisis.

A number of reports and research results could be reviewed here as relevant evidences. However, many of them do not have a direct linkage with the topic of this study.

2.3. Conceptual Framework of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to assess the management challenges of COVID-19 pandemic in the Ethiopian advertising industry with regards to business performance; sales volume and employee job satisfaction. And based on the above related literature review and concepts the conceptual frame work for this study is developed.



Source: - The concept frame work figure was developed by the researcher for this research study purpose.

CHAPTER THREE

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In the process of finding the key outcomes of this research thesis, integrated research methodologies need to be employed. It would be fair enough to clearly put the relevant methods of data collection, sampling techniques and analysis methods in the trend to investigate the performance challenges of COVID-19 pandemic and management responses on operational challenges on the advertising companies in Addis Ababa. The research philosophy, design and all methods related to the gathering of data, sample size and sampling techniques, and methods of data analysis are specified here under.

3.1. Research Philosophy

The basic research philosophy utilized in this research is interpretivism. Interpretivism is a kind of research philosophy which takes small sample, but with in-depth investigations, and a qualitative way of interpretation and presentation of collected data.

In an interpretivist/constructivist research philosophy, “qualitative methods dominate although quantitative methods can be used, too” (Greener, 2008, p. 24).

For that reason, this study uses interpretivist/constructivist research philosophy by taking qualitative research approach as a dominant one and quantitative approach as a subordinate one.

3.2 Research Approach

The decision of whether to carry out a quantitative or qualitative approach lies in the researcher’s assumptions (Kannan, 2009), in order to achieve the objectives of this study, the research method followed was quantitative, qualitative and mixed research approach.

A quantitative approach to research is likely to be associated with a deductive [begins by looking at theory and then proceeds to test that theory] approach to testing theory, often using number or fact and therefore a positivist model, and an objectivist view of the objects studied.

A qualitative approach to research is likely to be associated with an inductive [starts by looking at the focus of research and aims to generate theory] approach to generating theory, often an interpretivist model allowing the existence of multiple subjective perspectives and constructing knowledge rather than seeking to ‘find’ it in ‘reality’;

In current business and management research, “you are likely to find a mix of both quantitative and qualitative strategies, looking at observable objective facts where they might be seen to exist, through the use and manipulation of numbers, and looking also at the perceptions of those involved with these ‘facts’ “(Greener, 2008, P. 17).

So in a practical sense, it is recommended by many that to use both strategies can lead to effectively investigate the reality of business performances of companies.

3.3. Research Design

The research design that was applied for this study was a descriptive research design. And the stated research questions in this study were formulated in a way to provide clear answers for them. Consequently, this survey was designed as a plan of action for those answers on the management challenges of COVID-19 pandemic in the advertising companies in Addis Ababa. This research was designed to be a survey study on selected advertising companies in Addis Ababa. More specifically, the researcher used descriptive type of research design. And this study primarily adopts qualitative research approach.

Scholars in research design agree that the descriptive method of research is used to gather information about the present or existing condition. “Descriptive research answers research questions which are largely “factual” in nature. These questions include those which start with “how”, “what”, “where”, “when”, “how much” and “how often”. In business these questions can often be solved by finding people with the answers or by doing some simple digging for information” (Greener & Martelli, 2018, p. 53).

3.3.1. Quantitative and Qualitative Survey

Survey research is a widely used data collection method that involves getting information from people typically by asking them questions and collecting and analyzing the answers. Such data can then be used to understand individuals’ views, attitudes, and behaviors in a variety of areas

such as political issues, quality of life at both the community and individual levels, and satisfaction with services and products, to name but a few. Decision makers in both the public and private sectors use survey results to understand past efforts and guide future direction. Yet there are many misperceptions regarding what is required to conduct a good survey. Poorly conceived, designed, and executed surveys often produce results that are meaningless, at best, and misleading or inaccurate, at worst (Cowles and Nelson, 2015 p. Xii).

Alreck and Settle, cited in Cowles and Nelson (2015) make the following observation about why surveys are conducted:

Surveys are often conducted simply because it's the only way to get the information needed. Even when the information is available through other means, survey research may be an easier, quicker, less expensive, or more accurate way to get the required information. (p. 66)

Therefore, survey is the main characteristic of this study in the endeavor to get answers for the raised research questions.

3.4. Data Types and Data Sources

Primary and secondary sources are used in this survey. Through the questionnaire and the in-depth-interview, primary data were gathered, while the companies' relevant documents were utilized as secondary sources of data.

3.4.1. Primary Data Sources

Respondents from each selected advertising company for this survey provided their views for the questions. Again, as a supplementary method, the in-depth-interview enables to gather data from systematically selected samples as primary sources of data

3.4.2. Secondary Data Sources

These sources are much more easily available in the public domain. They include publications, outlets from news media, and business, government and international organizations' reports or documents (Ibid, P. 28). All documents related with business performance of those selected sample advertising companies were consulted to see the trend of sales volumes amid the pandemic in the specified time frame as secondary sources of data.

Different manuals, financial documents and related secondary sources of data were assessed to see the financial track record of the companies during the pandemic. Hence, while major data were gathered qualitatively, sales volumes and business performances of the companies have been also measured quantitatively through the views from the respondents and slightly from data gained in the sample companies.

These are the sources, which are the least accessible, often being company literature or unpublished research, private correspondence and can include conference proceedings (Greener & Martelli, 2018, P. 28).

3.5. Population of the Study

The target populations of this study are the advertising companies in Addis Ababa. The survey was firstly targeted to focus on the advertising companies, but the number and legal existence of all these companies (small, medium and large size companies) is complicated. This researcher consulted the Addis Ababa Administration's Bureau of Information to get the list of such companies. But, there was not valid data gained, and even was directed to go to the country's Broadcast Authority. The Broadcast Authority doesn't have a clear list of all such companies. Even the associations of advertising companies are diverse and with dummy data of the list of their members.

Therefore, the researcher was forced to devise a mechanism to get a clear population for the study. Advertising companies situated in the city with multi-million investment, with their own printing machines and which hire sizable employees were the criteria taken into consideration to decide who the sample of this study are.

Based on the set criteria, 97 companies were identified in the city. The sampling frame was designed to make sure that the selected samples are representatives of the population, and with regard to random sample selection, every n^{th} (7th) of the systematically selected companies were selected as the targets. Then, through the systematic sampling technique, the following 10 companies were selected: *Adulian Advertising & Promotion plc. Alpha Tibeb Advertising, Avast Engineering & Advertising, Bole Advertising Enterprise, BT Digital Advertising, Emmer Advertising & Printing Enterprise, Ermias Advertising & Printing Plc., Esayas Advertising, Ke Ha Iske Pe Advertising & Printing, and Mark Advert.* The respondents selected

for the questionnaire and the in-depth-interview are the employees of these companies mentioned above, as sample of this survey study.

3.6. Sampling Procedure

3.6.1. Sample size

The more complex the survey, the more up-front time and cost go into developing a blueprint for it, designing our survey instruments such as questionnaires or interview forms, creating sampling and data collection methodologies, and developing the methods of analyzing the information we receive from the survey's respondents.

Similarly, the greater complexity, the more back-end time and cost are required for activities once the data collection has been completed (Cowles and Nelson, 2015 p. 75). Hence, the sample size was selected from the selected companies targeted in this study. All the selected 10 advertising companies have 54 - 93 employees, considering the short-time workers. Therefore, From the 600 average employees of all the 10 targeted companies, 60 representing respondents were selected to be part of the questionnaire to provide their views, so the sample size is 60. The figure gets blurred because these companies do not uniformly show the clear cut to reveal their permanent and temporary employees. As a means to represent all the selected companies, six from each company were randomly approached for the questionnaire.

3.6.2. Sampling Technique/s

3.6.2.1. Systematic Sampling

Like simple random sampling, systematic sampling starts with a listing that is an identification of the units making up the population. The systematic approach usually starts by first determining the size of the sample needed. Every n th case is then selected. To inject randomness into the process, the key to the systematic selection is to randomly select a starting point number.

And in this research Purposive sampling technique was used to select those employees/respondents of the selected companies who are directly linked with duties associated to the topic, for the in-depth-interview.

3.7. Data Gathering Instruments

A survey focusing on management challenges of the pandemic on business performance needs to see what type of data gathering instrument is relevant for the desired investigation. Thus, two main instruments: a questionnaire and an in-depth-interview were taken as paramount data gathering instruments to assess the effect of the pandemic on business performance of these advertising companies. In gathering the data, the sources of this thesis are the respondents selected through systematic sampling from the selected companies. While these sources of data (respondents) for the questionnaire provided data related with the research questions (business performance, gaps and challenges the pandemic brought and job satisfaction), others specifically selected employees provide data for the in-depth interview.

Data have been collected from the purposely selected employees of the companies. Representative sample was selected. A **questionnaire** was provided to the selected respondents from the selected advertising companies. In addition, **in-depth-interview** was also used as a data collection method to hold an interview with these purposely selected respondents.

3.7.1. Questionnaire

A questionnaire designed based on the objectives and research questions of this survey was provided to the respondents selected from the target population. The questionnaire has close and open-ended questions intended to meet the set target.

“Questionnaires can be a powerful source of information. But effective questionnaire design is of utmost importance if you want to get the information you desire” (Greener & Martelli, 2018, P.97). It was important then to make the questions in the questionnaire be effective in order to get an appropriate data which have sound linkage with the intended research questions.

The measures of this questionnaire for this survey research are designed to bring the results intended in the objectives and research questions. Similarly, the variables are of quite importance. The independent variables (sales volume, Covid-19 related restrictions, payment etc.) are considered to assess their effect/s on dependent variables (business performance, such as loss/gain, employee satisfaction, employees’ motivation etc.).

As a variable is any measurable aspect of behavior that can vary, the variables are effects of the pandemic (degree of effect/fear, work environment restrictions etc.), business performance; sales volume (loss/gain, profit etc.) and employee job satisfaction satisfaction (payment, supervision, promotion etc.). A scale of 1-5 likelihood, based on Likert Scale would be used to measure the employees' satisfaction.

3.7.2. In-depth-interview

Face-to-face interviewing is an interviewer-administered survey, which provides maximum personal contact between the interviewer and the respondent and allows the interviewer to control the actual administration of the survey (Cowles and Nelson, 2015, P. 83).

The in-depth-interview designed in this study then tries to get the data which maintain the data gathered through the questionnaire.

As a supplementary data gathering method, this in-depth-interview is also a means to purposely interview those concerned individuals in each company about the financial and business performance trend since the pandemic was discovered. Three employees who have direct relationship with the financial and sales volume trend had been selected purposively from each selected company for interview sessions. Totally, 30 purposely selected employees are the target of the representing sample size for the in-depth-interview.

3.8. Data Analysis Technique/s

This research is dependent on **descriptive** type of analysis. It was designed to provide simple summaries about the sample and the measures. Text is used for commentary around and in summary of numerical or quantitative results. It is a good way to point out particularly significant statistical findings, which might be lost in the numbers reported in a table or depicted in a graph (Cowles & Nelson, 2015 p. 158).

Data can be presented in text, graphic, or table formats, but presentations usually include all three because it meets the needs and expectations of a broader audience.

The strength of text or narrative presentation is in providing explanation, commentary, or summary of numerical or quantitative data, not for actually presenting the data. Text should be

simple, clear, and brief, but not so brief that the wording becomes meaningless or unintelligible in terms of describing the data (Ibid, 167).

A survey with a questionnaire is a survey with the targeted data, if it is managed well. A questionnaire was the basic means in this survey to get the data to be analyzed. These data were analyzed qualitatively and to a lesser level quantitatively to get the intended results of the process i.e. interpretivism research philosophy.

The data gathered through an in-depth interview were also analyzed and presented through qualitative method; a textual depiction and description was used to assess the management challenges of COVID-19 pandemic with regards to business performance; sales volume and employees' job satisfaction in advertising companies.

With regard to the data gathered from the secondary sources and financial and other related documents of the companies, it was analyzed through quantitative method to show the trend/s of the companies have been going in association with the research questions this study has formulated.

3.9. Reliability and Validity

Validity is the most critical criterion and indicates the degree to which an instrument measures what it is supposed to measure. It can also be thought of as utility. In other words, validity is the extent to which differences found with a measuring instrument reflect true differences among those being tested (Kothari, 2004). Numbers of different steps was taken to ensure the validity of the study:

- Data was collected from the reliable sources; from respondents both operational staffs and management teams those are sample targets of this study.

- In-depth interview were made based on literature reviews and frame of references to ensure result validity.

In addition to asking if a measure is valid, we should also ask if it is reliable. A measure is considered reliable if it yields the same results each time it is used, assuming, of course, that there has been no real change in the variable being measured. In other words, reliable measures

do not fluctuate—they yield consistent results (Ruane, 2005). And this study is reliable and valid based on the scientific research methodologies.

3.10. Ethical Consideration

During the survey process a relationship exists between the three major stakeholder groups—sponsors, researchers, and participants. And like relationships in general, survey relationships work better when those involved approach the other parties with openness, honesty, and respect (Cowles and Nelson, 2015 p. 71). An ethical consideration has been taken in this research to make the study purely academic and independent.

Ian Brace (cited in Cowles and Nelson, 2015, p.71) notes: The ability of the market research industry to continue to use sample surveys as sources of primary data depends upon the willingness of members of the public to give their time and cooperation to answer our questions.... To be able to continue, market research needs to maintain this goodwill.

Therefore, this researcher took the responsibility of minimizing risk or harm to the participants or respondents respected the protection of the privacy and confidentiality of information taken from participants and clients. Maximum care and effort has been done to eliminate misrepresentation of the research results with other activities such as fundraising or campaigning of the companies under investigation under the guise of conducting survey.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. Results and Discussion

This thesis was conducted with meticulous process of handling business management research regarding the performance challenges of the pandemic and management responses on operational challenges in advertising companies in Addis Ababa. It is a study on the impact of Covid-19 on the business performance of advertising companies with predominantly qualitative approach of research and supported by quantitative presentation of data.

This chapter presents the results and analysis of data collected via questionnaire and in-depth interview. The contents of this chapter are organized as follows.

Section 4.1 presents the overview of the chapter followed by demographic information of the respondents, in section 4.2, the sales volume information are presented. While section 4.3 covers the workplace environment realities, section 4.4 is about job satisfaction of the employees in relation with the pandemic's effects. The results of the in-depth interview are included under section 4.5.

4.1. Introduction

It would be important to remind that 10 advertising companies were selected through systematic sampling as samples for this survey. Again, it was mentioned in the third chapter that the researcher was forced to devise a mechanism to get a clear population for the study by firstly determining the sample advertising companies.

Advertising companies situated in the city with multi-million investment, with their own printing machines and which hire sizable employees were the criteria taken into consideration to decide who the population of this study are.

Through the systematic sampling technique, the following 10 companies were selected: *Adulian Advertising & Promotion plc.*, *Alpha Tibeb Advertising*, *Avast Engineering & Advertising*, *Bole Advertising Enterprise*, *BT Digital Advertising*, *Emmer Advertising & Printing Enterprise*, *Ermias Advertising & Printing Plc.*, *Esayas Advertising*, *Ke Ha Iske Pe Advertising & Printing*, and *Mark Advert*. The respondents selected for the questionnaire and the in-depth-interview are the employees of these companies.

Adulian Advertising & Promotion plc. Provides billboard branding, car and wall branding, and building décor services. *Alpha Tibebe Advertising* focuses on screen Printing, digital printing, pad printing, UV prints, heat transfer printing, sublimation printing, laser cutting & engraving etc. Similarly, *Avast Engineering & Advertising* specializes in graphic design and corporate branding; it consults, designs, fabricates, supplies and installs business signs. *Bole Advertising Enterprise's* services and products are billboards, light box, lighting letters - LED light, promotional items (cap, t-shirt, pen, key-chain), prime signs, car branding, wall branding, and bronze letters. *BT Digital Advertising* is engaged in mega billboard, LED, strip, wall branding, cut out & displays, car branding, exhibition stands, and light box. The remaining *Emmer Advertising & Printing Enterprise, Ermias Advertising & Printing Plc., Esayas Advertising, Ke Ha Iske Pe Advertising & Printing,* and *Mark Advert* are engaged in almost similar services and products which include LED, light box, reflective signage, streamer and reflective banners, display stand, stickers, acrylic, silk screen printing, fabric print, car branding, wall branding, high quality posters etc.

As it was discussed in the methodology part of this study, data collected by using different techniques were analyzed in this chapter by using quantitative and qualitative approaches. A total of 60 questionnaires were distributed to different sampled respondents from the systematically selected advertising companies in Addis Ababa. And in-depth interview sessions were conducted with 30 purposely selected respondents from the sample advertising companies. The data gained from the questionnaire and the in-depth interview are presented and demonstrated in the following way.

4.1.1. Respondents' Demographic Information

The respondents of the questionnaire for this survey study have different personal information; these differences in gender, age, educational qualifications, current job positions and experiences tell the diversity among them. The following table shows these differences.

Table 4.1.1. Demographic information of respondents

Variable	Classification	Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	38	63.33
	Female	20	33.33
	Missing	2	3.33
	Total	60	100%
Age	18 – 25	6	10
	26 – 30	25	41.66
	31 – 35	15	25
	36 – 40	3	5
	>40	11	18.33
	Total	60	100%
Qualification	Certificate	-	0
	Diploma	-	0
	Degree	56	93.33
	Masters or above	4	6.66
	Total	60	100%
Job Position	Junior	8	13.33
	Senior	18	30
	Manager	32	53.33
	Other	2	3.33
	Total	60	100%
Experience	Less than 10 years	38	63.33
	10 – 12 years	12	20
	13 – 15 years	10	16.66
	More than 15 years	-	0
	Total	60	100%

Source: Survey Results (2021)

As it is shown on the above table 4.1.1, the highest percent of the participants in this questionnaire of the study are males, 63.33% of the respondents. 20% of these form the female

population. In line with that, younger employees or respondents from age range of 26 – 30 years (41.66%) are the dominant ones in this survey. Actually, around 18.33% of them are aged above 40.

These results show that even though this study used the systematic sampling to select the ample advertising companies, the employees both operational and managerial staffs of the selected companies were selected randomly; unfortunately the gender ratio couldn't be proportionate. Again, the dominance of the younger population in terms of age tells that the views and perspectives demonstrated in this survey are much more the views of the younger employees. If we try to consider all the respondents less than the age of 40, 49 employees or 81.66% make up the dominance of young population much more dominant.

With regard to educational qualifications, majority of the respondents (93.33%) are first degree holders while the remaining 6.66% are master's degree holders. 53.33% of them are at managerial positions at different levels, 30% are at senior positions, and 13.33% are at junior levels of job positions. The rest 3.33% are at other unmentioned positions.

The reality that 56 employees out of the 60 are first degree holders tells you that the majority of the respondents (93.33%) are well educated and well informed to effectively answer the questionnaire questions with an informed consent. The fact that the remaining four respondents are master's degree holders also backs the notion much more. Regarding to the job positions of the employees selected for the survey, to see more than half of the respondents are at any position in managerial posts can easily be interpreted that respondents of this survey are not only well informed about the intention of this study but also their reactions can be taken as integral and trustworthy information as they are focal employees in their respective companies.

The experience of the respondents has also a related facet. 63.33% have less than 10 years of experiences working for the companies, while 20% have 10 – 12 years and other 16.66% have 13 – 15 years of experiences.

The experience of the employees both managerial and operational of the selected companies also matters to the concreteness of the data, as one key factor. It is a leading idea to see that more than 36.66% of the respondents have more than 10 years of work experience. Actually, 38 of them

(63.33%) are less experienced; this might imply to the limitation on the data accuracy compare to those experienced ones.

The following section discusses the sales volume information and business performances.

4.1.2. Business Performance, Management and Operational Challenges

To see the challenges from the perspectives of the management would be another key element to see the challenges and their effects on the business performances of the companies. The question reads: “What were the main challenges of business performance in your Company and the management responses to pursue the usual work while dealing with the Pandemic?”

Among the common challenges, unable to get workers on time, people getting sick or infected and trying to change the work environment were mentioned. Some of these mentioned that employees have great fear not to get infected and this by itself caused not to accomplish works as necessary. To keep employees closer enough to commit their tasks has been also another big challenge.

To arrange shifts for employees has been also a problem in order to minimize risks of infection. Inability to assign employees to approach clients door-to-door and to be unable to manage business continuity without risking employees and customers has been raised too. Further, others forward the challenges of adjusting working spaces, sales cost decrease, and shortage of raw materials in managing the companies.

To sum up, a single comment of one respondent here under reveals the difficulty of managing the companies in dealing with the pandemic:-

Managers were facing difficulties in keeping their teams up-to-date as a result of social distancing. Numerous activities that need visual review, brainstorming sessions and face-to-face interactions were off and follow-up was always delayed. The internet connection hasn't been provided sufficiently and consistently, this resulted difficulty in using online communication not to be an alternative means.

It would be good here to see if there were positive sides of the companies' management despite all the challenges in relation to the company business performance.

Among the strong sides of the management of the companies, the respondents repeatedly pointed out dedication and focus, accurate orders, adaptation to the current situation, accurate evaluation, early planning, maintaining quality of services and products, motivation based supervision, using effective strategies and management skills, approaching new customers through online marketing, arranging working shifts for employees, and allowing employees freedom to accomplish assignments contributed to business performance of the companies.

Although few believed that there was not any strong side seen, still others say the ability aligning organizational purpose with team goals, demonstrate empathy with their team, delegating tasks effectively, and setting clear goals and expectations as some strong sides of the companies' management.

4.2. Sales Volume Information

The sales volume of the sample companies was tried to evaluate through the perspectives of the respondents both operational and managerial employees. The causes for the decrease or increase of sales volume, the Covid-19 related restrictions and their effects, and the managerial adjustments taken were taken as determinants to decide whether the sales volumes of the sample companies have been affected or not. Here under, these determinants are discussed and interpreted.

4.2.1. Employees' Response on Sales' Volume

It has been mentioned in the literature review portion of this survey that sales volume measures how many units of a product/s or service/s a given company sells during a specific reporting period. One of the major research questions was to evaluate how much the sales volumes of the companies have been affected. And as one objective of the research, measuring these volumes was spotted. Therefore, the researcher forwarded some questions and included them in the questionnaire, specifically on the sales volumes of the companies. The results follow:

The respondents were asked if they “think the volume of sales of the Company they work for has decreased after the spread of Covid-19?” 46 (76.66%) respondents believe that their respective companies' volume of sales decreased while 14 (23.33%) of them didn't believe so.

This clearly implies that the sales volumes of the sample advertising companies significantly decreased after the spread of the pandemic, as majority of the respondents have stated it. In

contrary to the decrease of these sales volumes, the fact that close to a quarter of the sample population size does not believe that the sales volumes of the companies didn't decrease is worth noting. The reasons for their belief would be presented afterward in this discussion. In the same way, the reality behind how the pandemic influenced the sales is discussed here under.

Similarly, they were requested if the company they work did use flexible mechanisms to boost sales volume; even the restrictions related to Covid-19 have been hurdles? Most of them, 55 (91.66%) said "yes", the other 5 (8.33%) are against the idea.

The implications behind is that even though majority of the respondents mentioned earlier that the sales volumes of the companies were decreased, most of them believed that the companies were engaged in different tactics to increase their sales volumes right after the pandemic began to affect them. But, still very few of them didn't see any mechanism to solve the effect of the pandemic on the sales volumes of the companies.

Another way to see the reasons behind the success/failure was to let the respondents provide their reasons. It was asked then, "What were the main reasons for the success/failure of the volume of sales of the Company you work for?"

19 respondents (31.66%) believed that the companies they work for were successful in their sales volume despite the pandemic related hurdles. However, majority or 41 of them (68.33%) are pro the notion that the companies' sales volumes were highly affected.

Both sides provided numerous reasons for the success/failure of their companies' sales volumes. The reasons do overlap in many cases, but the key ones are stated here under.

Among some of the respondents who said that the sales volumes of the companies they belong were failed, they state that the overall decline in business transaction caused by the pandemic affected the economy of the country and thereby most businesses including the advertising companies have been suffering from it. Others point the inability to have gathering people due to Covid-19 related restrictions led to the decline.

Few others also mention that since the time is challenging to survive and sustain in business, most business industries were indulged in meaningless advertising of their products and services with extra cost and a decrease in sales volumes.

One respondent explains the reason behind the decline of the sales volume boldly in the following way:-

The main reason behind the failure of our sales volume is due to the quarantine of people at home; movements within the city highly declined. Therefore, no one is there to check [see] doors advertisements posted, hence clients won't have a reason to order services or products.

From the questionnaire data, it was mentioned that most of the respondents believe that the sales volumes of all the companies have been decreasing significantly. 25 respondents out of the 60 (41.66%) said that there has been 10 up to 20% decrease of sales volume in the first six months. What is very serious is, 16 or 26.66% of them say that the rate of decline ranges from 40 up to 50%. While 11 (18.33%) of the respondents think that the companies have been losing 20 – 30% of sales volumes, the other 7 (11.66%) elevate the rate of sales volume into 30 – 40%. Only 3 individuals (5%) believed that even though the sales volume has been in a decreasing trend in the first six months, it began to rise then after with around 10%.

These data show that the magnitude of the pandemic's management challenges on the sales volumes decrease of the companies has been uncontrollable especially in the beginning. The pandemic related restrictions forced the companies' sales volumes to drop which might have led them to bankruptcy. On the other hand, the rise of the sales volumes after some months implies the companies introduced some necessary sales approaches for their survivals.

In the contrary, those who consider that the companies have been in success even when the pandemic has been an obstacle say factors like quality of products and services, delivering services and products on time, better experiences of the companies and their employees, professionalism and teamwork have been all contributing to the boost of sales volumes.

Based on other few supporters of the above view that there has been success during the pandemic, the companies sustained and triumphed because they were highly strategic to swift into focusing on specific tasks and segmenting the orders of clients received before the virus.

Diverting the services with clients digitally and acquiring clients with continuous incomes were also among the notable reasons forwarded. These mechanisms have been also mentioned by respondents who believed that the drop of sales volumes were high in the beginning but began to rise months after, as reasons for some sort of sales volume restorations.

4.2.2. Covid-19 Restrictions and Managerial Adjustments

In relation to the sales volumes of the companies, the questionnaire was set to see if the restrictions of Covid-19 were challenges to the companies. It was believed that if the respondents could provide lists of actions performed by the companies, these might have resulted into the sales volume decrease/increase. Thus, sample respondents were asked: “what do you think your Company performed well in its business with regard to the Covid-19 restrictions?” Multiple views were pointed out.

It was stated by some respondents that the companies maintained their business performance by strengthening the ties with clients which had established relationship, adjusting themselves to the situation and diversifying products and services, minimizing costs to cope with the decline in sales, focusing on digital communication with clients, and finding better and safe [related to the pandemic] distribution networks.

Predicting the impacts that Covid-19 would bring earlier and adapting to the situation was also given by significant people as one means of reacting to the Covid-19 restrictions and the companies’ performances in return. Six respondents (10%) also said that so many efforts have been made by the companies, but sales volume and profitability couldn’t be sustained.

Apart from the statements which might resemble, another respondent explains the case with peculiar and detail points, as it is stated below;-

Applying online marketing by approaching our clients through internet (e-mail), phone calls etc. and serve them with social distance restriction boundaries, and we tried to update our advertising services by extending our services which are related to the pandemic, like offering branded facemask, branded pen with sanitizer cover etc.

Therefore, it is referred that the management bodies of the companies have been engaged in arranging and adjusting key solutions to manage the businesses in reaching clients.

Again, related with managerial adjustment mechanisms, sales volume can be also calculated. A question which reads; “what managerial adjustment/s mechanism/s do you think the Company you are in utilized during the pandemic?” was presented. Few individuals that there was nothing done to adjust things.

Adaptation to the current situations, cost cutting, encouraging to work from home, offering special transport services to the employees, permitting rest time to employees who were suspected of Covid-19, arranging online meetings with employees, and allowing employees to work from home were the mechanisms utilized.

Here below shows an individual respondent’s vivid explanation:-

When the pandemic was announced by the Ministry of Health, we tried our best to create awareness for the ‘society’ by posting Covid-19 prevention methods in our own sites. Other companies were initiated to expand this example. The situation has been a special opportunity for the companies to work differently and approach clients.

Correspondingly, other actions like reducing the cost of highly paid workers and reaching clients with local stocks have been also used. Cost minimizing has been taken as one viable option as a mechanism as a managerial adjustment.

4.3. Workplace Environment

It is important to see how the respondents view their workplace environments in order to answer the basic research questions of the survey. Respondents show their views in the following way.

Table 4.3. Workplace environment, restrictions and protective equipment’s

Item	Respondents’ Responses			
	Yes	No	Missing	Total
Have your Company been providing Covid-19 personal protective equipment’s both for employees and customers?	50 (83.33%)	10 (16.66 %)	-	60, 100%
Were there workplace restrictions inside your company amid the pandemic?	45 (75%)	10 (16.66 %)	5 (8.33%)	60, 100%
Has there been any change in your assigned working time limit after the Covid-19 Pandemic?	50 (83.33%)	10 (16.66 %)	-	60, 100%

Source: Survey Results (2021)

The companies have been providing enough personal protective equipment, according to the majority of the respondents (83.33%), while the rest (16.66%) do not believe so. This majority's belief that the companies have been engaged in providing enough personal protective equipment is to mean that the companies have strived to adjust the workplace environments to be suitable with the Covid-19 related restrictions.

Workplace restrictions inside the companies amid the pandemic were also implemented as to the 75% of the respondents. In addition, 83.33% of them assume that the working time limit had been changed after the pandemic came to the picture. Both these views lead to the suggestion that the responsibility the companies have been taken to respect the workplace restrictions and the initiative in changing the working time limit in accordance with the restrictions have contributed to the betterment of the workplace environments of the companies. This by itself would have also supported to the success of the companies' business survival and employees' job satisfaction after few months since the pandemic was declared.

Similar with the above view, further questions were forwarded to see the specific outlooks of respondents.

Table 4.3.1. Workplace environment and the pandemic

Item	SDA	DA	UD	AG	SAG	Total
Your Company has been working to protect you from Covid-19 pandemic	0	5, 8.33%	0	35, 58.33%	20, 33.33 %	60, 100%
The working environment is suitable in the Company you are working for:	0	0	5, 8.33%	40, 66.66%	15, 25%	60, 100%
The working environment in the Company you work for has been changed after the Pandemic has been discovered	0	10, 16.66 %	10, 16.66 %	35, 58.33%	5, 8.33 %	60, 100%

Source: Survey Results (2021)

Most of the respondents agree that their respective companies have been working to protect the employees from Covid-19 pandemic. And, majority or 66.66% of the respondents think that the

working environments have been suitable. Additionally, 58.33% said that the working environment had been changed in accordance to the situation after the pandemic.

As it has been mentioned under table 4.3., the results in table 4.3.1. Above also show that the workplace environment has been appropriate and responsive to the pandemic related restrictions. It is understandable that if majority of the respondents believe that enough personal protective equipment were provided and the working time limit were adjusted to fit the restrictions (as it is stated under table 4.3.), the above results which show that their respective companies have been protecting the employees, and the workplace environment were made to be suitable are matching views with the former.

4.4. Operational Employees' job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction, as one major indicator of business performance also needs an attention to focus to see the effects of the pandemic on the advertising companies.

Table 4.4. Job satisfaction

Item (Statement)	SDA	DA	UD	AG	SAG	Mean	SD
Enough personal protective equipment supplied	0	10, 16.66%	5, 8.33%	45, 75%	0	12	18.9
Situational work environment managed	0	5, 8.33%	5, 8.33%	45, 75%	5, 8.33%	12	18.57
Working time was addressed/compromised with the Pandemic's nature	0	5, 8.33%	0	50, 83.33%	5, 8.33%	12	21.38
Managers encouraged employees' feelings of threat on the Pandemic	0	8, 13.33%	2, 3.33%	37, 61.66%	13, 21.66%	12	14.88
Motivation to deal with the Pandemic revealed	0	6, 10%	3, 5%	34, 56.66%	17, 28.33%	12	13.87
Continuous instructions to protect	0	5,	4,	42,	9, 15%	12	17.07

yourself from the virus have been forwarded		8.33%	6.66%	70%			
The Company has been successful amid the pandemic	0	8, 13.33%	0	36, 60%	16, 26.66%	12	14.96

Source: Survey Results (2021)

Among the respondents, 75% of them agree that enough personal protective equipment have been supplied. The same percentage also believes that situational work environment has been managed. Here again, we find corresponding results. 50% and 16.66% are confident that the sales volumes of the companies have been decreased citing “agree” and “strongly agree” respectively, which this makes 66.66% of the respondents. These results are very harmonious with the previous results discussed.

The working time was adjusted and compromised in line with the pandemic’s nature, as per to the 83.33% of the respondents. 61.66% also consider that their managers encouraged employees’ feelings of threat on the pandemic. With regard to the motivation to deal with the pandemic was revealed or not, around 56.66% of the respondents agreed that there has been a motivation to deal with the pandemic.

It is obvious here too that the motivation to deal with the pandemic has been satisfactory, because more than half of the respondents believe that the stand to deal with the pandemic effects was good. And another major point related with it is that to see that more than 60% of them are in support of the idea that their managers have been encouraging the employees in the companies to cope up with the pandemic’s threat is self-explanatory. The researcher believes that this has significant contribution in the trend of keeping/and recreating employees’ job satisfaction after the pandemic was spread.

70% of these samples again considered that continuous instructions to protect themselves from the virus have been forwarded by the companies they belong for. Additionally, more than 86% think that the companies they belong have been successful amid the pandemic.

It is believed that the job satisfaction of employees can contribute to the success of companies. Respondents were then asked to answer this question; how much do you think your job

satisfaction level contributes to the success of your company performance? 24 (40%) out of the 60 sample respondents feel that they think job satisfaction highly contributes to the success of companies' performances by selecting the option "excellent". While 5 (8.33%) of them preferred "good", and other 12 (20%) chose "fair", only 4 (6.66%) respondents said the contribution of the level of job satisfaction to companies' success is "poor". This easily implies that the majority of the respondents are pro the notion that job satisfaction contributes to the success of the companies' satisfaction. The following questions and their results also show related implications.

Similarly, the encouragement that employees get from their managers can have a vital role in achieving overall business success of companies. The question goes: Do you managers encourage you to work effectively? 48 (80%) of them responded "yes while the remaining 12 (20%) said "No". Managers' encouragement can lead to the success of the companies' business performances, increase in sales volumes, and increase in employees' job satisfaction. The point that majority (80%) of the sample respondents believe that if managers encourage employees the business success comes to reality is a reality by itself here.

4.4.1. Business Performance and General Challenges

Since the entry of the virus to the country, anyone can assume easily that a number of challenges have been witnessed in many spheres and sectors. The business sector cannot be out of these challenges. As one area of focus in this study, to assess the beliefs of the selected employees from the sample advertising companies on the business performances of the companies they belong was undertaken by including specific questions in the questionnaire.

The effectiveness of the companies, and the efforts these companies accomplished to survive the challenges the pandemic brought could be implied by the statements respondents provided. A question related to this was given, which reads; what do you think about your Company's performance (effectiveness) in business survival while facing the Covid-19?

Majority of the statements are prone to the idea that the companies have been coping with the pandemic effects by taking various tactics. Seniority of the companies in the advertising business and their employees' experiences, working in smaller circles, and following the instructions to protect Covid-19 are among the repeatedly stated tactics which enable to survive in the business.

They believe that their companies have been engaged in motivating employees to conduct careful and organized means of selling services and products. One of the respondents clarifies this idea more specifically:-

In the beginning, it was very challenging for our company, but we survived in the industry by extending our services; like branded items which are useful to prevent Covid-19. Nowadays, it is getting better; people (our employees) are taking care of themselves and working hard as the same time. After few months since Covid-19 was discovered, with all the activities of preventing the pandemic, the business performance began to return into normal.

Few others do not think that the business performance has been effective while facing Covid-19. The ‘physical [social] distance as a restriction’ and the ‘shift of budgets by the advertising companies’ are mentioned as major reasons for the failure to sustain the business performances of the companies.

Again separately, respondents were asked to mention the major challenges witnessed in their workplaces since the pandemic was discovered. Several challenges were cited. Wearing the facemask feels discomfort, restraining oneself, inability to gather people, tension (psychological), poor communication, inability to deal and exchange updates with clients, transportation problems, limitations in distributing products, and inability to import important goods from abroad are the major challenges stated.

While few stated that sales volume decreased and become slower than ever, some others also believed that they couldn’t recall any major challenge in their workplaces. A typical instance which shows the atmosphere of workplace environment is put below:-

The sale was highly declined during the first months of the pandemic, people couldn’t move due to the restrictions and employees were very scared to come to workplace as a result. Some client companies even began to say advertising is a luxury considering the virus effects, when we tried to approach them. It was very challenging. We were having a bigger loss of income even it was heavily hard to pay monthly salary of employees.

Thus, it seems as if these advertising companies have been affected more than many other sectors, which this leads to conduct further comparative studies.

4.5. Discussion of the In-depth Interview Results

As an accompanying data gathering method, an in-depth-interview, which was considered in the research questions and objective of this survey study, was conducted. Hence, to purposely interview those concerned individuals in each company about the financial and business performance trends since the pandemic was discovered was mandatory. Three employees who have direct relationship with the financial and sales volume trends were selected purposely from each sample company for interview sessions. Entirely, 30 employees (respondents) were the target of the representing sample size for the in-depth-interview.

4.5.1. Business Performance

Most of the interviewees' understanding on business performance challenges of Covid-19 pandemic on advertising companies is similar – companies were highly affected where to run their business performances have been difficult especially in the first few months since the pandemic was discovered.

The effect on the business performances is manifested by the loss, employee satisfaction, employees' motivation, and minimizing costs in the sample companies. The in-depth interview sessions prove that the companies faced significant income loss particularly in the first three up to six months. Some interviews say that after the mechanisms to cope up with the pandemic related restrictions were devised, the companies began to increase their incomes few months later.

As an audit of the performance of a product in the marketplace, business performance can be measuring it against the marketing plan, its targets and performance estimates. Therefore, almost all interviewees agree that their products and services were at stake in the first six months after Covid-19 cases were found in Ethiopia. As the government implemented necessary quarantines and social distancing practices to contain the pandemic, the efforts to reach customers was difficult.

Target clients couldn't be accessible easily due to the restrictions and psychological tensions surfaced on the society, then the business performance of all the advertising companies was hugely affected.

As it has been mentioned in the literature review of this survey, unlike purely internal measures of performance, such as defects per million, marketing performance depends on external, largely uncontrollable actors, such as customers and competitors. Hence, respondents buy the idea that the business performance was so affected in the beginning months, but actual audits couldn't be forwarded. While some of these say that more than 10 – 20 million ETB defects are estimated in the first 6 months against their marketing plans, others raise issues of risks faced due to unsold products which have been ordered before the discovery of the pandemic.

Majority of them also noted that after few months of huge effects on the business performances, several business adjustment mechanisms, such as electronic contacts with clients, working based on the restrictions, and creating new clients started to be utilized which led to the survival of the companies.

4.5.1.1. Sales Volume

The sales volume metric focuses on the number of products sold rather than monetary profit. Respondents strongly believe that the sales volumes of their respective companies they belong were highly dropped. It was stated in the data presented gathered from the questionnaire that, in the first six months after the pandemic was discovered in the country, there was an average of less than 30% decline of sales volume compare to the sales volume of the month before the pandemic was declared.

From the questionnaire data, it was mentioned that most of the respondents believe that the sales volumes of all the companies have been decreasing significantly. 25 respondents out of the 60 (41.66%) said that there has been 10 up to 20% decrease of sales volume in the first six months. What is very serious is, 16 or 26.66% of them say that the rate of decline ranges from 40 up to 50%. The data from the in-depth interview also support this.

In triangulated correlation between the data gained from the questionnaire, the in-depth interview, and the official financial documents from the sample companies, it can easily be explained that the decline of the sales volume has been beyond imaginable especially in the first few months.

However, after few months, with all the Covid-19 related protection methods and using new ways employees use to cope up with the virus and approach clients, sales volume began to increase.

Most of the interviewees suggest that even though sales volume has been increasing at a slower rate after the first six months since the pandemic was discovered, they all agree that the companies couldn't still reach to their maximum amount of sales volumes they used to have prior to the pandemic time.

Interviewees were asked what the major problems of sales volume of the companies. Many say that the inability to reach customers was the huge challenge. The tension the pandemic created on clients brought a decrease of clients' interest to buy services and products of the companies. Workplace restrictions, shortage of imported materials in the market, and poor internet connection were also raised as contributing factors as challenges for the sales volume problems of the companies.

It is implied that the interviewees are still feeling the panic and the decrease the pandemic caused on the sales volumes of the companies they work for.

4.5.1.2. Operational Employees' Job Satisfaction

Operational Employees' satisfaction (which can be measured through payment, supervision, promotion etc.) is another major focus of the survey and the in-depth interview in particular.

Many interviewees focus on the first few months after the entry of the pandemic when they were asked about the whether the employees in the companies they work in have been satisfied in their jobs since the first time the pandemic became a threat in the country or not. One third of the respondents focused on the emotional effect the pandemic caused, and as a result employees were too afraid to work in the beginning even when all protective measures were handled.

This by itself brought suspicion among the workers to feel less secured, and the respondents believe that that fear and uncertainty fueled to the decrease in employees' job satisfaction. Hence, respondents do not think that the employees' have been satisfied in their jobs.

Some others cite some pitfalls such as cutting costs of the companies which resulted to the loss of jobs of some employees. According to the data gathered from all the interviewees, all the

sample advertising companies (in any rate) have been engaged in reducing employees, at least on those temporary workers. This led to let the rest of the employees to feel insecure on their jobs, which this in turn would have contributed to the decrease of job satisfaction due to the Covid-19 related effects.

In the beginning of this survey, it was explained that even though there are other researches on the effect of the pandemic on business operations, but it is difficult to see where a research on how this pandemic is/has been affecting the advertising business particularly in Ethiopia. That point is achieved through the results in this research process.

Among the research questions, it states that “how much has been the pandemic affecting the business performances of the advertising companies in Addis Ababa?” The results tell that the effect has been tremendous especially in the beginning few months for many reasons.

The research questions portion also asks that how much have the volume of sales of these companies been affected? The results are still congruent. The companies’ sales volumes have been heavily affected, specifically in the first six months.

With the adoption of different coping mechanisms, these companies were able to begin to survive and improve their sales volumes months later.

Presenting the major gaps faced regarding the sales volume, while dealing with COVID-19, as well, is among the research questions reflected in the research questions. Consequently, wearing the facemask feels discomfort, restraining oneself, inability to gather people, tension (psychological), poor communication, inability to deal and exchange updates with clients, transportation problems, limitations in distributing products, and inability to import important goods from abroad are the major challenges stated.

The major gaps also include unable to get workers on time, people getting sick or infected and trying to change the work environment etc.

As another indicator of business performance, measuring the level of the employees’ satisfaction in these companies during the pandemic is the last part of the research questions. The motivation to deal with the pandemic has been satisfactory, because more than half of the respondents of the questionnaire believe that the stand to deal with the pandemic effects was good.

More than 60% of them are also in support of the idea that their managers have been encouraging the employees in the companies to cope up with the pandemic's threat is self-explanatory.

The researcher believes that these believe had substantial contribution to the positive outlooks of the employees towards their job satisfaction amid the pandemic, even though some of them are against this view. It has been stated in the literature review that hierarchy of effects model in advertising is based on the premises that advertising effects occur over time and advertising communication may not lead to immediate behavioral response or purchase, but rather, consumers must fulfill each step before s/he can move to the next stage in the hierarchy.

Anyone could easily guess that this model works under normal circumstance. This is not to mean that the model didn't match in the pandemic time, but the likelihood of its actual shadow could have been compromised by the new and unexpected restrictions the pandemic brought.

Again, the risk management theory has a standpoint that organizations are supposed to proactively manage risk, monitoring in a continued and conscious way the risks associated with their strategic objectives. This theory fits much more with the reality in the ground given the results found from both the questionnaire and the in-depth interview.

These results showed how much the companies have been affected severely. The companies' readiness to proactively manage the risks in line with their strategic objectives was not satisfactory because the results proofed that the companies' performances and their performance indicators showed poor consequences, especially in the first six months since the pandemic was declared.

This survey shows the facts revealed through the respective generic responses given to the research questions generated first. The results notify that the research gaps mentioned in this research should be addressed in line with the results discussed. The expectations in the beginning of this research are met since the results show the immense effect the pandemic brought on the advertising companies.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. Summary of Findings, Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1. Summary of Findings

It was stated in the beginning of this survey that the study aims to assess the performance challenges of Covid-19 and management responses on operational challenges on company's sales volumes, and job satisfactions of employees' on 10 selected advertising companies. Then, this study identified some outcomes which can portray the realities behind the business activities of the sample companies in the time of the pandemic.

The survey has proved that the pandemic had significant challenge on the business performance and operation related to sales volumes and employees' job satisfaction on the advertising companies. The data from both the questionnaire and the in-depth interview showed that the effects of the pandemic have been so huge and the management was highly challenged on the spot.

Of course, the results from both methods of data gathering instruments verified that the enormous effect of the virus related restrictions and other related variables were manifested in the first few months after the pandemic was declared to be found in the country.

The data from this survey proved that the management team beside business performance in general, operational activity, sales volume, and the employee's satisfaction have been boldly affected and challenged by the pandemic.

Majority of the respondents believe the idea that the companies have been coping with the pandemic effects by taking various tactics in order to maintain their business performances. Wearing the facemask feels discomfort, restraining oneself, inability to gather people, tension, poor communication, inability to deal and exchange updates with clients, transportation problems, limitations in distributing products, and inability to import important goods from abroad are the major challenges stated as the main challenges of business performance.

Data from the questionnaire shows that close to half of the respondents, 46 (76.66%) consider that their respective companies' volume of sales decreased and the companies' operational activity is highly affected. In contrary, after few months, with all the Covid-19 related protection

methods and using new ways employees use to cope up with the virus and approach clients, sales volume began to increase, as per the data from the in-depth interviews.

With regard to workplace environment, most of the respondents agree that their respective companies have been working to protect the employees from Covid-19 pandemic. 66.66% of the respondents think that the working environments have been suitable. In addition to this, 58.33% said that the working environment had been changed in accordance to the situation after the pandemic.

Job satisfaction of the employees appeared to be affected in the beginning months since the pandemic cases were declared in the country. Reducing employees in some companies in the beginning created emotional disturbance among the employees.

5.2. Conclusion

The Corona virus or COVID-19 has led to unprecedented economic and public health concerns, which will likely transform how businesses operate going forward. The advertising companies are among the highly affected ones according to the data presented in this study.

The basic aim of this survey was to assess the performance challenges of COVID-19 pandemic and management responses on operational challenges regards to sales volume and their employees' job satisfaction in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; focusing on ten systematically selected advertising companies'.

In this paper, an attempt has been made to study the concepts on challenges of management, operational activity and business performance in relation to sales volume and employees' job satisfaction are explained in the review of the related literature. Data to support the intended research questions were included in the questionnaire, and the in-depth interview which were carried out to see the management and performance challenges of COVID-19 pandemic.

After the collected data through a questionnaire and an in-depth interview, the results were presented, interpreted and discussed in the previous chapter. Consequently, regarding the respondents it is easy to conclude that the business performance have been affected and also the companies' operational activity is highly affected so much taking the results from both the questionnaire and the in-depth interview.

The results in this research show the immediate replies for the problem stated in the beginning of the survey. Based on the discoveries in the previous chapter, the fundamental research questions had been addressed through the results taken from both the data gathering methods utilized here.

Anyone can conclude here that the business performance of the companies resulted into the loss of revenue and profits, there by a risk in the survival questions. But this was the reality in the first few months since the virus was declared that cases of the disease were began to be found in Ethiopia. The reality with business performance; sales volume and employees' job satisfaction is also similar.

The business performances of the selected advertising companies, their operational activity and management were affected seriously particularly in the first six months, with all the mentioned reasons related with COVID-19 pandemic. The indicators of business performances; sales volumes and job satisfaction of employees were also affected based on the results seen in the results of this survey. Therefore, this researcher concluded that the elemental research questions raised at first have been answered as per the intention in the proposal designed. And it is the belief of this researcher that COVID-19 pandemic has brought remarkable negative changes on the business performances; sales volumes and job satisfaction of employees as huge manifestations of the management and operational challenges that the pandemic caused on the advertising companies in Addis Ababa.

And of course, the researcher believed that based on the data analyzed from the questionnaire and in-depth interview and presented in the findings, the management challenges of Covid-19 have been seriously manifested through the decrease in the business performances and sales volumes of the companies, and the shadow on job dissatisfaction revealed by the employees. However, these realities began to change after six months since the pandemic was declared, in which the management and operational challenges were began to be solved, and there by the business performances; sales volume and employees' job satisfaction of the advertising companies began to improve.

5.3. Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, the researcher presents relevant recommendations for the companies, their employees, and other concerned bodies here under. Therefore, this researcher recommends:

- In order to overcome the stated problems with regard to business performance, management and operational challenges, sales volumes, and job satisfaction, the advertising companies should be engaged in modern and innovative marketing strategies and practices that will navigate the business through analyzing brand reputation issues such as identifying potential new products and services needed to meet clients' needs and expectations and focusing on creative and strategic marketing campaigns and targeted advertising in relation with the pandemic and related restrictions.
- It is critical for such advertising companies to be tactful and be empathetic to consumers' plight, when a serious risk or event occurs such as the Covid-19 pandemic. This can be accomplished through adjusting marketing campaigns and scheduled content timelines, evaluating the marketing materials and awareness of consumers' increased anxiety at this time. In addition, the companies must also evaluate their products and services for compliance with the appropriate regulatory frameworks in relation to the pandemic.
- Charitable sales promotions are also vital instruments for the advertising companies to align their products and services with social impact initiatives to assist victims of the Covid-19 pandemic. This can help the companies to build and maintain trust amid the pandemic.
- Increasing online transactions of the companies may look to optimize their marketing practices and elevate their sales volumes.
- Attempting to secure the job satisfaction of employees is also mandatory. To do so, safeguarding the health of employees and ensure employee safety in the workplace are recommended. Remote work should be encouraged in order to minimize the employee's absence from work because of transportation problem and anxiety (fear). And extend protection measures to employees, for example provide employees with safety equipment (hydro alcoholic gel, masks, gloves) for personal use and expand the working environment with considerable space to not to violate social distance restriction would also maximize the confidence of employees.

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Appendixes

I. Appendix A: Questionnaire

St. Marry University

School of Graduate Studies

Dear Respondents,

The researcher wants to thank you beforehand for your willingness to fill this questionnaire honestly and responsibly. The questionnaire was designed to collect the necessary information/data to conduct a research entitled, “**Assessment on Performance Challenges of COVID-19 Pandemic and Management Responses in the Ethiopian Advertising Industry**” for the partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Masters of Arts (M.A) in Marketing Management.

Thank you very much again!

I. Personal Information

1. Sex: Male Female

2. Age: 18-25 26-30 31-35 36 -40 >40

3. Educational Qualification

Certificate Diploma First Degree Masters or above

4. Your current position in the Company

Junior Senior Manager Other

5. Your work experience in the advertising Company

Less than ten years 10-12 Years 13 – 15 years More than 15 years

II. Sales Information

1. Do you think the volume of sales of the Company you work for has decreased after the spread of Covid-19? Yes No

2. If your answer for the above question is yes please state the sales decline in percentage after the Pandemic declaration?

Declined by 10-20% Declined by 20-30% Declined by 30-40%
Declined by 40-50% Declined by more than 50%

3. If your answer for the above question is No please click the Sales Volume Increase in percentage and after the Pandemic declaration?

Declined by 10-20% Declined by 20-30% Declined by 30-40%
Declined by 40-50% Declined by more than 50%

4. Did the Company you work use flexible mechanisms to boost sales volume; even the restrictions related to Covid-19 were hurdles? Yes No

5. What were the main reasons for the success/failure of the volume of sales of the Company you work for?

6. What do you think your Company performed well in its business with regard to the Covid-19 restrictions?

7. What managerial adjustment/s mechanism/s do you think the Company you are in utilized during the pandemic?

III. Company/Workplace Environment Data

2. Your Company has been working to protect you from Covid-19 pandemic:

Strongly disagree Disagree Undecided Agree strongly agree

3. Have your Company been providing Covid-19 personal protective equipment? Yes No

4. Were there workplace restrictions inside your company amid the pandemic? Yes No

5. Has there been any change in your assigned working time limit after the Covid-19 Pandemic?

Yes No

6. The working environment is suitable in the Company you are working for:

Strongly disagree Disagree Undecided Agree strongly agree

7. The working environment in the Company you work for has been changed after the Pandemic has been discovered:

Strongly disagree Disagree Undecided Agree strongly agree

IV. Employees' Job Satisfaction

The following statements are about your Company's performance in the time of Covid-19 Pandemic. Please tick on a scale's blank you believe represents each statement.

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Sales volume decreased after COVID-19					
Enough personal protective equipment supplied for both employees and customers					
Situational work environment managed					
Working time was adjusted/compromised with the Pandemic's nature					
Managers encouraged employees' feelings of threat on the Pandemic					
Motivation to deal with the Pandemic revealed					
Continuous instructions to protect yourself from the virus have been forwarded					
The Company has been successful amid the pandemic					

1. How much do you think your job satisfaction level contributes to the success of your company performance?

Excellent Good Fair Poor Very poor

2. Do you managers encourage you to work effectively? Yes No

3. What do you think about your Company's performance (effectiveness) in business survival while facing the Covid-19?

4. What major challenges have been witnessed in your workplace since the Covid-19 Pandemic was discovered first?

5. What were the main challenges of the management in your Company to pursue the usual work while dealing with the Pandemic?

6. Were there some strong sides of the management of the Company you work for in the past year? If you think there were, mention them.

7. Do you have any remained statement/comment to add with regard to all the previous questions? Please specify it here under?

II. Appendix B: In-depth Interview Questions

St. Marry University

School of Graduate Studies

1. How do you explain the effect of Covid-19 on the business performances of advertising companies?
2. How much have the sales volume of your company been affected?
3. What were the major problems of your company's sales volumes while facing the pandemic?
4. Do you think the employees of the company you belong have been satisfied in their jobs in the midst of Covid-19?
5. Would you please explain the sales volume trends and business performances of the companies you are in?