"The key factors that influence the attitude and behaviour of young South African female consumers towards online clothes shopping: A Superbalist case study"

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i.   DECLARATION

I, Kasia Jackson, declare that this dissertation is of my own original work. Any secondary research material that has been used in this dissertation has either been a print source or from the Internet. I am well aware that plagiarism is the use of another person's words, ideas and work without appropriate and specific acknowledgement. All sources are referenced using the required Harvard referencing method and can be found at the end of this document.

I hereby declare that the Research Report submitted for the Bachelor of Arts in Strategic Brand Communication degree to The Independent Institute of Education is my own work and has not previously been submitted to another University or Higher Education Institution for degree purposes.

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ii.   ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

iii.   GLOSSARY OF TERMS

- Apparel

  Apparel refers to personal attire or clothing of a particular kind that is being sold in stores (Sejin & Stoel, 2012). For the purpose of this research, apparel is being referred to as clothing young south African female consumers can purchase via online branded stores, such as Superbalist.

- Brick-and-mortar

  Brick-and-mortar store is a traditional "street-side" business that interacts with its customers face-to-face in a physical store and has the capability to offer experiential factors (e.g. such as consumers having the ability to touch and feel the clothing) (Lassitsa & Kol, 2016).

- Consumer behavior

  Consumer behavior refers to understanding why consumers choose to shop online, how consumers make purchase decisions and what factors influence such decisions, and the behaviour of consumers in the online retail environment (Constantinides, 2013). Thus, the researcher will analyse young female consumers' online attitude and behaviour in terms of searching, browsing, finding, selecting, comparing and evaluating information, as well as interacting and transacting with online branded stores, such as Superbalist.

- Consumer perceptions

  A customer's impression, awareness and/or consciousness about a company or its offerings (Constantinides, 2013). For the purpose of this research, the researcher will focus on what factors influence young South African female consumers' perception towards online branded stores, such as Superbalist.

- E-commerce

  E-commerce refers to the exchange (buying and selling) of goods and/or services via the internet (Akhlaq & Ahmed, 2015). For the purpose of this research, e-commerce refers to a brand that offers their products and services solely through the internet.

- Online retail

  Online retail consists of retailers that operate without a physical store. Also known as electronic retailing or "e-tailing", and online retailer can include can include business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-consumer (B2C) sales of products and services (Akhlaq & Ahmed, 2015). Sales can be done through subscriptions to website content or through advertising.

- Online shopping

  Online shopping, also known as e-shopping, is defined as the act of purchasing products or services over the internet (Akhlaq & Ahmed, 2015).

- Web experience

  According to (Constantinides, 2013), web experience is defined as the consumer's total impression about the online company resulting from his/her exposure to a combination of virtual marketing tools, which is directly controlled by the marketer, likely to influence the buying behaviour of the online consumer.

iv.   ABSTRACT

As the Internet and online shopping is growing at a very fast pace worldwide, investigating this phenomenon within a South African context is vital considering that today it is a relatively "new" trend in this country as the rate of growth has been slow compared to worldwide. To assist in answering 'why?' South Africans have be slow to adopt, implement and utilise the online retail sector, this research dissertation explored the factors that influence young South African female consumers to participate, or not, in online shopping. The researcher focused predominantly on apparel purchases done through the internet or online branded stores by young female consumers.

The research employed a qualitative approach where online surveys and in-depth interviews were conducted. Convenience, purposive and snowball sampling methods were used to identify respondents and participants that suited the pre-determined sample criteria. Findings are presented through constructions created by the researcher from common themes and patterns identified in participants' responses during the data analysis process. The findings revealed that saving time and effort, the convenience of products being available and accessible, and being able to make price comparisons easily are the main motivations (advantages) for online clothes shopping. The main limitations of online clothes shopping that cause hesitation in young female consumers to shop online was not being able to touch and feel clothing, and the delivery time of clothing, the use of personal information on the internet and the fear of fraudulent online activities. However, when participants do decide to purchase clothing from an online branded store, customer reviews, personal recommendations and discount factors are considered utmost important during the consumer's decision-making process. Findings of the research are further discussed in detail, along with recommendations for online retailers and future research.

Although this research was small-scale and the findings cannot be generalised, it provides insights as to how online apparel brands can develop better marketing strategies that influence customers' attitude towards online shopping and online

experience. This can ultimately increase online business, thus contributing to the growth of e-commerce in South Africa.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH

1.1 Background of research

The increasing number of smartphones, along with other internet-enabled devices paired with their applications and services, has made the internet more easily accessible. As people are spending more of their 'spare' time on online activities, such as social networking, gaming and internet browsing, online shopping or internet retailing has become a standardised procedure in many countries.

According to Kumar and Kashyap (2018), online shopping is the process by which consumers search for, browse, compare and purchase goods using the internet. Internet retailing (e-retail) offers customers the benefits of greater access to price comparison information, a different and unique shopping experience, and the convenience of a "store" open 24/7 (Kumar & Kashyap, 2018). This leads to retail evolving at an accelerated rate due to the changes made possible by new technologies because with the large quantity of information and products available in the marketplace, consumers are becoming more sophisticated, with needs for personalization, uniqueness, as well as maximised values. Therefore, in response to the intense competition in the marketplace, innovative and non-traditional retailing setups, such as online stores, have emerged to meet changing consumer needs (Dahlhoff, 2017).

Kahn, Inman and Verhoef (2017) assert that new retailers are transforming traditional businesses through changing the traditional retailing assumptions as many retailers are implementing innovative new technologies, such as smart dressing rooms and mobile vouchers/discounts/sales. Thus, such retailers, whether it be specialty retailers, new online players, or web-based retailing platforms, are attracting consumers away from traditional brick and mortar stores (Kahn *et al.*, 2017). However, e-retail has a few disadvantages for consumers, such as lack of the ability to try a product, lack of interpersonal trust, lack of instant gratification, high shipping and handling costs, lower customer service, loss of privacy and security, challenging logistics, and lack of an in-store shopping experience (Kumar & Kashyap, 2018). Therefore, it is suggested that in order to

maximize the potential benefits and minimize the disadvantages of e-retail mentioned above, e-tailers should adopt innovative strategy-based business models to create channel integration and cohesion to further instill confidence in potential online shoppers and positively influence buying behavior (Kumar & Kashyap, 2018).

1.2 Research title

The key factors that influence the attitude and behaviour of young South African female consumers towards online clothes shopping: A Superbalist case study.

1.3 Problem statement

The online retail sector in South Africa has grown significantly over the past years with the start-up of local online brand stores, such as 'Zando', 'Spree' and 'Superbalist'. Statistics from the MasterCard Worldwide Online Shopping Survey show that the amount of South African internet users shopping online grew from 53% in 2010 to 58% in 2012 (Fin24, 2013) and it is inferred that growth has continued. However, today e-commerce in South Africa makes up 1% of the overall retail sales, according to data from World Wide Worx (2018). Although there has been growth in e-commerce within the South African context, the rate of growth has been slow which makes one ask the question 'why?'.

Therefore, the researcher aims to investigate what factors impact consumers' attitude and buying behaviour towards online clothes shopping, while focusing on young female online shoppers within South Africa between the ages 20 and 25.

1.4 Purpose statement

The purpose of this research is to determine and understand the key factors that create young female consumers' perceptions of online clothes shopping, as well as attract and influence young female consumers to purchase clothing online from South African online clothing brand stores. The researcher has focused on and used the online brand store 'Superbalist' as a point of reference to analyse the online shopping environment within South Africa. Subsequently, the aim of the researcher was to then identify and provide innovative recommendations as to

how South African online store brands, such as Superbalist, could appeal to, gain and retain consumers, especially young females. These recommendations may possibly provide insight as to how an online brand store can remain competitive amongst other online branded stores and ultimately help e-commerce gain popularity amongst South African citizens.

1.5 Rationale and relevance

Internet connectivity and usage has increased intensely in the past decade, providing people with easy access to obtain information and engage in economic and social exchanges, social activities and online communities (Lassitsa & Kol, 2016). With the introduction of smartphones ability to be paired with internet-based applications and services, such new technologies allow consumers to interact with brands in multiple ways (touchpoints), regardless of customer location and often in real time. According to Brands that adopt e-commerce can gain benefits, such as providing information to consumers (Melis, Campo, Breugelmans & Lamey, 2015), efficient movement of physical product(s) (Ishfaq, Defee, & Gibson, 2016), and have the opportunity to capture and analyse vast amounts of customer data, which allow brands to develop structures that support and integrate highly complex supply chain activities for a diverse range of customer touchpoints (Lassitsa & Kol, 2018).

Once a brand is an established e-commerce retailer, the aim is to not only attract customers away from traditional "brick-and-mortar" stores, but also to understand what encourages customer switching behavior among technologies and various online brands. According to Wen (2014), gaining this understanding is essential in order to compete for e-market share. Furthermore, online brands should focus on online customers repurchase intention and loyalty as the ultimate success of the online shopping experience is dependent on customers' continued web site usage. This focus should be prioritized as the cost of retaining a customer for a brand operating in e-commerce is more affordable than the cost of obtaining a new customer (Wen, 2014).

In terms of consumers within the context of this research proposal, South Africans are slowly becoming more comfortable engaging with technology, but an element of unwillingness is evident when it comes to buying products online. This is evident in the Connected Consumer Survey (2017) as findings show that 84% of South African use their smartphones during the various stages of online shopping, from 'inspiration' to comparison to advice and purchase preparation, but only 1.5% of online consumers actually end up making a purchase online. In addition, News24 (2015) stated that auditing firm PWC conducted a survey of 15000 consumers from 15 areas to specifically investigate if the lack of trust towards online payments delayed the adoption of shopping online. From this survey, results showed that 38% of South Africans do not want to transact online.

Therefore, for brands to survive in the highly competitive marketplace of the internet, brands must develop their marketing strategies based on the factors that influence customers' attitude towards online shopping and online experience. This research displays relevance as it can provide insight into the various factors that influence consumers within the online shopping environment, and further assist brands in designing and communicating a framework to understand their target audience better. This can ultimately increase online business, thus contributing to the South African economy.

1.6 Research question

What key factors influence young female consumers to purchase clothes online?

Sub-question:

What are the key consumer drivers that encourage young females to participate, or not participate, in online shopping and how do these impact the development of the online retail channel?

1.7 Research objectives

1.7.1 To describe what factors entice young South African female consumers to participate in online clothes shopping.

1.7.2 To describe what factors may cause hesitation or non-participation in young South African female consumers to purchase clothes online.

1.7.3 To describe what factors young South African female consumers consider during the decision-making process before purchasing clothes online.

1.7.4 To describe recommendations as to how Superbalist, as well as other online apparel retailers, can attract young South African female consumers to buy clothes from its online store, and further create and retain brand loyalty.

1.8 Chapter outline

Chapter 1: Chapter 1 introduced the research topic, highlighting the research questions and defining the researching objectives.

Chapter 2: Chapter 2 is the literature review specific to the research. Appropriate studies, previous research papers and relevant findings are discussed.

Chapter 3: Chapter 3 introduces the research methodology and the adopted research approach and design. The selected target population, sampling size, data collection and ethical considerations are also discussed.

Chapter 4: Chapter 4 is the presentation and discussion of findings of this research dissertation.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and recommendations are discussed and related to each objective of this research dissertation, with the mention of suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERITURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a review of past literature that has been analysed and summarised to explore the possible factors that may influence young female consumers' attitude towards online clothes shopping and behaviour in the online shopping context.

2.2 Theoretical approach:

Despite the growing interest between researchers and retail marketers, there is still a need to increase the knowledge about the key factors that influence consumer e-shopping behavior, especially among young female consumers. The theoretical models identified and selected to potentially assist the researcher in determining these key drivers are: The Engel-Kollat-Blackwell (EKB) (1968) consumer behavior model and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM).

The Engel-Kollat-Blackwell consumer behaviour model:

The factors that may influence buying behavior of consumers can be explained with the five-stage Engel-Kollat-Blackwell (EKB) (1968) consumer behavior model. The EKB model has been dominantly used as a wide-ranging model that conceptualises a private, rational decision-maker who systematically accesses and examines through information to maximize value (Ashman, Solomon & Wolny, 2015). According to the model, consumers go through a fixed sequence of five distinct stages when they make purchase decisions, which ultimately determines their buying behavior (Park & Cho, 2012)**.** These stages include 1) problem recognition, 2) information search, 3) evaluation of alternatives, 4) purchase, and 5) post-purchase evaluation.

Stage 1: Problem recognition

The consumer purchase process begins when an individual discovers a need for a new purchase (Park & Cho, 2012), or in other words, a gap between the real status and the preferred status. Ashman, Solomon and Wolny (2015) believe that marketing efforts, such as advertising and promotions, social media, store and online-store displays, catalogues, discount vouchers and emails, provoke problem recognition majority of the time as they draw attention to unrecognised wants or needs. These wants or needs can be satisfied by the individual through either internal or external circumstances. The consumer may search for information and assess possible alternatives to satisfy his/her want or need (Park & Cho, 2012).

Stage 2: Information search

Usually once a consumer has identified and is aware of a want or need, he/she accesses different sources of information to identify choice options. Different 'traditional' sources of information may include, but is not limited to, personal experiences, word of mouth and commercial advertising and marketing messages (Ashman *et al.*, 2015). However, the digital culture of today has shifted individuals' dependence away from traditional sources of marketing information to more non-traditional sources such as customer reviews, search engines, blogs, branded social media pages or customer created photo feeds (Park & Cho, 2012).

Stage 3: Evaluation of alternatives

After the information searching stage, the individual considers a relatively limited number of options to be compared and analysed (Park & Cho, 2012). Each option may be compared and analysed according to a personalised criteria that is aligned with an individual's beliefs and fundamental needs, and possible benefits that potentially can be gained from the product's attitudes (Park & Cho, 2012). For purchasing apparel, such benefits may include brand reputation, price, warranty, colour, quality and size.

Stage 4: Purchase

After evaluating alternatives, the consumer then selects the best solution or product among all possible options (Park & Cho, 2012). During this stage, the consumer has a list of specifications, such as specific product, specific brand and specific retailers to assist in the process of a new purchase (Park & Cho, 2012). In addition, the elements of consumer online shopping experience and information provided online is fundamental in the purchasing stage as it helps the consumer to make decisions with less perceived risk and creates perceptions of value. These elements can, therefore, either reassure or discourage the customer of their choice or purchase (Ashman *et al.*, 2015).

Stage 5: Post-purchase evaluation

During pre-purchase, the consumer forms expectations about a product. Correspondingly, during post-purchase the consumer assess his/her purchase decision and forms further expectations about their future levels of satisfaction based on how well the product has satisfied their want or need (Park & Cho, 2012). In addition to a consumer's own feelings, the opinion of others as well facilitates the amount of satisfaction a consumer experiences (Ashman *et al.*, 2015). Consumers search for positive information from multiple information sources to justify their purchase behaviors, particularly for high involved and publicly consumed products such as apparel items (Park & Cho, 2012). Therefore, consumers of apparel items are more likely to obtain feedback from reference groups to confirm if their decisions were correct, which further helps reduce cognitive dissonance (Park & Cho, 2012). Cognitive dissonance can be defined as the state of a "psychological tension resulting from perceived inconsistencies in cognitions" (Park & Cho, 2012). In other words, apparel shoppers are likely to check with family members and friends to make sure they made the correct apparel purchases.

Since customers are decision makers attempting to fulfill their needs, this EKB framework of a "problem-solving process" can be beneficial to brands in terms of consumer behavior and marketing, as it is vital to understand how customers make decisions to satisfy their needs, wants, and expectations. For this research, since consumers are influenced by several uncertain internal and external factors

previously mentioned, online store brands, such as Superbalist, should aim to understand how South African customers perceive quality within their online shopping decision-making process. This will help improve brands' online store service, which is essential since a customer's last online shopping experience highly influences their next purchase decision.

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM):

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is a research model that can be used to investigate the technology acceptance factors that influence the adoption of online shopping within the context of South African consumers (Lim & Ting, 2012). TAM is used broadly in studying information system acceptance in which the usage of the system (actual behavior) is determined by two dimensions: perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness, which are the antecedents of attitude (Lim & Ting, 2012). TAM also includes a causal relationship between perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness. In addition, TAM is based on the Theory of Reasoned Action which suggests that social behavior is motivated by attitude and intentions to perform (Lim & Ting, 2012). Attitude, in turn, is connected to behavior.

Lim and Ting (2012) assert that perceived ease of use (PEOU) is defined as the concentration of physical and mental efforts that a user expects to receive when considering the use of technology, in other words the degree to which a technological system would be effortless. Furthermore, it is suggested that technology that is perceived to be easier to use than another is more likely to be accepted by users, whereas the more complex a technology is perceived to be, the slower its adoption rate (Lim & Ting, 2012). According to Lim and Ting (2012), studies concluded that a system which is easy to use requires less effort from users, and therefore, increases the possibility of acceptance and usage of specific technology. This aspect of TAM can have a positive influence on consumers' attitude in using the internet to shop online.

Perceived usefulness (PU) is another major element of attitude toward using technology and can be defined as the degree to which the user believes that the technology will enhance the performance of an activity (Lim & Ting, 2012). Lim

and Ting (2012) affirm multiple studies concluded that consumers will have favourable attitudes towards online clothes shopping if contributions from the internet are developed towards a solution or sufficient benefits are provided. For instance, comparing price and product information via the internet, which is not accessible through traditional shopping, can be perceived as useful by consumers (Lim & Ting, 2012). Therefore, the relationship between PEOU and PU is closely related to e-commerce as the easier it is for consumers to use online shopping sites, the more useful online shopping will be perceived by consumers.

Corresponding with the TAM and the purpose of this research, the researcher will investigate which online platforms young female consumers prefer using or are more active on (e.g. website or applications) as this will automatically propose which online platform is PEOU and PU. Thus, this can provide Superbalist with an insight into which online channel will be most effective when aiming to communicate and attract young female consumers, as this could be a possible key factor that influences young female consumers to participate in online clothes shopping.

2.3 Review of previous literature

The researcher identified a range of factors that could potentially influence consumers' attitude and behaviour towards online clothes shopping. Potential factors within the online shopping context have been categorised into four main sub-headings: technological factors, consumer-related factors, pricing factors and product and/or service factors within the online shopping context.

2.3.1 Technological factors

Pantano, Priporas and Dennis (2018) express as retail and technology evolve, consumers now can choose to purchase clothing through multiple retail channels, from traditional retail outlets, pop-up stores and direct marketing, to online or mobile versions formats. Even though multiple channel options are available, the e-commerce share of total retail sales increases at a faster rate than traditional offline retail channel. It is suggested that this is because of the factors of

generation and gender, as literature associates these factors with consumers' use of technology and retail channels (Ordan, 2015). With the addition of e-retailing in the marketplace, young female consumers have easy access to information for product and price comparison (e.g. including online coupons and information on special promotions or sales), which shows that young female consumers have the opportunity to purchase through one retail channel or across channels, depending on the ideal 'value for money' price of the consumer (Herhausen, Binder, Schogel & Hermann, 2015). This is known as multi-channel retailing which integrates online and offline channels to provide consumers with a unified shopping experience. Therefore, brands must understand young female consumers' digital behaviour in terms of how they use technology so that marketing strategies can successfully target specific clothing channel sections, as digital consumer behaviour differs by generation and gender.

Members of Generation Y, also labelled as millennials, were born between early 1980s and 2000s, and are the largest group of consumers with a dominant influence on clothing sales (McDonald, 2015). Generation Y are technologically capable as they are regular users of social media and early adopters of new products since they use a range of technological devices, such as tablets, cell phones and instant messaging to connect with people and retail outlets (Ordun, 2015). This can lead to the assumption that online friends within social networking communities may influences Generation Y's buying decisions. Furthermore, when it comes to online shopping, it is suggested that Generation Y mainly use the internet to search for online product information to make efficient shopping decisions before purchasing as Generation Y like to make decisions quickly and expect fast transactions (Ordun, 2015). Therefore, Generation Y consumers are more likely to use interactive online platforms for online clothes shopping than Generation X or Baby Boomers since Generation Y consumers find in-store interactions with a salesperson unnecessary, as opposed to the other generations. Generation Y consumers prefer less human interaction in the shopping experience, yet want a fast purchase as well as visual communication that is timely and reliable (Bruseke, 2016).

Authors Shepard, Pookulangera, Kinley and Josiam (2016), and Jin, Osman, Manaf and Abdullah (2015) show that there are gender differences in the way consumers shop, as it is expected that females and males have different digital behaviour when selecting retail channels for clothing shopping. Literature states that females have a greater need, than males, to touch apparel products before purchasing (Shepard *et al.*, 2016). However, generation Y females' online clothing purchases are 33% higher than all other generations (Jin *et al.*, 2015). This shows that generation Y female consumers use the internet more than generation Y males, as well as older females, when it comes to purchasing online.

2.3.2 *Consumer-related factors*

One of the many reasons as to why internet shopping, specifically online clothes shopping, has had a slow growth within South Africa could potentially be due to the factor of trust. Trust, in the context of e-commerce, can be defined as "a consumer's willingness to rely on the seller and take action in circumstances where such action makes the consumer vulnerable to the seller" (Akhlag & Ahmed, 2015). Chen, Yan, Fan and Gordon (2014) state that consumers are hesitant to adopt online shopping because consumers are often uncertain about how their personal information is going to be used, the accuracy of the information provided online and whether products are priced fairly.

Therefore, a consumer's lack of trust can be a major barrier for brands to do business online. Trust can thus be closely associated to the concept of perceived risk. Dai, Forsythe and Kwon (2014) define perceived risk as the degree to which a person expresses uncertainty about a service or product and particularly, the consequence. In other words, online shoppers may become uncertain when deciding to purchase online and the consequence of a poor decision. O' Cass and Carlson (2012) further suggests that uncertainty may be due to a lack of contact and interaction with the physical product, brand or store and personnel, thereby discouraging consumers from purchasing via the internet.

Zhang and Liu (2011) assert that uncertainty has two forms: perceived commodity uncertainty and uncertainty of behavior. Perceived commodity uncertainty refers

to the uncertainty caused during the transaction process because consumers don't have information on the attributes of the product, such as its quality and style (Zhang & Liu, 2011). In the context of online clothes shopping, buyers and sellers (brands) don't have physical interaction so buyers cannot verify the true quality of the product for themselves and determine if whether the attributes of the clothing will satisfy their personalised needs or not, as online buyers only have access to experience browsing pictures and descriptions of clothing (Zhang & Liu, 2011). Furthermore, the example of the colour and shape between the pictures and physical product and the possibility of the online brand store providing an inaccurate description of the product, overall increases a consumer's perception of uncertainty.

The other form of uncertainty is the uncertainty of behaviors and refers to the perceived seller's or online branded stores' behavior uncertainty (Zhang & Liu, 2011). Due to the consumer not being able to determine whether the seller or online store has provided correct information, the seller will always possess more information about the attributes of the product than the consumers. This forces consumers to rely heavily on the seller's integrity and actions, and further increases the difficulty for consumers in judging whether sellers are honest or not (Zhang & Liu, 2011). For example, there is a possibility that the seller or online store could not deliver the product or the right product.

Per previous discussion, it is also suggested that product risk is the most frequent reason as to why consumers may not shop online. Product risk, or performance risk, can be defined as the probability of the item failing to meet the performance requirements originally intended (Dai *et al.*, 2014). It is similarly stated that online shoppers perceive a higher level of product risk for apparel when purchasing online due to shoppers' inability to physically examine and test product attributes online, as opposed to purchasing apparel in traditional stores. In addition, perceived financial and privacy risks may also influence consumers' intention to purchase online. Financial risk can be defined as the possibility of suffering a monetary loss from a purchase (Dai *et al.*, 2014). Different reasons have been identified as to why consumers may suffer monetary loss when online shopping.

Firstly, it is difficult especially for consumers new to online shopping to determine whether the price of an item they have purchased at a particular online store was the lowest price for value available compared to other online stores (Dai *et al*., 2014). This type of financial risk could explain why online shoppers abandoned carts. However, as previously mentioned, this can lead back to how consumers have now adopted multi-channel retailing which allows for product information and price comparison. And secondly, financial losses may be due the possibility of credit card fraud, as well as other costs such as shipping (Dai *et al*., 2014). Thus, online shopping is associated negatively with financial risk and may be a strong factor that influences consumers' intentions to shop online.

Privacy risk can be defined as the probability of having personal information revealed from online transactions (Dai *et al*., 2014). Despite the nature of e-commerce growing, consumers have concerns regarding the privacy and safety of their personal information. Kokolakis (2015) shares that privacy is a primary concern for people in the digital age in terms of how their information is collected and used. However, the literature identifies that individuals disclose personal information for relatively small rewards, such as gaining attention from peers in an online social network (Kokolakis 2015). This inconsistency between privacy attitude and privacy behavior has been referred to as the term "privacy paradox".

The privacy paradox, according to author Kokolakis (2015), has significant suggestions for e-commerce and online social networking, since e-commerce and social networking sites collect massive amounts of personal information. When it comes to online social networks, there is an assumption that young people do not protect their private information. However, Kokolakis (2015) also recognises that young people do use a variety of protection strategies, such as giving false information, restricting access to their profiles by adjusting their privacy settings, limiting friendship requests, and deleting tags and photos.

With this research investigating what factors influence young South African female consumers to shop online, the factor of privacy risk does not seem as influential as the literature conducted by Kokolakis (2015) has concluded that active participation in online social networks, which involves self-disclosure, is associated

with three fundamental needs: (1) the need for diversion and entertainment, (2) the need for social relationships, and (3) the need for identity construction. Thus, for majority of young consumers, satisfying the above needs outweighs the possible risks of revealing personal data when purchasing via the internet.

Today, a major factor that influences young people (Generation Y/Millennials) is social media. Through social media networks, such as Instagram and Facebook, young people constantly post their opinions, experiences, and product reviews online, as well as keep track of the posts from friends and/or family (Cabosky, 2016). According to Bazaarvoice (2013), research shows that before they enter a store, 62% of millennial shoppers already know what they want to buy through their research in the online environment, and 84% say that consumer written content on brand sites influences what they buy. This emerging method of e-commerce is known as social shopping and is a mixture of social networking and online retailing (Akman & Mishra, 2017). Especially for young consumers, a social network online community may serve as a main information source since there are a variety of sub-groups formed within this community by people who have the need to share their opinions and experience related to a specific topic (Park & Cho, 2012).

Park and Cho (2012) argue that the most common aspects discussed within the apparel sub-group included sharing personal experiences and advice on the quality of products and trends regarding fashion, as well as information such as comparable prices, promotional events, and feedback regarding service quality. Therefore, it is evident that social network online communities play a dominate role in affecting young consumers' choice to purchase from a specific branded online store. Thus, it is vital that retailers constantly monitor the information exchanged within these online communities.

2.3.3 Pricing factors

As discussed above, it is evident that an individual's behaviour is heavily influence by others, especially when it comes to young South African female consumers buying apparel online as feedback obtained from reference groups influence the

attitude and buying behaviour towards online purchasing. However, Cheah, Phau and Liang (2015) argue that a consumer's perceived value of a product or service and their level of price consciousness ultimately influences consumers' attitudes and evaluations towards a product, and therefore, their online purchasing behavior. Price consciousness can be defined as the degree to which the consumer focuses exclusively on paying low prices (Cheah *et al.*, 2015). Price 'sensitive' consumers are buyers that search for the best, lowest price available and usually avoids buying expensive items (Cheah *et al.*, 2015). Thus, it is suggested that price conscious consumers are more likely to purchase from online store brands that offer lower prices or online promotions/deals as this results in purchase satisfaction, which can further increase the probability of repeat purchase behavior and compulsive buying of e-deals (Cheah *et al.*, 2015).

Due to this research targeting specifically young female consumers between the ages 20 and 25, there is a strong possibility that many young females within the researcher's target population may be tertiary students and thus, they will be regarded as price sensitive consumers.

2.3.4 *Product and/or service factors*

Akroush and Al-Debei (2015) believe that consumers are more likely to adopt online shopping if they perceive relative advantage over traditional shopping methods such as lower costs and saving time and effort. Therefore, the convenience factor of online shopping may positively influence the attitudes and online behaviour of consumers as online shopping allows consumers to purchase products at any time and location, and it provides consumers with the ability to search and collect more information regarding potential purchase, as well as to compare prices with transparency (Akroush & Al-Debei, 2015).

Furthermore, other factors such as website quality, website image and website reputation also plays a significant role. When examining the relationship between perceived website quality and consumer emotion, authors Kim and Lennon (2013) identified that website design factors, such as organisation of layout, display and signage, do have a positive effect on consumers' emotional experience and

satisfaction when browsing or searching for potential purchases. In addition, customer service is an integral part of website quality as it is insisted that a lack of immediate response to online consumer queries is the most common, negatively perceived aspect in online retailing (Kim & Lennon, 2013). This can lead to negative emotions such as anger and disappointment, which could possibly influence consumers to avoid online shopping.

In the context of online shopping, perceived image is related to physical and behavioral attributes of the website such as its design and functionalities, the variety of products or services it provides, and the way it interacts with its consumers (Akroush & Al-Debei, 2015). It is essential for brands to manage their online website image as it influences how consumers think about a brand and perceive its website operations. Therefore, website image should be regarded as an asset because it can determine profitably as change in corporate image can initiate a change in consumers' attitude (Akroush & Al-Debei, 2015).

And lastly, website reputation refers to a website's popularity and credibility, and contributes to the making of the brand's image. Due to the inability of consumers to evaluate the credibility of an online shopping website before purchasing from it, websites with strong reputations are likely to be more persuasive then sources with little to no credibility (Akroush & Al-Debei, 2015). Therefore, Akroush and Al-Debei (2015) suggests that perceived website reputation has a positive influence on consumers' confidence and trust in e-commerce settings.

For the purpose of this research, the researcher will utilise social network online communities to monitor discussions, feedback and reviews pertaining to Superbalist's clothing and online service(s) since consumers, especially young South African female consumers, now rely on social networking sites, comparison shopping services, influencer opinions or customer reviews on blogs. It is necessary for the researcher to monitor social network online communities as such platforms provide young female consumers with information that allows them to evaluate an online brand or retailers' reputation, and ultimately form a perception of a brand.

2.4 Summary

The literature reviewed above is relevant to the dissertation topic and research objectives of the study. The literature has assisted the researcher in building a strong foundation of knowledge that has guided this study, as it broadened the researcher's knowledge on the theoretical framework in relation to factors that influence young female consumers to participate, or not, in online clothes shopping. Chapter 3 introduces the research methodology.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The following chapter provides an in-depth analysis of the research methodology conducted by the researcher, in order to achieve the research objectives. The research design, research approach, target population, the sample size, data collection method, data analysis method, validity, reliability and trustworthiness and ethical considerations are discussed below.

From the responses gathered the researcher was able to generate an understanding and insights from the different perspectives of various young females, of the factors that influence their attitude and behaviour towards online clothes shopping. These insights helped guild the researcher's dissertation and provided a clear path to formulate a conclusion answering the research objectives.

3.2 Research paradigm

According to du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout (2014), the term 'paradigm' can be defined as a cluster of beliefs that influences and dictates what should be studied, how research should be done, and how results should be interpreted for researchers in a particular field. Furthermore, there are three main theoretical paradigms identified: positivism, interpretivism and critical realism. This research utilised the interpretivism paradigm. Interpretivism seeks to discover and understand the elements that impact a person(s) 'reality' in terms of behaviour, experiences and opinions, as individuals experience reality differently due to the impact of unalike internal and external factors (du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014). The researcher's aim is to identify and gain an in-depth understanding of the internal and external factors, both collectively and individually, that could potentially influence young South African females' decision to shop online.

Therefore, in order to determine which factors are dominant in influencing young female consumers' attitude towards the online retail environment, their decision to shop online as opposed to 'traditional' in-store shopping and their purchasing intention or lack thereof (behaviour), the researcher exercised empathy through a

series of online surveys and in-depth interviews to seek, discover and understand the multiple, different factors that have influenced each research participant's experience, behaviour and opinion(s) with regards to the online shopping context.

3.3 Research design

3.3.1 Nature of Research

The nature of this research employs a qualitative research approach and descriptive research design. Qualitative research is investigation aimed at describing and clarifying human experience as it appears in people's lives, and data is gathered primarily in the form of spoken or written language rather than in the form of numbers (du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014). The aim of descriptive research design is to describe a group of people or phenomena and determine a relationship between variables, through primarily being concerned with finding answers to "what" questions (du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014) such as '*what are young females' attitudes towards online clothes shopping?*', '*what factors influence these attitudes?*', '*what factors encourage or discouraged young South African females' behaviour online in terms of actually purchasing clothes?*'.

For this research dissertation, a triangulation design was utilised. Triangulation this is a process of collecting and analysing data from numerous sources (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). Firstly, findings from previously published literature was gathered to allow the researcher to gain insight into influencing factors in the online shopping context. Secondly, an online survey was conducted to obtain insight and identify themes from general opinions of young South African female consumers, and their attitudes and behaviour towards purchasing clothing from online branded stores, such as Superbalist. And thirdly, structured, in-depth interviews were conducted to further unpack insights and themes identified in online surveys.

An in-depth interview and online survey is a qualitative data collection method which allows the researcher to pose questions to participants with the aim of learning more about their views, opinions and beliefs about a specific

phenomenon (du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014). This qualitative data collection method is aligned with the theoretical paradigm 'interpretivism' as it seeks to understand a particular context (e.g. the internet or a brand's website for online shopping) to determine how it influences young females' attitude and behaviour, which is used as a guide for this research dissertation.

3.3.2 Time dimension

For this research, the researcher employed a cross-sectional research design. Cross-sectional studies aim to investigate associations between risk factors and the outcome of interest for a given population, and are conducted at one-time point or over a short period (du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014). The researcher distributed online surveys, as well as conducted several face-to-face interviews with young South African females over a course of two weeks to collect responses from a diverse range of participants. The aim was not only obtain the possible factors that influence young females at a given point, but identify a common factor(s) that dominantly impact young females' attitude and behaviour towards online clothes shopping.

3.3.3 Line of reasoning

This research dissertation followed a deductive line of reasoning because the researcher moved from exploring broad and general aspects of a theory to applying them to a specific topic under investigation or observation (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). For instance, the researcher explored The Engel-Kollat-Blackwell consumer behaviour model (EKB) and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). Both models discuss the factors that influence consumers decision-making process when deciding to purchase via the internet or through technology (i.e. online applications and websites). Then the researcher moved to investigating and observing through in-depth interviews and online surveys how young females' attitude and behaviour are influenced by factors related to online clothes shopping.

3.4 Population
3.4.1 Units of analysis

The researcher approached and invited young South African females of different races (black, white, coloured, Indian and Asian) who were between the ages 20 and 25, to participate in an individual online survey and face-to-face, in-depth interview. Young females who participated in the research were aware of the concept 'online shopping' and the brand 'Superbalist', regardless of whether they purchase clothes online or not. This was stipulated on the online survey and communicated when inviting young females to participate in the interview with the researcher.

3.4.2 Target and accessible population

Target population refers to the entire class/group of units, objects or subjects that falls within the population parameters to which the researcher wants to generalise the research findings (Maree, 2015). The target population for this research would be all young female consumers within South Africa, between the ages 20 and 25, who are aware of the concept 'online shopping'.

Accessible population refers only to the section in the target population to which the researcher has access (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). The accessible population for this research was young South African female consumers between the ages 20 and 25, were aware of the concept 'online shopping' and lived within the Durban North area in KwaZulu-Natal.

3.4.3 Population parameters

For the purpose of this research, the population parameters included the following:
- Young females that are South African citizens;
- Young females that were currently living in Durban North, KwaZulu – Natal;
- Young females that have access to the internet for recreational use;
- Young females that were aware and understand the concept of 'online shopping';
- Young females that were aware of online branded stores, such as 'Superbalist'; and
- Young females that were between the ages of 20 and 25 years old.

3.5 Sampling

3.5.1 Non-probability sampling

Non-probability sampling is used when it is nearly impossible to determine who the entire population is or when it is difficult to gain access to the entire population (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). For the purpose of this research, non-probability sampling was selected because the researcher only approached and invited young female consumers that the researcher had access to. Therefore, the researcher distributed online surveys to young females with whom a personal contact was already established, and the researcher only approached and invited female South African citizens that are between the ages 20 and 25 years old, and lived in Durban North, KwaZulu-Natal to participate in an individual, in-depth interview with the researcher.

3.5.2 Sampling methods

For this research, the researcher made use of the following non-probability sampling methods:

- Convenience sampling
  This sampling method involves the researcher drawing from units of analysis that are conveniently available and is heavily biased towards the social or professional context of the researcher (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). This research made use of this sampling method because due to the researcher suiting the population parameters of the study and currently utilising social media platforms, other South African female consumers were easily accessible for questioning through online surveys. Furthermore, due to the researcher already in the correct context parameter being situated in the Durban North area, other female consumers that reside in the Durban North area and were in the public domain, were easily accessible for inviting to participate in an in-depth interview with the researcher.

- Purposive sampling
  This sampling method involves the researcher purposefully choosing the elements the researcher wishes to include in the sample, based on a set list of

characteristics (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). This research made use of this sampling method because the researcher needed to ensure that invitation to participate in online survey and interviews were extended to diverse, young South African female consumers that were between the ages of 20 to 25 years old and aware of the concept of 'online shopping' and local online branded stores.

- Snowball sampling

    Snowball sampling makes use of referrals to increase the sample size where participants in the study provide suggestions of others who also fit the population parameters of the study (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). This research made use of this sampling method because once the researcher had distributed the online survey, the researcher asked respondents to further distribute or "share" the survey via social media platforms to their friends who are also young South African female consumers and aware of the concept 'online shopping'. The same applied for the in-depth interviews as the researcher asked participants to refer the interview to their friends that fit the population parameters. The purpose of this sampling was to get a wide range of young females' reasons for their attitude and behaviour, or lack thereof, towards online clothes shopping.

3.5.3 Sample size

Sample size can be defined as the act of choosing the number of observations to include in a statistical sample to make interpretations about a population from a sample (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). For the purpose of this research, the sample size for the online survey was 30 female respondents to gain a general opinion, and 5 female participants to observe and record the different emotions, opinions and experiences through the in-depth, structured interview.

3.6 Data collection method

Why a survey?

For the purpose of this research, an online survey was used for the following reasons:

- Reach and scalability because sending an online survey to one participant can too be sent to multiple people in a short time period;

- Administering surveys through an online system increases accessibility a link to the survey can be sent via email along with subsequent reminders set-up through the online feedback management system as respondents have a variety of ways to access the survey i.e. mobile devices, tablets, laptops, and desktop computers;

- Online surveys provide respondent anonymity so participants feel more comfortable providing open and honest feedback.

- It is convenient for respondents to complete surveys online as participants can fill out surveys when they choose to, and start and stop a survey at their leisure; and

- Online surveys add objectivity to the data because since participants are answering the survey at their leisure, any influence from i.e. telephone or in person surveys or the interviewer, is eliminated.

Design of survey

The online survey contained a mixed set of direct, close-ended, open-ended and ranking questions that was asked for all respondents. By offering certain options to select as an answer, paired with a few questions for respondents to interpret and respond in their own words, it allowed the researcher to identify the overriding factor(s) and common theme(s) from the 'general public' that may influence young South African females' participation in online clothes shopping (Maree, 2015).

Why an interview?

For the purpose of this research, a structured, in-depth interview was used for the following reasons:

- High response rate as new participants can be accessed if sample size decreases;

- The researcher or interviewer is present to explain questions to avoid misinterpretation;

- Standardised questions result in standardised response as all participants are faced with the same questions in the same order, in a short period and in a relatively cost-effective way;

- Structured interviews can be conducted by the researcher or by any person(s) with minimal effects to its validity and reliability with the ability to quote interviews through tape recordings or video footage; and

- Once data has been measured, it can be used to compare other research and may be used to measure any change.

Design of interview

The structured interview contained a set of standardised, open-ended questions that was asked for all the participants. This was selected as information gathered was analysed more easily as it allowed the researcher to compare notes on the different views and opinions of the diverse young females in a more organised manner. Interviews containing open-ended questions allow participants to answer in their own words, in any way they wish (Maree, 2015). An open-ended question can evoke fundamental ideas, feelings and opinions (perceptions), which the researcher might not have considered (Maree, 2015).

Process of interviews and surveys: invitation, completion and collection?

The researcher invited the accessible population both physically and digitally, over a two-week period. Physically, the researcher searched and approached females in the public domain, who were between the ages 20 and 25, and reside in the Durban North area through convenience sampling to participate in a voluntary interview. Those females who agreed and participated in the interview, were asked for their email address by the researcher so that a follow-up e-mail could be sent to confirm and remind participants of the date, time and place of the interview. During the interview, the researcher was physically present to interview participants and clarify any ambiguous questions that participants didn't understand or necessarily know how to answer. Furthermore, once the interviews were completed, responses were collected through voice recordings from each direct personal interview. In addition, written down direct quotes that were considered relevant were transferred into a shortened transcript of the interview.

Digitally over the two-week period, the researcher uploaded the online survey to social media platforms, Facebook and Whatsapp. Through convenience sampling,

this method reached females that fit the population parameters, as well as additional females were accessed through snowball sampling as respondents shared the hyperlink of online survey to their contacts via online or social media platforms.

3.7 Data analysis method

The interview and online survey consisted of open-ended questions, as well as the online survey consisted of ranking questions, this resulted in using a qualitative approach such as collecting data that is interpreted, subjective and personally symbolic to individuals. Thus, thematic coding was used to analyse responses. Thematic coding is a process of data reduction by means of identifying themes (du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014). With the line of reasoning for this research proposal being deductive, the researcher utilised this data-analysis method because it emphasises identifying, examining and recording patterns or themes within the data. Therefore, identifying similar responses and feelings towards the relationship between the factors that influence young females to participate, or not, in purchasing clothes online was important to describe the phenomenon of 'online shopping' and the negative and/or positive associations that were attached with it. Description is in terms of the dominant, associated factors identified with online clothes shopping that impact the level of participation of young females within the South African context.

3.8 Validity, reliability and trustworthiness

Validity refers to the extent to which the instrument that was selected reflects the reality of the constructs that were being measured (Maree, 2015). For this research, the researcher created an 'audit trail' of the interviews with participants by providing a sheet of the questions that were asked in order during the interview, a signed permission form from participants, voice recordings and a shortened transcript of each interview. And for online surveys, the researcher utilised surveys powered by Google Forms, which is a business product by Google that facilitates customised market research in the form of spreadsheets and visual graphs with accurate results from data findings.

Reliability refers to the extent to which results gathered from a specific research study can be generalised and if the research was conducted again, similar results will be obtained (Maree, 2015). Therefore, reliability is about the credibility of a research study and for research to be credible, it demands consistency (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). The researcher's research methods contained inter-coder reliability as the researcher asked the same questions in the online surveys, as well as in the interviews to the different female consumers that fit within the population parameters of this research study (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). These differences were in terms of occupation, age and race.

Trustworthiness is the term used to indicate validity and reliability in qualitative research (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). The dimension of trustworthiness, transferability applies to this research proposal as the researcher's findings will have the ability to be applied in similar situations and deliver similar results, which lends itself to generalisability (Maree, 2015). As previsouly mentioned, the researcher utilised a triangulation design as this is a process of collecting and analysing data from numerous sources. Thus, triangulation of previous literature, online surveys and in-depth interviews were conducted to identify common themes, which ultimately enhanced the trustworthiness of the researcher's study.

3.9 Ethical considerations

Ethical issues that were considered relating to the females who participated in the research included the following:

- Females that participate in scheduled interviews must be informed and give consent, in writing, that they are taking part in a research study and clearly understand what is expected of them (Maree, 2015). Also, females must be guaranteed that their identity will be protected and that their answers to the questions will remain confidential. This will also apply to respondents of the online survey.
- When collecting data, the researcher needs to be sensitive and prioritise the physical and psychological comfort of the females participating by approaching selected females in a friendly manner, avoiding embarrassing questions, and

empathise with the participants' personal feelings and opinions towards online shopping within the South African context expressed in the interview (Maree, 2015).

- It is vital for the researcher to avoid harm caused to females participating in scheduled interviews, whether it be emotional, psychological or physical (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014).

- Respondents of online survey and participants of scheduled interviews will be invited to participate in the research on a voluntary basis and will be advised that they may withdraw should they choose to.

Ethical issues that were considered relating to the researcher included the following:

- The researcher may not misuse information by collecting data from participating females on their feelings, opinions and uses of the internet and online shopping, and distribute that information to other brands/organisations without the females' permission (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014).

- The researcher may not distort the results of the research proposal by emphasising certain aspects in the scheduled interview and online survey to be able to generalise the findings to represent how all young females within South Africa, feel and engage with online clothes shopping (du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014).

3.10 Summary

This chapter has presented a clear research design and approach. Qualitative research was selected as it allowed the researcher to gain insight into the perceptions and opinions based on the key factors that influence young female consumers to participate in online shopping. An appropriate target population was chosen with a manageable sample size, and clear data collections and analysis were discussed. Validity, reliability and trustworthiness were explained and thoroughly understood to ensure credibility of research, and ethical considerations were acknowledged when doing the research. Chapter 4 introduces the findings of the research.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter contains the presentation and discussion of the responses collected through the online surveys and in-depth, structured interviews. The researcher identified major themes from the responses of the participants. Thus, the researcher created constructions by means of identifying themes, main trends and patterns in the responses to present and discuss the overall results. Results are discussed with reference to primary research questions and main research question, 'What key factors influence young female consumers to purchase clothes online?'.

4.2 Presentation and discussion of findings

4.2.1 Participants

All the participants fell within the qualifying criteria of the accessible population parameters due to the researcher utilising convenience, purposive and snowball sampling methods, as previously discussed. Every participant was female between the ages of 20 – 25 years of age, lived in Durban (and more specifically Durban North for face-to-face interviews) South Africa at the time of data gathering, and is an internet user, online shopper and/or is aware of the concept 'online shopping' and the brand 'Superbalist'.

In terms of occupation; the total responses (30 respondents) from the online survey showed that 15 respondents were employed full-time, 2 respondents were employed half-time and 13 respondents were currently tertiary students. And from the total participation of face-to-face interviews (5), 1 participant was employed full-time and 4 of the participants were currently tertiary students. With majority of participants being tertiary students, pricing factors may have a possible influence in impacting young female consumers' decision to participate in online clothes shopping.

In terms of preferred method of purchasing clothing; the online survey showed that 19 respondents prefer purchasing clothing instore and 11 respondents prefer purchasing clothing online. In addition, all participants in the face-to-face

interviews preferred purchasing clothing instore. The following quotes support the majority of participants who prefer to shop for clothing instore:

- "*… because I feel I have a different body shape so I need to try on clothes before I buy.*"
- "*I like to try on the clothing to see if it suits me and also to feel the material of the clothing item.*"

In terms of having purchased clothing online; the online survey showed that 25 respondents have purchased clothing online previously and 5 respondents have not. From the total participation of face-to-face interviews, 4 participants had purchased clothing online previously and 1 participant had not.

In addition, participants of both the online survey and face-to-face interview were asked specifically if they had previously purchased clothing from Superbalist. Results showed that from the online survey, 16 respondents had purchased from the Superbalist website and 14 respondents had not, and from the face-to-face interview, 4 participants had purchased from Superbalist and 1 participant had not.

Furthermore, all participants who had previously purchased online via Superbalist in both the online survey and face-to-face interviews were asked to state what they particularly like and dislike about the brand 'Superbalist' and its website.

Table 1: Explanation of the likes and dislikes of online brand and website 'Superbalist'.

The following quotes present what is **liked** about Superbalist brand and website, and are taken from the online surveys and interview discussions.
"*Easy to navigate and they have a HUGE selection.*"   "*They local so no import taxes, they have great customer care and always have deals which is nice because they offer clothes you can't get instore here and the clothes are actually really nice.*"   "*Easy to use and quick response rate if there's an issue*."   "*The order procedure is so easy and they often have specials*."

• *"Good service, fast delivery, good product descriptions including giving information about sizes model wears for comparison. Free returns and exchanges. Wide variety of products."*

The following quotes present what is **disliked** about Superbalist brand and website, and are taken from the online surveys and interview discussions.
• *"Dislike that you have to pay a certain price or purchase a number of clothing items to qualify for 'free shipping."* • *"Sometimes they get your package mixed up which leads to you having to return and waiting extra time for your real or correct package."* • *"The time to pick up an incorrect order or exchange - it takes forever and a day!"* • *"I did not like the layout of the Superbalist mobile application – not the easiest to work with."* • *"They take longer than I would like to deliver clothing."* • *"They don't tell you specifically when they are delivering and packages almost always arrives when you are out!"*

4.2.2 Results and discussion of internet utilisation

Respondents and participants were asked how many hours they spend on the internet daily and what they mostly use the internet for.

The following results show how many hours are spent using the internet daily from the online survey:

- 1 respondent spends less than one hour
- 4 respondents spend 1 – 2 hours
- 6 respondents spend 2 – 3 hours
- 10 respondents spend 3 – 4 hours
- 4 respondents spend 4 – 5 hours
- 5 respondents spend 5+ hours

In terms of what the respondents and participants mostly used the internet for, the following main constructions were identified and created based on responses:

Table 2: Constructions of internet utilisation

Constructions:	Quotes:
1. Internet used as an information gathering tool.	• *"To stay up-to-date and learn new things."* • *"... to get information."* • *"To gather information and browse for content and articles, and keep up with entertainment news and current affairs."* • *"... and to do searches. I'm engaged so now I'm searching information on wedding venues and bridal registry etc."* • *"… and to check the weather and news."*
2. The internet is used for e-mail and communication.	• *"… to check my emails."* • *"I use the internet mainly for e-mails for work to communicate with clients."* • *"Mainly e-mails…"*
3. The internet is used for educational purposes.	• *"Research for my studies…"* • *"I'm always on the internet because of my degree as I am always researching for academic assignments."*
4. The internet is used for recreational purposes	• *"Checking social media…"* • *"… Facebook and Instagram."* • *"To pass time and look at pictures for inspiration whether it be fashion or décor etc."* • *" … and Netflix."* • *"To see what my friends are up to so mostly social networking."* • *"… and to see latest trends."*

Constructions:	Quotes:
5. The internet is used to do online shopping.	• *"… and looking for shopping deals."* • *"… shopping."* • *"…and banking."*

The constructions identified in the table above indicate that participants mainly use the internet to gather information, whether it be for research on a specific subject matter, current affairs or news, and social and recreational purposes. The internet is also used for communication and educational purposes. Online shopping was not viewed as a main internet activity among participants.

4.2.3 Results and discussion of the advantages of online clothes shopping

In this section, participants were asked what aspects they enjoy most about online clothes shopping. The following main constructions were identified and created based on responses.

Table 3: Constructions of the advantages of online clothes shopping

Constructions:	Quotes:
1. It saves time and energy	• *"… because I have a full time job I don't have much time to physically go to the shops and try on clothing."* • *"I can be very indecisive so instead of going to a shopping centre and walking around for hours, online shopping allows me to take as long as I want when deciding which clothing to purchase."* • *"It is easier to search an online clothing catalogue than to look for the same piece of clothing in a physical store – so it saves time and patience."* • *"I enjoy the time-saving aspect."*

2. It is a convenient shopping experience	• *"… it is so convenient. I can do it any time and I don't have to wait for the shop to open."* • *"I love it because you don't have to get dressed "properly", in other words I can just do it in my tracksuit pants at home."* • *"…because when you online shop, it delivers your clothing to your house so there is no need for you to travel."*
3. Wider variety of clothing	• *"… the variety available."* • *"Online just offers so much more clothing options than instore…"* • *"… because clothing is different…"*
4. Clothing is easily available and accessible	• *"… because you can find clothing online that are not available locally and therefore just order it through the internet."* • *"Online shopping allows you to shop whatever time of day which is nice because sometimes I like to lay in bed and just browse through all the clothing options."*
5. It allows for clothing information and price comparison	• *"I always search for the lowest prices…"* • *"… to be able to compare prices of clothing, especially if the clothes I like are expensive from a particular store."* • *"… shop for bargains and compare prices between different shops before I physically go visit the shops."*

The constructions identified in the table above indicate that firstly, majority of participants view online clothes shopping as a time and energy-saving benefit. Secondly, the convenience of online clothes shopping was highlighted as it can be done from home at any time of the day, which links to clothing being available and accessible through online shopping sites. This further relates to participants expressing that online clothing websites have more clothing variety than local, physical stores due to the accessibility aspect of online shopping. And thirdly, participants value the aspect of comparing clothing price and information via the internet in a short period of time, rather than physically travelling to the shops or walking from shop to shop.

4.2.4 Results and discussion of the limitations of online clothes shopping:

In this section, participants were asked what aspects they least enjoy and are mostly concerned about with online clothes shopping.

Table 4: Constructions of the limitations of online clothes shopping

Constructions:	Quotes:
1. No touch and feel aspect	• *"I'm mainly concerned that the garment won't fit properly."* • *"Not being able to try on clothes for sizing."* • *"Sizing is a huge issue with online shopping and that's one of the main deterring factors for me when it comes to purchasing online."* • *"…cannot get a refund if clothing doesn't fit."* • *"…lie about clothing materials through the internet and then when you received clothing in person - the material is so cheap and the colour doesn't look the same as in the picture, and it just frustrates me."*

2. Delivery time of clothing	• *"Usually when I buy a new clothing item I probably will end up wearing it that night so the fact that you have to wait a week or so to get your clothing package from an online website – sometimes I don't have the patience."* • *"…the time it takes to deliver your package can sometimes take long."* • *"…sometimes get nervous that during the delivery time so the transport time, something happens to my package…"* • *"…it is a pity because online stores have such nice clothes but I can't wait days to receive those clothes – I need instant gratification."* • *"…it won't arrive in time for, say, "a wedding" that I'm attending."*
3. Clothing information is incomplete or misleading information	• *"Paying delivery fees that were not mentioned…"* • *"Not being able to see the product before buying it - pictures can sometimes be misleading…"* • *"…clothing description needs to be detailed…"*
4. Personal information on the internet	• *"As long as my personal information, so credit card and home address details are safe and protected - I do not have a problem with it being available to authorised persons. I mean I am aware of it, but secure and reputable sites I trust."*

	• *"…it does sometimes make me very uncomfortable when I think about that my personal information may be floating around somewhere on the internet…"* • *"…card fraud…"*
5. Fraudulent websites	• *"The fact that I could give them the money and their website disappears or I never get my package and they say it was delivered."*

The constructions identified in the table above indicate that the touch and feel aspect of clothing is a primary disadvantage of online clothes shopping as participants heavily expressed the need to see and feel the fabric, as well as to determine fit and size according to body shapes.

Secondly, participants least enjoy about online clothes shopping was the waiting time between ordering the clothing online and actually receiving it, as participants stated that they do not want to wait for package to be delivered. In addition, participants further expressed concerned that if ordering clothing via an online website, the package might be received late or damaged, or in some instances, receive the wrong package.

And thirdly, majority of participants view the internet as secure regarding personal information being available on the internet. However, participants did express that this 'confidence' is website dependent, as secure and reputable websites are trusted through security certificates and data encryption levels. In contrast, minority of participants were concerned about online retailers having access to their personal information and being victims of fraudulent activities.

4.2.5 Results and discussion of considerations towards online clothes shopping

And lastly in this section, participants were asked what aspects are considered important and further influence their attitude and decision towards online clothes shopping. The following constructions were identified and created based on responses.

Table 5: Constructions of considerations towards online clothes shopping

Constructions:	Quotes:
1. Website recommendations	• *"…because the more you find quality websites through connections and friends, the better the shopping experience."* • *"I only purchase from websites that have been recommended to me through people I know really well, like friends and family."* • *"… rather use a well-known site that you can trust."* • *"Before purchasing from a website, I always go and see what people have to say so I'm constantly looking for comments on that brand's social media pages, blog reviews…"* • *"I like to look for real people wearing clothes from a particular online store before I make a purchase from that store - so I'll search on social media and see what people have said about the website service, the clothing and if anyone has uploaded a picture that they took themselves in the clothing."*
2. Website facility and offering	• *"Before I purchase from any online store, I always look at their return policy and make sure that if I don't like what I've ordered, I can return it – for free especially!"* • *"I look to see if they do free delivery…"*

	• *"I always look to see if the online store has an Instagram page and if people are wearing their clothes and tagging the store in their pictures, and if they do – I then go look at the store's website."* • *"…because easy navigation of the website is important to me – they must offer a filtering system where you can click exactly the item characteristics instead of having to go through all clothing items – it can be so overwhelming and tedious!"* • *"Website has to look good, visuals must be clear and everything must be consistent, efficient and just look like a professional created the website."*
3. Lower prices and discount deals	• *"I only purchase clothing online when there is a sale on..."* • *"…because I'm a student so I only purchase clothing online when there are student discounts."* • *"The prices online are much cheaper than physical store prices because the retailer is not paying for "space" or premises in a shopping centre…"*
4. Detailed product information	• *"…before I purchase clothing from an online store, model details in terms of what size she is wearing needs to be specified so I can use it as a reference in relation to my body proportions…"*

	• *"I always look to see if the website has detailed the clothing material used because I know materials and I'm not going to buy an item that is say, polyester – so a detailed description is a must for me."*

In this final overall section, participants expressed that recommended websites were utilised more than websites never used before, as recommended websites were perceived as safe, trusting and of high quality. Participants further expressed that 'trusted' recommendations came from friends, family, social media pages, accounts and comments, and customer service and blog reviews. Participants revealed that a website's aesthetics and operations is important as the process from 'filtering', browsing (visuals) and purchasing clothing according to individual preferences, must be a seamless and consistent process.

This interlinks with the need for detailed product descriptions as participants stated that this element assists in building their confidence with regards to purchasing clothing via the internet. And lastly, participants expressed that their regularity of online clothes shopping is dependent on discount deals and comparison of prices. This is due to participants revealing that online shopping is mostly used to browse for clothing items for a certain period of time until those items have lowered in prices, then participants will purchase items and transact through the online website.

4.3 Summary

This chapter involved the researcher identifying the major themes present in participants responses and thus, forming constructions of identified themes that created four sections of the research. Primary research was done and responses were obtained from online surveys, which consisted of 30 respondents, and in-depth interviews conducted with 5 participants. Majority of respondents and participants were tertiary students and had purchased clothing via online stores before. Such respondents and participants expressed that the internet was mainly used as an information-gathering tool and for recreational purposed. The advantages of online

shopping, which related to what consumers enjoyed about online clothes shopping, was constructed of time and effort savings, convenience, variety, accessibility and the possibility of price comparisons. However, the limitations of the online shopping consisted of the constructions of the inability to touch and feel clothing, the delivery time, and misleading and incomplete product information, which is an element associated with fraudulent online activities. Furthermore, consumers expressed that when considering to purchase clothing through an online branded store, website recommendations from friends, family or 'online community', features and information, and discounted prices are vital elements.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The conclusions and recommendations of the research are presented in relation to each research objective. The first three research objectives will be discussed under separate headings, while the fourth objective will be incorporated in the recommendation section of each heading. Thus, findings from the literature and primary research are presented, followed by a conclusion and recommendation for each objective. To conclude, suggestions for further research has been made and a closing comment ends the chapter.

5.2 Objective one

To describe what factors influence young South African female consumers to participate in online clothes shopping.

5.2.1. Findings from the literature

As previously mentioned, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is used broadly in studying information system acceptance in which the usage of the system (actual behavior) is determined by two dimensions: perceived ease of use (PEOU) and perceived usefulness (PU), which are the antecedents of attitude (Lim & Ting, 2012). Attitude, in turn, is connected to behavior. These aspects of TAM positively influence young females' attitude, and thus, behavior because Lim and Ting (2012) affirm multiple studies have concluded that consumers will have favourable attitudes towards online clothes shopping if contributions from the internet are developed towards a solution or sufficient benefits are provided. For instance, comparing price and product information via the internet (which connects to technological factors in literature), which is not accessible through traditional shopping, can be perceived as useful by consumers. Interlinking with the TAM aspects of PEOU and PU, convenience (product and/or service factors) and bargains (pricing factors) also influence young female consumers to participate in online clothes shopping as these elements contribute to the benefit and perceived usefulness of utilising online shopping.

5.2.2 Findings from research

Results indicated that several factors influence young females to participate in online clothes shopping and transact online, and thus such factors were categorised in relation to the advantages of online shopping. Participants expressed reasons for conducting online shopping for clothing was due to time and energy saved, the convenience, wider variety offered, clothing availability and accessibility, and the ability to compare clothing information and prices. These factors were constructed due to a common theme among participants as participants felt they were gaining the above 'benefits' that are simplifying their lives.

5.2.3 Insight(s)

A common theme found was that participants develop a positive attitude and behaviour when online clothes shopping through an online branded website is perceived as easy to use and can be done anywhere (convenient). This is because consumers perceive online stores useful when comparing clothing information, it offers a wider variety of clothing choices and it accommodates their work and personal lives.

5.2.4 Recommendation

It is recommended that established online retailers do a large-scale study as this was a small-scale study. This would be necessary for online brand stores, such as Superbalist, to determine exactly which dominant factor attracts young South African female consumers to transact online with a particular e-retailer opposed to competitors.

5.3 Objective two

To describe what factors may cause hesitation in young South African female consumers to purchase clothes online.

5.3.1 Findings from literature

The above objective relates to the consumer-related factors previously identified in the literature. Chen, Yan, Fan and Gordon (2014) state that consumers are hesitant to adopt online shopping because consumers are often uncertain about how their

personal information is going to be used, the accuracy of the information provided online and whether products are priced fairly. Therefore, a consumer's lack of trust can be a major barrier for brands to do business online as young female consumers may become uncertain when deciding to purchase online because of the consequence of a poor decision. O' Cass and Carlson (2012) further suggests that uncertainty may be due to a lack of contact and interaction with the physical product, brand or store and personnel, thereby discouraging young female consumers from purchasing via the internet.

5.3.2 Findings from research

In terms of limitations of online clothes shopping, five major constructions were identified that cause hesitation among young female consumers to purchase clothing online. The first relates to the inability to touch and feel the clothing which mostly prompts young female consumers to exclude the action of online shopping from their lives as the need to fit the clothing was often expressed.

The second relates to the delivery time of the clothing as participants expressed their need for instant gratification and concern of late, damaged or non-delivery of clothing.

The third relates to incomplete product information of clothing being deceiving. The fourth relates to personal information being available on the internet. Majority of participants were not too concern about their information being available because of advanced technology, such as security certificates, strengthening their trust of reputable websites. And lastly, fraudulent websites were also expressed as a concern, which interlinks with incomplete product information.

5.3.3 Insight(s)

The fear of financial and product (i.e. clothing) loss is evident. Fear of financial loss interlinks with purchasing clothing before having the opportunity to inspect or "try on" clothing item. This creates the feeling of money being wasted if the consumer is disappointed in the clothing item or the clothing item does not live up to the expectations of the consumer (i.e. colour, size). Product loss happens when the

consumer does not receive the clothing that has been ordered and payed for. In addition, young female consumers are not concerned about releasing personal details to online branded stores if it is a trusted and reputable website. In other words, online transactions will only be done through established, credible websites.

5.3.4 Recommendation

For recommendations going forward, the researcher suggests that online branded stores, such as Superbalist, should implement advanced technology that shows website credibility, ensures the protection of personal details and quick delivery of package orders to consumers. This should then be constantly communicated through branded advertisements to attract and retain young female consumers to conduct online clothes shopping.

5.4 Objective three

To describe what factors young South African female consumers consider during the decision-making process before purchasing clothes online.

5.4.1 Findings from literature

Park and Cho (2012) state that the Engel-Kolat-Blackwell (EKB) (1968) consumer behaviour model consists of five distinct stages that consumers go through when they make purchase decisions, which ultimately determines their buying behavior. These stages include 1) problem recognition, 2) information search, 3) evaluation of alternatives, 4) purchase, and 5) post-purchase evaluation. Stages 1), 2) and 3) form the pre-purchase process and incorporates the consumer deciding whether or not to transact with a certain online branded website. Aspects considered during the pre-purchase is brand reputation and website quality (product and/or service factors) (Park & Cho, 2012), discount vouchers or lowest price possible (pricing factors) (Park & Cho, 2012), branded social media pages, customer reviews and personal relation recommendations (consumer-related factors) (Ashman *et al.*, 2015).

5.4.2 Findings from research

Literature findings were relatively identified in the researcher's primary research. Four major constructions were identified that young female consumers consider before transacting online and expressed as important. The first being website recommendations; as it was noted that recommendations from friends, family, customer reviews and comments lead to an increase in website quality and trust.

The second being website facility and offering; as participants expressed that websites must be user friendly from searching clothing items (i.e. filtering system) to check-out procedures, and more likely purchase from websites that offer incentives, such as free delivery and return policies.

The third being lower prices and discount deals; as participants revealed that before transacting online with a particular online branded website, they search to ensure that they getting the best 'deal' and value for money. And lastly, detailed product information as participants expressed this is an important factor before transacting online, due to the lack of touch and feel aspect.

5.4.3 Insight(s)

A common theme identified is that before purchasing clothing via online websites, young female consumers heavily rely on sources such as customer reviews, blogs, branded social media pages and customer created photo feeds to determine the credibility of a website. In addition, young female consumers value and appreciate detailed clothing description, discount vouchers and lower prices, including free delivery and return costs.

5.4.4 Recommendation

The researcher suggests that online branded stores, such as Superbalist, monitor social networks to identify reviews and comments being stated about the brand's services and products, as it will heavily impact the potential of online shoppers to transact online with a brand in the future. In addition, such online branded stores should offer and communicate incentives (i.e. free delivery and returns) when purchasing via that particular online store in order to attract new consumers, as

well as retain existing ones. However, in order to affirm and refine the research results, further research should be conducted. Through a longitudinal study and repeated observation of the same factors over longer period of time, it should be possible to obtain a greater insight into how influential each factor is and further, identify other possible factors that influence the decision-making process of young female consumers.

5.5 Suggestions for further research

The research conducted highlighted various factors that are important to consider before investigating the key factors that influence young South African female consumers to participate, or not, in online clothes shopping. Since this research being a small-scale study due to geographical and budget constraints, the sample in this research study does not represent the full diversity range of the South African population. Thus, it is suggested that further studies be conducted to explore the range of factors that influence young South African females to online shop. In addition, this research was conducted regarding only general circumstances towards apparel and purchasing clothes online, as the main objective of the researcher was to assist the online branded stores, such as Superbalist, and thus, the findings may not necessarily be applicable to any particular e-business. Therefore, it would be highly encouraged to examine consumers' attitudes towards specialised online shopping websites to look for differences in terms of products or services.

5.6 Conclusion

This research dissertation aimed to answer the question, "*What key factors affect young female consumers to purchase clothes online?*". A qualitative research design using online surveys and in-depth, structured interviews enabled the investigation of whether factors found in the literature influenced young South African female consumers' participation in online clothes shopping.

The researcher identified multiple internal and external factors, both collectively and individually, that influence young South African females' decision to shop online. Findings revealed that major factors that motivate young females to participate in online shopping is the convenience factor, as time and energy is saved due clothing variety, availability, accessibility, and the easy comparison of product information (i.e.

price). In contrast, the researcher identified that the no touch and feel factor have a dominant, negative impact on young females' attitude and behaviour to participate in online shopping. This factor is dominant because consumers fear they may experience financial and product loss due to the lack of contact and interaction with the physical product, brand or store and personnel. However, when participants do decide to purchase clothing from an online branded store, customer reviews, personal recommendations and discount factors are considered utmost important during the consumer's decision-making process. These factors that influence the decision-making process of young female consumers can also be utilised by online branded stores, such as Superbalist, and developed into marketing strategies to entice young females to participate in online clothes shopping.

The findings of this research are valuable for many reasons. Firstly, this research provides information that may be of interest to any online retailer focussing on young South African female online shoppers as part of their customer base as understanding their changing needs, lifestyles and the dominant factors that persuade consumers to purchase clothing via online or not could be valuable insight for online retailing brands.

Secondly, a contribution is made to the body of knowledge of the interpretivist paradigm through the means of identifying and interpreting factors that influence young South African female consumers' behaviour in the online shopping context.

And thirdly, even though the results cannot be generalised, it can provide a framework that enables online brands to develop and implement better e-marketing strategies to attract and influence young females with regards to their online shopping experience and behaviour. This can be done by creating a highly personalised, convenient online shopping service for customers and dedicating valuable resources to precisely monitor consumers' behaviour online, online experience, attitude towards shopping online, as well as future technologies and developments that may change the phenomenon of 'online shopping' in the South African economic environment.

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Annexure A

The following documents attached are the participant consent forms for the in-depth interview. The participants could choose whether they wanted their information to remain confidential or not.

Annexure B

The following document attached is the ethical clearance as provided by the IIE. The document was signed by Navigator, Alec Bozas and Supervisor, Graham Downing.

APPENDIX

- Final Research Report Summary Document Table
- Online survey guideline
- Interview guideline

TITLE: *"The key factors that influence the attitude and behaviour of young South African female consumers towards online clothes shopping: A Superbalist case study"*

Research purpose	Primary research question	Research rationale	Seminal authors/ sources	Literature review: Conceptual framework	Paradigm	Approach	Data collection method(s)	Key findings	Key contributions	Recommendations
To determine and understand the key factors that create young female consumers' perceptions of online clothes shopping; as well as attract and influence young female customers to purchase clothing online from South African online clothing brand stores. To identify and provide innovative recommendations as to how South African online store brands, such as 'Superbalist', could appeal to, gain and retain consumers, especially young females.	What key factors affect how young female consumers purchase clothes online?	For brands to survive in the highly competitive marketplace of the internet, brands must develop their marketing strategies based on the factors that influence customers' attitude towards online shopping and online experience. This research proposal displays relevance as it can provide insight into the various factors that influence consumers within the online shopping environment, and further assist brands in designing and communicating a framework to understand their target audience better. This can ultimately increase online business, thus contributing to the South African economy.	(Akroush & Al-Debei, 2015). (Cheah *et al.*, 2015) (Kokolakis, 2015) (Dai *et al.*, 2014). (Ordun, 2015)	**Theoretical approach:** The EKB model TAM **Previous literature:** **Theme 1:** Technological factors **Theme 2:** Consumer-related factors **Theme 3:** Pricing factors **Theme 4:** Product and/or service factors	For this research proposal, the paradigm interpretivism will be employed as interpretivism seeks to discover and understand the elements that impact a person(s) 'reality' in terms of behaviour, experiences and opinions, as individuals experience reality differently due to the impact of unalike internal and external factors. Thus, the researcher's aim is to identify and gain an in-depth understanding of these internal and external factors, both collectively and individually, that could potentially influence consumers to shop online. More specifically, to determine which factors are dominant in influencing young female consumers' behaviour in the online retail environment, their purchasing intention or lack thereof, as well as their decision to shop online as opposed to 'traditional' in-store shopping.	Qualitative methods **Population parameters** Young females that live in Durban North, KwaZulu – Natal; Young females that have access to the internet for recreational use; Young females that are aware and understand the concept of 'online shopping'; Young females that are aware of online branded stores, such as 'Superbalist'; Young females that are South African citizens; Young females that are of black, white, coloured, Indian and Asian race; and Young females that fall between the ages of 20 and 25 years old.	Online survey Structured, in-depth interviews **Data analysis method** Thematic coding is a process of data reduction by means of identifying themes.	Factors that motivate participation in online clothes shopping is the convenience factor, as time and energy is saved due clothing variety, availability, accessibility, and the easy comparison of product information (i.e. price). Factors that cause hesitation to participate in online clothe shopping is the no touch and feel factor as consumers fear they may experience financial and product loss due to the lack of contact and interaction with the physical product, brand or store and personnel. Factors that are considered during the decision-making process include customer reviews, personal recommendations and discount factors.	This research provides information that may be of interest to any online retailer focussing on young South African female online shoppers as part of their customer base as understanding their changing needs, lifestyles and the dominant factors that persuade consumers to purchase clothing via online or not could be valuable insight for online retailing brands. A contribution is made to the body of knowledge of the interpretivist paradigm through the means of identifying and interpreting factors that influence young South African female consumers' behaviour in the online shopping context. Even though the results cannot be generalised, it can provide a framework that enables online brands to develop and implement better e-marketing strategies to attract and influence young females with regards to their online shopping experience and behaviour.	It is recommended that established online retailers do a large-scale study as this was a small-scale study. This would be necessary for online brand stores, to determine exactly which dominant factor attracts young South African female consumers to transact online with a particular e-retailer opposed to competitors. Online stores should implement advanced technology that shows website credibility, ensures the protection of personal details and quick delivery of package orders to consumers. This should then be constantly communicated through branded advertisements to attract and retain young female consumers to conduct online clothes shopping. Online branded stores monitor social networks to identify reviews and comments being stated about the brand's services and products, as it will heavily impact the potential of online shoppers to transact online with a brand in the future. In addition, such online branded stores should offer and communicate incentives (i.e. free delivery and returns) when purchasing via that particular online store in order to attract new consumers, as well as retain existing ones. However, in order to affirm and refine the research results, further research should be conducted. Through a longitudinal study and repeated observation of the same factors over longer period of time, it should be possible to obtain a greater insight into how influential each factor is and further, identify other possible factors that influence the decision-making process of young female consumers.
Research problem	**Secondary objectives**	**Key concepts**	**Key theories**			**Sampling**	**Ethics**	**Limitations**		
The researcher aims to investigate what factors impact consumers' attitude and buying behaviour towards online clothes shopping, while focusing on young female online shoppers within South Africa between the ages 20 and 25.	-To describe what factors influence young South African female consumers to participate in online clothes shopping. -To describe what factors may cause hesitation in young South African female consumers to purchase clothes online. -To describe what factors young South African female consumers consider during the decision-making process before purchasing clothes online. -To describe recommendations as to how 'Superbalist' can attract young South African female consumers to buy clothes from its online store, and further create and retain brand loyalty.	Apparel Buying behaviour Consumer behaviour Consumer perceptions E-commerce E-retail Online shopping Web experience	The Engel-Kollat-Blackwell (EKB) consumer behaviour model Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)			Non-probability sampling is selected because the researcher will only approach and invite young female that the researcher has access to. Therefore, the researcher will only approach and invite black, white, coloured, Indian and Asian female South African citizens that are between the ages 20 and 25 years old who live in Durban North, KwaZulu-Natal to participate in interviews. Convenience sampling Purposive sampling Snowball sampling The sample size for online surveys was 30 repsondents and for in-depth interview, 5 participants.	Participants must be informed and give consent in writing. Researcher must not cause any emotional, psychological and physical harm. The researcher may not distribute information obtained from interviews to online brand organisations. The researcher may not distort results for ideal results.	The research conducted is small-scale study due to geographical and budget constraints. The sample in this research study does not represent the full diversity range of the South African population. This research was conducted regarding only general circumstances towards apparel and purchasing clothes online. The findings may not necessarily be applicable to any particular e-business.		

Online survey guideline

Online Shopping Survey

This survey has been developed by Kasia Jackson, an honours student at Vega. This survey has been created with the intention of researching what key factors influence the attitude and behaviour of young South African female consumers towards online clothes shopping.

Eligibility: To participate in this survey you need to be female aged 20 - 25 years old, and have previously purchased items online or at least be aware of the concept 'online shopping'.

Please note that your participation in this research is voluntary and that if you choose to participate, your anonymity is assured and answers provided will be kept in the strictest confidentiality.

This survey should only take 5-10 minutes to complete. Please answer questions as honestly and accurately as possible. Thank you for your time.

1. **1. What is your current occupation?**
   Mark only one oval.

   ◯ Employed full time

   ◯ Employed half time

   ◯ Unemployed

   ◯ Student

2. **2. Please specify which social media platform(s) you use most: (e.g. Instagram, Facebook, blogs etc)**

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

3. **3. How often do you use the internet every day?**
   Mark only one oval.

   ◯ Less than an hour

   ◯ 1 - 2 hours

   ◯ 2 - 3 hours

   ◯ 3 - 4 hours

   ◯ 4 - 5 hours

   ◯ 5+ hours

4. **4. What do you mostly use the internet for?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

5. **5. How often do you use the internet for shopping?**
   Mark only one oval.

   ◯ Very often

   ◯ Often

   ◯ Rarely

   ◯ Never

6. **6. What is your preferred method for purchasing clothing?**
   Mark only one oval.

   ◯ Instore

   ◯ Online

7. **7. Have you purchased clothing online?**
   Mark only one oval.

   ◯ Yes

   ◯ No

8. **8. If answered 'No' in question 7, please specify why?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

9. **9. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements about online shopping for clothing:**

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Online shopping is a convenient way to shop	◯	◯	◯	◯
Online shopping has a wider variety	◯	◯	◯	◯
Online shopping prices are cheaper	◯	◯	◯	◯
Online shopping saves time and energy	◯	◯	◯	◯
Online shopping delivers clothing to your home without the need for travel	◯	◯	◯	◯
Online shopping can be done anywhere	◯	◯	◯	◯
Online shopping ensures security of private information	◯	◯	◯	◯
Online shopping conducted depends on the website's design/features	◯	◯	◯	◯

10. **10. Please indicate which factors you are mostly concerned about with regards to conducting online clothes shopping:**

Mark only one oval per row.

	Least concerned	Moderately concerned	Very concerned
Security of payment information (payment by credit/debit card over the internet)	◯	◯	◯
Not being able to physically inspect the clothing before purchase	◯	◯	◯
Clothing getting damaged during transport	◯	◯	◯
Clothing not arriving in time or at all	◯	◯	◯
Clothing quality is low or not the same as online description	◯	◯	◯
Risk of identity theft	◯	◯	◯
Personal details (i.e. home address)	◯	◯	◯

11. **11. Do you have any other major concern(s) when online clothes shopping? If yes, please specify:**

_____

_____

_____

12. 12. When considering to purchase clothing online from a particular brand (website), how important are the following elements?

Mark only one oval per row.

	Not important	Important	Very important
Easy navigation around the site	◯	◯	◯
Free delivery and returns	◯	◯	◯
Detailed product information (i.e. fabric, wash, fit)	◯	◯	◯
Phone apps that allow shopping through mobile phone	◯	◯	◯
Strong visuals of clothing	◯	◯	◯
Customer reviews on clothing	◯	◯	◯
Discount or special offers	◯	◯	◯
Instant response to clothing queries	◯	◯	◯
The brand's morals and ethics	◯	◯	◯
Brand reviews (e.g. in magazine or blog)	◯	◯	◯
Media/social media coverage	◯	◯	◯
Friend/family recommendation	◯	◯	◯

13. 13. Have you ever recommended to friends/family a particular site to purchase from? If yes, please specify the reasons for doing so:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

14. 14. Have you purchased from Superbalist.com?

Mark only one oval.

◯ Yes

◯ No

15. 15. If answered 'Yes' in question 14, what do you particularly like and dislike about the experience of purchasing online through Superbalist.com?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Interview Guideline

1) Do you generally shop online or mainly in stores?

Interviewer probe in general, all sorts of items etc.

2) Have you ever bought clothing online?

(If yes to Q. 2)

2.1) How often do you buy clothing online?

Probe:

- Indicated that you shop online X times, Is there a specific reason for this? (Regularity of shopping)

***2.2)* When you look back and recall, what was your first experience with buying on the Internet? Could you please tell me about that situation?**

Probe:

- *What were your thoughts/ emotions? (e.g. nervous, excited etc) – Why ?*

2.3) Have you had any significant online shopping experience(s) (positive and/or negative) in the past?

Probe:

- *(If 'yes') Could you please explain the situation?*
- *Has this impacted your attitude/behaviour towards online shopping for the future? Please explain why*

2.4) Have you ever bought clothes from Superbalist.com?

Probe:

- *(If 'yes) Describe what particularly liked/ disliked about the brand/ website service and features*

3) It has been argued that buying on the Internet is easy. What do you think ? (agree or disagree)

Probe:

- *What is the meaning of that for you in your online buying? What is this easiness for you?*

4) If you think about your daily life as a consumer and shopper, what kind of a role does Internet play in it?

Probe:

- *Through which technology do you use internet? (mobile internet, phone apps, computer, iPad etc.)*
- *Describe what kind of consumer/shopper you are via the internet? (customer behaviour online – new, reluctant, bargain, specific purpose, recreation purpose, regular (know what personal standards to evaluate clothing/website)*
- *Has buying on the Internet changed you as a consumer or shopper? If so, how? Could you please tell me about a certain situation?*

5) When buying clothing online, you cannot touch them. How important is that for you? What is the meaning of that for you in your online buying?

Probe:

- *Would you say it influences you whether or not to shop online? Please explain*
- *Would the website's return policy counteract this influence for you? How do you feel about returns policy (e.g. say if clothing doesn't fit etc)*

6) When planning to purchase clothing via the internet/online, what is the process or how carefully do you plan?

Probe:

- *What are the most important aspects you look at or consider when choosing a garment to purchase online?*
- *Does it involve other people's opinion (friends/family/reviews/blogs etc) or is it just dependent on personal opinion/preferences during the decision-making process/ pre-purchase/ post-purchase?*

7) Has a friend ever recommended a online shopping site to you?

(If yes to Q. 8)

8.1) Do you think that you use this site more often / regularly than other sites?

Probe: (please explain)

8) Following the previous question, would you consider purchasing clothing from an online brand (website/store) that you have not had any previous experience with or haven't heard recommendations?

Probe:

- What aspects would you look at when considering to purchase from a "new" online store? (i.e. social media pages/ reviews/ website service, features an design - is it attractive, website visuals good etc.)

9) How do you feel about your personal information being available on the Internet?

Probe:

- *Do you conduct online banking? Are you concerned about banking online?*
- *Are you concerned about putting in your personal details (such as card details, home address, email address etc) when creating an account to shop online with an online store?*

- *Does this majorly influence your attitude or behaviour towards shopping online?*

10) What do you understand about people hacking into the Internet?

Probe:

- *How does this affect your choice to do online shopping?*

11) How do the following issues influence your attitude towards online shopping:

- The high crime rate in South Africa;
- Familiarity with the Internet;
- Trust in the Internet as a shopping channel (Do you trust the internet as an alternative shopping channel?)
- Risk-taking in online shopping (Do you perceived online shopping as a risk?)
- Credibility of online shopping (To you what makes a site credible?)

Probe:

- *Why? please explain.*
- *Are you influenced in a positive or negative manner?*

12) What aspects do you enjoy most about shopping online?

Probe: (Please explain)

13) What aspects do you enjoy least about online shopping?

Probe:

- *Why? Please explain.*

14) To conclude, in your opinion, what do you regard as your main reasons for shopping online? (Motivations for online shopping)

Probe:

- *Please explain what factors or key motivators entice you to do online shopping?*

15) Are there any questions that you would like to ask regarding the topics discussed today?