

Online Service Quality and its Influence on Customer Satisfaction: A Descriptive Study

Bianca Botha

15018738

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Supervisor: Anthony Wingfield

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ABSTRACT

As e-commerce brands are embracing the rapid change in technology, the importance of e-service quality is increasing. The purpose of this research study is to describe the relationship between e-service quality and customer satisfaction. The research was conducted by using a structured online survey, which made use of the E-S-QUAL model. The findings were compared to the developers of the model (Parasuraman *et al* ., 2005) as well as a study conducted by Santouridis *et al* (2014). The sample size was 22 respondents between the ages of 25 and 35 years old and who have previously purchased from the South African online retailer Takealot.com.

The analysis of the data collected confirmed that overall e-service quality – as presented in the E-S-QUAL model – does influence customer satisfaction. The dimensions of efficiency, system availability, and fulfilment showed a positive and significant relationship with customer satisfaction. The dimension of privacy did not show a significant and positive relationship with customer satisfaction. The results reinforces the importance of e-service quality with regards to creating customer satisfaction for e-commerce brands.

Keywords: E-commerce, Service quality, E-service quality, E-S-QUAL, Customer satisfaction

1. CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The ability of consumers to simply go online to search and purchase products instantly has rapidly changed in the past few years. The increase in the usage and convenience of the Internet has affected the way in which we interact and engage with brands. This research study reports on a descriptive approach to determine whether online service quality influences customer satisfaction. The aim of this study involves analysing customer satisfaction through the measurement of e-service quality of the South African online retailer Takealot.com.

This research study begins with providing an introduction and background into the research problem, the theoretical background of previous literature, and proposed hypotheses. Thereafter the research methodology and results are presented. The study concludes with a discussion and conclusion which identifies limitations and implications for future research.

1.1 Background and Contextualisation

As the Internet is becoming increasingly more available to consumers, it is important for online e-commerce brands to differentiate themselves from competitors. According to Collier and Bienstock (2006:35), online stores provide customers with a more consistent experience and puts customers in control of when to buy products. The Internet is a source of information frequently used for price comparisons or looking at products before purchase either online or in-store. Consumers have more access to the global market than ever before resulting in more purchasing power (Khan, 2016:19). If consumers are not satisfied with a brand, a competitor is just one click away – it is much easier to switch brands in the online environment (Khan, 2016:19).

Online retail is one of the components contributing to the digital transformation of South Africa's economy (Goga, Paelo & Nyamwena, 2019:1) The growth of e-commerce in South Africa has been crippled by high prices, poor quality of internet services, and the reliability of delivery mechanisms – in particular, the Post Office. However, e-commerce in South Africa is growing, and as data costs decreases and logistics are improving it is expected to grow even faster (Goga *et al.*, 2019:1). Although online retail represents a small proportion of all retail sales in South Africa, around the world, online sales are increasing rapidly (Goga *et al.*, 2019:1). E-commerce benefits consumers in the form of greater choice and lower prices (Goga *et al.*, 2019:1).

As the online retail environment is becoming more competitive, brands must keep in mind that customer satisfaction is crucial to maintain a sustainable competitive advantage (Huiqun & Xin, 2012:359). The competitiveness is due to brands having the ability to reach their customers on a global scale.

Customers aim to consistently get maximum satisfaction from the services and products they buy. For brands to succeed in today's online environment the focal point must be on customer relationships and not just on the service itself (Kotler & Keller, 2012:131). Whether a brand delivers a quality service will depend on the feedback provided by customers regarding their experience of the service performed, as previous studies have noted that higher levels of quality have to lead to higher levels of customer satisfaction which in turn results in profitability (Kotler & Keller, 2012:131).

1.2 Rationale

Due to the rise in electronic commerce and technological changes, the importance of e-service quality is rapidly increasing (Khan, 2019:19). According to Santouridis, Trivellas, and Tsimonis (2012:86) brands are more reliant on internet services as they are convenient, interactive, personalised, and have lower costs. Online retailers have realised that customers care about how a service is delivered as well as the outcome of that service (Santouridis *et al.*, 2014:87).

As e-commerce is a manner of purchasing online it can be argued that customers can be satisfied or dissatisfied with the service. According to Irantaj and Huseynov (2018:19), online customer satisfaction is different compared to the physical market as consumers cannot see the products that they want in front of them. Customer satisfaction plays a vital role in the success of a brand as it influences customer loyalty, repurchase intention and positive word-of-mouth (Huiqun & Xin, 2012:359). Since customer satisfaction is one of the main concerns of brands, it is crucial to conduct research about what relates to satisfaction.

Hidayat, Saifullah, and Ishak (2016:152) explain that although numerous studies have been conducted regarding e-commerce, the country where the study was conducted will have a big influence as cultural and economic environments differ. How to deliver exceptional high-service quality online, where there is no opportunity for face-to-face interaction, is one of the most crucial strategic questions that all online retail brands must answer (Kim & Kim, 2018:2).

According to Zehir and Narcikara (2016:428), understanding and measuring online service quality including its dimensions has become vital as more brands are doing business in the digital world. Therefore, it is of paramount importance that online retailers know how to improve the quality of their service offering. If brand managers and marketers know how online customers make their decisions based on online service quality, they can adjust their branding and marketing efforts to successfully attract and retain customers (Al-Nasser, Islam, Abidin, Azam & Prabhakar, 2015:423).

In terms of research done in South Africa about online service quality and its relationship with customer satisfaction, there is a knowledge gap. This study will be similar to those conducted by Santouridis *et al.* (2012), Kandulapati and Bellamkonda (2014) and which were conducted in the context of Greece and India, respectively.

This research aims to contribute to the closure of this knowledge gap by studying online service quality (and its dimensions) and customer satisfaction in the South African context.

1.3 Problem statement

The website of an online retail brand is the main and most prominent point of contact in an online transaction. This is where customers can access specific information relating to available products and determine for themselves whether the website is aimed to satisfy their needs (Collier & Bienstock, 2006).

Online retailers are beginning to understand the importance of realising that the factors which affect the success or failure are not mainly the cost or website presence but rather the quality of the service provided (Lee & Lin, 2005:161). According to Kotler and Keller (2012:132), service quality is one of the key elements to value creation and customer satisfaction. Good online service quality can present brands with an opportunity to differentiate themselves in the market and have the potential, if it satisfies customers, to increase customer retention as well as positive word-of-mouth (Huiqun & Xin, 2012:359).

This results in a shift in focus from 'e-commerce' to 'e-service'; which involves all encounters that take place before, during, and after purchase transactions. (Ulkhay, Rabbani, Wibowo & Rachmania, 2017:20).

Therefore, the problem is to describe how e-service quality is influencing customer satisfaction.

1.4 Purpose Statement

Since customer satisfaction is one of the main concerns of brands, it is crucial to conduct research about what relates to satisfaction. Although there are many factors such as price, product quality, etc. that influences online customer satisfaction, e-service quality and its dimensions will be the focus of this study.

Researchers have conducted studies over the past decades to expand on the understanding of service quality, customer satisfaction and how these constructs relate to one another (Subrahmanyam, 2016:172). These studies have shown that service quality is one of the best determinants of customer satisfaction (Subrahmanyam, 2016:172).

Understanding the dimensions of service quality, as proposed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Malhotra (2005), and customer satisfaction in an online space is important for online brands and managers. In other words, studying the dimensions of e-service quality can assist online retail brands to ultimately satisfy customers with improved online services (Arora & Narula, 2018:31).

The purpose of this research study is to describe the relationship between e-service quality and customer satisfaction.

1.5 Research Question

Do the dimensions of e-service quality have an influence on customer satisfaction?

1.6 Hypotheses

The hypotheses will be focused on the dimensions of e-service quality and customer satisfaction; and will be identified after the literature review.

1.7 Outline of the paper

Chapter Two: Theoretical Foundation. This chapter presents the expectancy disconfirmation theory and how it relates to service quality and customer satisfaction is discussed to provide a theoretical foundation prior to the discussion of previous literature.

Chapter Three: Literature Review. The purpose of this chapter is to outline and review previous literature regarding e-service quality and customer satisfaction. Here, an

understanding of these constructs is established to provide a basis to identify and address the hypotheses.

Chapter Four: Research Methodology. This chapter outlines what research methodology will be used to collect and analyse the relevant data.

Chapter Five: Findings and Discussion. This chapter involves presenting the data collected in an organised manner as well as a discussion of the findings that were drawn from the data analysis.

Chapter Six: The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the overall findings and its implications for future research, limitations, and addressing the hypotheses.

2. CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory

Concerning this research study, the expectancy disconfirmation theory provides the theoretical foundation.

The most widely accepted conceptualisation of customer satisfaction is the expectancy disconfirmation theory (Huiqun & Xin, 2012:359). According to Oliver (1980:465) satisfaction is determined by both disconfirmation and expectation where the former is most influential. In other words, if a customer's expectations are not met, for example, in the case where a website is not responding or online transactions cannot be completed, customers' expectations are negatively disconfirmed, resulting in dissatisfaction. The expectancy disconfirmation theory entails the notion that repurchase intention is mainly determined by whether customers were satisfied with the product or service at first (Oliver, 1980:465).

According to Churchill and Surprenant (1982:492), the expectancy disconfirmation theory consists of four constructs namely expectations, performance, disconfirmation, and satisfaction. As this research study is focused on the influence service quality has on customer satisfaction in the online space, only the construct of satisfaction is the focal point. Furthermore, Mahmood, Rana, and Kanwal (2018:141) explain that customers will reach a high level of satisfaction when the services they experience met and/or exceed their expectations. Additionally, customer satisfaction can be determined either by subjective (such as emotions and needs) and objective factors (such as product and service features) (Huiqun & Xin, 2012:359).

Yüksel and Yüksel (2001:108) explain that the expectancy disconfirmation theory suggests that once a product or service has been used, the outcomes are assessed against expectations. Wirtz (2016) argues that service expectations are present during the decision-making process where customers assess the risks and attributes associated with the service offering. If the expectation is met, confirmation occurs, and satisfaction follows (Yüksel & Yüksel, 2001:108). The positivist paradigm can be seen here as the customer is ultimately satisfied or dissatisfied – this study does not aim to understand the phenomena but simply to describe it. The expectancy disconfirmation theory focuses on customer satisfaction which serves as the foundation to approach the research problem of this study.

Regarding service quality, it is important to note that it is rooted in the expectancy disconfirmation theory (Collier & Bienstock, 2006:261). As quality depends on customer perception it is subjective in nature, service quality results from how well customer

expectations are met by their actual experiences. This means that if the performance/quality of the service is at the same or higher level than expectations, then service quality is good or excellent; and vice versa (Ojasalo, 2010). The root of customer satisfaction and service quality must be understood first before its relationship with service quality can be determined.

3. CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

It is crucial for brands operating in the online environment to realise how service quality can strategically influence customer satisfaction thus, in return, influence profitability. By consulting previous literature, a better understanding is gained of service quality, customer satisfaction, their relationship with one another, and how these constructs can be measured in the online environment.

3.1 Service Quality

Service quality has been widely discussed in previous literature as it assists organisations in differentiation strategies and gaining competitive advantage in the era of globalisation (Ismail & Yunan, 2016:269). Many authors question why service quality should be measured. Arora and Narula (2018) believe the answer is simple: the measurement of service quality allows us to compare before and after changes, it can identify quality-related issues, and assists in the establishment of high standards for the delivery of services.

Parasuraman *et al.* (1985:47) deduced, through extensive exploratory research, that service quality can be determined by the following 10 criteria: reliability, responsiveness, competence, access, courtesy, communication, credibility, security, understanding the customer, and tangibles.

These criteria formed the foundation for the SERVQUAL model further developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988:23). The SERVQUAL model is one of the most used tools to measure traditional service quality (Kaura, Prasad & Sharma, 2015:3). This model consists of five dimensions derived from the previous 10 dimensions namely tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. Tangibles involve physical facilities, equipment, and personnel. Reliability entails the ability of the service to perform as promised. Responsiveness involves the willingness of personnel to help customers and to provide prompt service Parasuraman *et al.* (1988:23). Assurance entails the knowledge and courtesy of employees as well as their ability to inspire trust. The last dimension of the SERVQUAL model is empathy which includes the attention the brand and employees provides to customers (Agbor, 2011).

Traditional service quality refers to the non-internet-based interactions and experiences of customers with brands. Ulkhaq *et al.* (2017:20) suggest that service quality can be regarded as one of the key elements contributing to the success of a brand.

As the Internet resulted in the rise of e-commerce, brands realised the importance of embracing this new online platform (Gefen, 2002:42). This led to a change in the way we measure and assess service quality as electronic service quality takes over. SERVQUAL was designed to measure service quality but with the digitisation of business processes it was essential for this model to be adapted for the digital and e-commerce environment as a non-human element to service was added (Gefen, 2002:42). This resulted in the E-SERVQUAL model (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Malhotra, 2005).

3.2 E-service quality

E-service quality measurement in e-commerce has been receiving a lot of attention in recent literature (Arora & Narula, 2018). According to Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Malhotra (2002:213) brands with an online presence must focus on the service quality aspect of e-commerce – everything occurring before, during, and after the transactions. It is crucial for brands to understand how consumers perceive and engage with their online service.

Ojasalo (2010:128) explains that in the context of cyberspace, the true nature of e-service should revolve around providing customers with a superior experience regarding the interactive flow of information. Parasuraman *et al.* (2005:217) define e-service quality, or e-SQ, as the degree to which a “website facilitates efficient and effective shopping, purchasing, and delivery”. According to Mohammed, Wafik, Jabil and Hassan (2016:13) e-service quality is crucial for brands because it attracts new customers and influences customers’ satisfaction and intention to purchase brands online.

There are numerous scales that have been developed to measure and evaluate websites.

Loiacono, Watson, and Goodhue (2000) created the WebQual scale which rates websites according to 12 dimensions namely, informational fit to task, interaction, trust, innovativeness, response time, design, intuitiveness, visual appeal, flow-emotional appeal, integrated communication, substitutability, and business processes. The WebQual scale is a tool to measure the quality of a website’s interface and aims to gain information primarily for website designers and not to measure service quality (Al-Nasser *et al.*, 2015:429). Parasuraman *et al.* (2005:216) argue that this scale does not measure customer service and fulfilment.

Barnes and Vidgen (2002) developed a scale called WebQual2 which measures a brand’s online offering. It consists of five elements namely, usability, design, information, empathy and trust. The scale is designed in such a way that it can be answered without the customer

purchasing a product. The WebQual2 is more focused on the evaluation of transactions rather than on the service quality offered by the website (Al-Nasser *et al.*, 2015:429).

Yoo and Donthu (2001) created the SITEQUAL scale which measures website quality through four dimensions namely, ease of use, aesthetic design, security, and processing speed. Parasuraman *et al.* (2005:216) highlight that the SITEQUAL does not consider all the aspects of the buying process and thus do not provide a comprehensive measure for a website's service quality.

After examining the previous literature and scales of other authors, Parasuraman *et al.* (2005:216) developed their own online service quality model called the E-SERVQUAL model. The 11 dimensions of the e-SERVQUAL consist of reliability, responsiveness, access, flexibility, ease of navigation, security/privacy, efficiency, price knowledge, customisation/personalisation, and website aesthetics (Parasuraman *et al.*, 2005:219). The authors approached e-service quality as a multidimensional construct that needed to be revised to be applicable in the e-commerce field (Al-dweeri, Obeidat, Al-dwiry, Alshurideh & Alhorani, 2017:93). Parasuraman *et al.* (2005:220) developed two scales based on these dimensions namely E-S-QUAL and E-RecS-QUAL. The latter involves the measurement of online recovery dimensions. Collier and Bienstock (2006:271) posit these recovery measures are often the last resort taken by brands to satisfy customers. For the purpose of this study, only the four dimensions of the E-S-QUAL scale will be discussed.

Efficiency

The first dimension, efficiency, relates to the ease of using and accessing the website and content and is concerned with the capability of customers to make use of and navigate the website (Parasuraman *et al.*, 2005). Efficiency refers to the ability of the consumers to get on the website to easily find the item that they want (Zehir & Narcikara, 2016:431). Efficiency is important in e-commerce because convenience and saving time is seen as the primary reasons for purchasing products online (Santouridis *et al.*, 2012:89).

Fulfilment

The second dimension, referred to as fulfilment, involves the extent to which the website fulfils their promise on convenience, order delivery, and availability of items (Parasuraman *et al.*, 2005). Fulfilment further involves the accuracy of service promises, having items in stock, and whether the items are delivered in the promised timeframe (Zehir & Narcikara, 2016:431).

System availability

The third dimension, called system availability, entails the technical functioning and availability of the website (Parasuraman *et al.*, 2005). When customers buy from an e-commerce website or are just browsing the website functionality problems e.g. missing links can lead to disappointed customers can result in them leaving the website (Santouridis *et al.*, 2012:89).

Privacy

The last and fourth dimension, privacy, involves the safety and extent to which the website protects customer information and the degree customers are convinced their information is protected (Parasuraman *et al.*, 2005:220; Islam, Abidin & Prabhakar, 2015:431). Some customers are not willing to buy items online because of the risk associated with the misuse of their private information (Santouridis *et al.*, 2012:89).

Al-Nasser *et al.* (2015:431) founded that in e-commerce, the efficiency and fulfilment dimensions have the most effect on perceived service quality followed by system availability and privacy.

According to Kalia (2013:4), there are advantages to utilising the E-S-QUAL scale to measure service quality. This scale ensures the measurement of service quality to be objective and precise; it can predict customer satisfaction and identify any service quality gaps between satisfaction and expectations. This scale can be used to track customer perceptions and preferences regarding service quality as compared to competitors. Additionally, with these results e-commerce brands' e-service quality can start focusing on personalisation and fulfilment in the online environment (Kalia, 2013:4). According to Ulkhaq *et al.* (2017:24) as e-commerce brands established customers' perceptions towards their quality of service and recovery services, marketing efforts can be adapted to ensure expectations are met.

The four dimensions discussed is appropriate in the context where customers buy tangible products online that needs to be packaged and delivered. Here, e-service quality is seen as a function of how the online retailer facilitates effective shopping, purchasing, and delivery of products. Therefore, measuring the quality of the e-service experience involves that which occur before, during, and after the purchase transaction. This measurement is possible through the use of E-SERVQUAL (Kalia, 2013:7).

Furthermore, using E-SERVQUAL presents numerous advantages when conducting research. Firstly, as e-service quality is subjective and thus making the measuring thereof

difficult, E-SERVQUAL makes measuring e-service quality more precise and objective (Kalia, 2013:7). Secondly, E-SERVQUAL has been found to be an important prediction tool for overall customer satisfaction (Kalia, 2013:7). Lastly, E-SERVQUAL can be used to determine the gaps between experience or satisfaction and expectation (Kalia, 2013:8). – which relates to the expectancy disconfirmation theory.

Yaya, Marimón and Casadesús (2017: 1309) posit that there are two criticisms regarding E-SERVQUAL. Firstly, whether it is applicable to different industries and secondly, the need for the model to be adapted due to rapidly changing trends in e-commerce. However, the E-S-QUAL scale measures the quality of the core service dimensions rather than solely the technical quality of the website (Goel, 2017:130).

3.3 Customer satisfaction

Given the crucial role of customer satisfaction, it is expected that a variety of research has been conducted to investigate what determining factors contribute to customer satisfaction (Huiqin & Xin, 2012:359). Additionally, Huiqin and Xin (2012:359) noted that customer satisfaction can be determined by both subjective (e.g. emotions and needs) and objective factors (e.g. service features).

As previously mentioned, customer satisfaction is rooted in the expectancy disconfirmation theory which highlights satisfaction as the difference between performance and expectation (Romadhoni *et al.*, 2015:3; Ismail & Yunan, 2016:270). Arora and Narula (2018:32) explain it as follows: customers develop a certain expectation of the service before they buy it. Next, customers use the service and based on how they perceive the quality of the service they make a judgement whether they are satisfied or dissatisfied.

Ganiyu, Uche, and Elizabeth (2012:14) state that customer satisfaction should be approached as the heart of marketing. The dissatisfaction of a brand might lead to negative word-of-mouth and encouraging others to boycott the brand.

Romadhoni *et al.* (2015:3) explain that the success of e-commerce is dependent on the satisfaction level of customers. According to Anderson and Srinivasan (2003:125), e-satisfaction occurs when a customer's experiences gratification regarding their purchase of a product or service through an e-commerce brand. Mohammed *et al.* (2016:14) define e-satisfaction as a construct, developed over a long period of time, that is influenced by e-service expectations and quality perceptions that change over time based on new

experiences and knowledge. Liao, Liu, Liu, To, and Lin (2011:244) found that in the e-commerce market service quality is important to achieve customer satisfaction.

As supported by the expectancy disconfirmation theory, if the quality of service meets customers' expectations, customer satisfaction will be reached. According to Mohammed *et al.* (2016:15), customer satisfaction is related to e-service quality as brands need to achieve superior e-service quality by identifying and eliminating gaps that hinder customer satisfaction. Ismail and Yunan (2016:270) concluded that service quality and customer satisfaction, although predominantly different constructs are interrelated. Romadhoni *et al.* (2015:5) and Ismail and Yunan (2016:277) founded that service quality is able to influence customer satisfaction.

3.4 Hypotheses

The proposed hypotheses are based on the dimensions of e-service quality and its relationship with customer satisfaction.

H₁: There is a significant and positive relationship between fulfilment and customer satisfaction

H₂: There is a significant and positive relationship between efficiency and customer satisfaction

H₃: There is a significant and positive relationship between system availability and customer satisfaction

H₄: There is a significant and positive relationship between privacy and customer satisfaction

3.5 Conceptualisation

3.5.1 E-commerce

According to Khan (2016:19), electronic commerce, also known as e-commerce, entails the purchasing and selling of products and services on the Internet. On the other hand, Hidayat *et al.* (2016:152) state e-commerce is also broadly defined as electronic networks aimed at simplifying and modernising the business process. For the purpose of this study, both definitions are considered appropriate and e-commerce will refer to 'doing business via the Internet'.

3.5.2 Service Quality

According to Parasuraman, Ziethaml, and Berry (1985:42), service quality measures the performance of the service delivered to meet customer expectations. In other words, it is the difference between perceived service and the expectation of the service (Arora & Narula, 2018). This, in turn, presents managers with the opportunity to identify gaps in their service offerings (Agbor, 2011:8).

3.5.3 E-service Quality

According to Collier and Bienstock (2006:271), e-service quality is more than the interaction of customers with the website. It involves the design, information accuracy, ease of use, privacy, and functionality of the said website. For example, if a customer negatively experiences the functionality of a website due to its navigation, then the customer might form their negative opinion before the transaction takes place. For this research study, e-service quality will be measured by making use of Parasuraman *et al.* (2005) E-S-QUAL scale which includes the four dimension of service quality namely, efficiency, system availability, fulfilment, and privacy.

3.5.4 Customer satisfaction

Churchill and Surprenant (1982:492) state that customer satisfaction is a “post-purchase phenomenon” that reflects whether a customer likes or dislikes a product or service after use. For this research study, customer satisfaction will be measured by making use of scales by Nejati and Moghaddam (2013:1596) and Hanzaee and Rezaeyeh (2013:821).

4. CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The aim of this study was to describe the relationship between online service quality and customer satisfaction. This chapter discusses the research paradigm, population and sampling, the method used for data collection, and the method used to analyse the data to address the previously mentioned hypotheses.

4.1 Research Paradigm

Tronvoll, Brown, Gremler, and Edvardsson (2011:561) argues that in order to understand research based on service and the quality thereof, a paradigmatic foundation must be chosen and analysed. According to Kelly, Dowling, and Millar (2018:11), a paradigm can be explained through different perspectives. A paradigm is a way of approaching the world through one's values, morals, and attitudes. It guides us to find the best solutions to research problems and the manner in doing so (Antwi & Kasim, 2015:218).

Before deciding on a paradigm, the researcher must consider their stance on the ontology and epistemology of the research as this is the foundation of how the research will be conducted (Kelly *et al.*, 2018:12). The ontological perspective entails the way one looks at and understands reality. According to Tronvoll *et al.* (2011:563) ontology reflects claim that a certain approach to social inquiry makes about the nature of reality (i.e. the nature of online service quality). It involves the study of the type of reality that exists, what it looks like, which entities exist within this reality, and the relationships between them (Tronvoll *et al.*, 2011:563).

The epistemological perspective examines the way in which knowledge can be created and interpreted (Kelly *et al.*, 2018:12). Epistemology addresses how we perceive reality and presents questions about our understanding and communication of this knowledge (Tronvoll *et al.*, 2011:563). Regarding research relating to service and customer satisfaction, different epistemological approaches can be utilised to describe how to view reality and the relationships between entities (Tronvoll *et al.*, 2011:563).

The paradigmatic foundation of this research study is positivism. Positivism is rooted in the assumption that logic, empirical measurement and deductive reasoning can be applied to research (Kelly *et al.*, 2018:12). According to Arghode (2012:156) positivism assumes that if there is a problem, a solution exists. Positivism also concentrates on understanding a stationary situation where time is not relevant. This allows the researcher to be objective by maintaining a distance from what constructs are measured (Tronvoll *et al.*, 2011:571).

Ontological Positivist Position

The ontological perspective of positivism believes that reality is not dependent on social constructs and knowledge is objective and quantifiable (Antwi & Kasim, 2015:218; Kelly *et al.*, 2018:12). The ontology of positivism is grounded in realism (Arghode, 2012:156). Positivistic studies are driven by theory, such as the expectancy disconfirmation theory, and assumes that reality is objective and can result in guidelines for how brands and employees should act (Tronvoll *et al.*, 2011:568). Objectivity is also supported by the use of E-S-QUAL, as it enables measuring service quality in a more objective and accurate manner.

This study is focused on realism and objectivity as it seeks to quantify whether e-service quality influences customer satisfaction.

Epistemological Positivist Position

According to Pham (2018:2) the intent of positivism, from an epistemological point of view, is to describe the causal or correlative relationship between an independent variable and one or more dependent variables. Here, the independent variable is e-service quality and the dependent variable is customer satisfaction. Pham (2018:2) emphasises that positivists believe the purpose of research should be considered scientific and objective methods should be developed in order to describe reality.

Therefore, this research study will adopt a positivist paradigm as the variables (e-service quality and customer satisfaction) will be approached from a realist perspective and based on the notion that individuals' statements are either right or wrong. This is based on the epistemological positivist stance that knowledge is real and acquirable (Antwi & Kasim, 2015:218).

As this research study will be conducted by making use of a quantitative methodology, findings will be supported by scientific assumptions rendering the results valid and reliable (Pham, 2018:2). The findings can thus be generalised to the greater population and replicated (Kelly *et al.*, 2018:13; Pham, 2018:2).

4.2 Research Approach

The research approach can be described as the procedure that was followed step by step starting from vague and broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection, analysis, as well as interpretation. The three research approaches include qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method research (Creswell, 2014:4). As this study is underpinned by the positivist paradigm, a quantitative research methodology was followed.

Coinciding with the positivist worldview quantitative measures are focused on measuring variables and testing hypotheses that are linked to the description of causal relationships (Antwi & Kasim, 2015:220; Rahman, 2017:105). The quantitative research approach was used because the study wants to provide an overview of data that is analysed statistically, accurately, as well as clearly.

Additionally, an applied research approach was taken. Applied research is designed to solve practical problems, such as the problem of e-service quality and its influence on customer satisfaction. It is based on the notion to improve the conditions around us. According to Davis (2017:74) applied research is purpose-driven and can be applied to real-life situations. The goal of this research study is to provide online retailer brands with the description of e-service quality, and its dimensions, and its influence on customer satisfaction.

4.3 Research Design

According to Davis (2017:74), the different types of research designs include exploratory research, descriptive research, correlational research, explanatory research, predictive research, and pragmatic research. This research study adopts a descriptive research design as the goal is to objectively describe the relationship between variables (Davis, 2017:75).

Descriptive research is used to describe the characteristics of variables and the relationship between variables as accurate as possible (Davis, 2017:75). Descriptive research is related to quantitative methodology and the positivist worldview. It is related to the epistemological position of positivism. The positivist paradigm emphasises that behaviour can be described and explained through measurable data by utilising standardised tools such as close-ended questionnaires or surveys (Antwi & Kasim, 2015:219). For this research study, online surveys will be used to address the research question.

Most researchers use deductive and inductive reasoning when conducting research (Antwi & Kasim, 2015:220). Inductive reasoning is used to search for patterns in data to make generalisations and to ultimately conclude on the best explanation. Deductive reasoning involves the logic of confirmation. It is used to test hypotheses and deduce findings based on consequences that should occur with new empirical data if the hypotheses are found to be true (Antwi & Kasim, 2015:220).

This research study is cross-sectional in nature as it aims to study variables at a specific point in time (du-Plooy Cilliers & Cronje, 2014:149). Quantitative research operates under the assumption of objectivity and neutrality. Surveys were used as the data collection

method because quantitative research and the positivist paradigm is focused on collecting data that can be represented numerically which ultimately allows for the data to be statistically analysed (Antwi & Kasim, 2015:220).

This research study was conducted through the utilisation of a quantitative research methodology and is descriptive in nature. Deductive reasoning was utilised to test the hypotheses relating to the relationship of variables. It aims to objectively describe the significant relationship between the dimensions of e-service quality and customer satisfaction.

4.4 Population

The population is the total collection of individuals that are the primary focus of a research study (Pascoe, 2017:132). Within the population, there is a target population which is then narrowed down into the accessible population for the research study. The target population is more specific where parameters are set to ensure the study stays focused on its purpose (Pascoe, 2017:133).

The target population for this study involved all South African individuals between the ages of 25 and 35 who buy or have previously purchased items online. The reasoning behind this specific age group is supported by the South Africa E-commerce Industry Report 2018 published by Narratiive.com. When looking at the mentioned report, 48% of the respondents who have purchased online, the majority were between the ages of 25 and 35 years old (Narratiive.com, 2018).

The accessible population consists of all the individuals that can be included in the research study (Pascoe, 2017:133). The accessible population for this study consisted of individuals between the ages of 25 and 35, both male and female, and who have purchased items from the online retailer Takealot.com. The reason behind this specific brand is that it is currently the largest and most popular online retailer in South Africa (Euromonitor International, 2019).

Unit of analysis

For this research study, the units of analysis were individuals. Individuals were analysed as the purpose of this study is to describe the relationship between e-service quality and customer satisfaction. These individuals refer to the customer of Takealot.com who are between the ages of 25 and 35 years old.

4.5 Sampling

Sampling entails selecting a subset of individuals from the accessible population (Vosloo, 2014) with the intention of representing the target population. There are two categories of sampling namely probability and non-probability sampling. Non-probability sampling is used when not every unit of the population has the same chance for selection in the sample (Pascoe, 2014). It mainly focuses on gaining an in-depth understanding of the research problem. Probability sampling is when the units of analysis in the target population has an equal chance to be selected for the sample (Vosloo, 2014).

This research study adopted a quantitative approach and was descriptive in design, non-probability sampling methods were used, specifically a combination of convenience and snowball sampling. Convenience sampling refers to the selection of readily available individuals, who are part of the accessible population (Pascoe, 2017:142). Snowball sampling entails obtaining more respondents as recommended by initial respondents (Acharya, Prakash, Saxena & Nigam, 2013:333).

This process is then continued until the sample size of respondents is reached (Pascoe, 2017:144). Snowball sampling is mostly used when individuals of the target population are difficult to reach. Here, although Takealot.com is the most popular online retailer in South Africa, one cannot know if the respondents have explicitly purchased products from Takealot.com without personally asking them. This would have been a timely process to follow, thus snowball sampling provided the research with suggestions of others who fall within the population parameters.

The combination of these sampling methods enabled the research to be completed within the set time frame. Furthermore, the convenience sampling method provided a starting point to gain more respondents. This proved efficient as both methods ensured that relevant individuals were studied i.e. individuals who purchase or have purchased products online.

The **sample size** originally consisted of 20 ($n=20$) respondents who are between 25 and 35 years of age and have purchased products from the South African online retailer Takealot.com, but to ensure that there would be enough valid responses collected more than 20 surveys were distributed. This resulted in 33 responses but only 22 ($n=22$) were valid. The sample size was small due to time constraints and limited resources available.

4.6 Data collection method

As previously mentioned, this research study made use of online surveys to collect data. A survey can be described as a number of questions that are designed to collect information about a large group of individuals (du-Plooy-Cilliers & Cronje, 2014:149). It is also used to gather data regarding demographics (such as gender, age, race, etc.) as well as data about individual's attitudes, opinions, and levels of satisfaction with a product or service (du-Plooy-Cilliers & Cronje, 2014:149). Surveys measure attitudes by using rating scales (Antwi & Kasim, 2015:223). The use of surveys also contributes to the validity and reliability of the research study.

Furthermore, according to du-Plooy-Cilliers and Cronje (2014:149), the benefits of using surveys are that it is not as expensive or time-consuming as other quantitative methods, large amounts of data can be collected and as the survey is anonymous, and respondents are more likely to complete the survey honestly. The survey design will be cross-sectional as the purpose is to measure the influence of e-service quality on customer satisfaction at a specific point in time. This also requires data to be collected once per respondent (du-Plooy-Cilliers & Cronje, 2014:160).

The survey was distributed online via email and a link was provided to redirect respondents to the survey which was designed in Google Forms. Before respondents started with the survey, information was provided to inform respondents of what the survey entails. Also, a digital consent form was included at the start of the survey which can be seen in Annexure D.

Respondents were thanked for their participation and were ensured that if they wish to stop with the survey, they are free to do so. This option was included to make respondents feel comfortable in the case that they might feel they are revealing sensitive information. Also, the consent form included that all responses would be anonymous and confidential. Participation in the survey was completely voluntary. Respondents who provide consent further advanced to the survey questions. The consent confirmation contributed to the ethical conduct relating to the collection of data.

The first section of the survey involved questions regarding their age, gender, and whether they have bought products online and specifically from the online retailer Takealot.com. These questions were included to ensure that the respondents met the population criteria. If respondents did not fall within these parameters, they were redirected to the end of the survey and thanked for their contribution.

The second and last section of the survey involved questions based on Parasuraman *et al.* (2005) E-S-QUAL 22 multiple-item scale which measures the service quality of websites and customer satisfaction scales by Nejati and Moghaddam (2013:1596) and Hanzaee and Rezaeyeh (2013:821). These items were grouped into the four dimensions of e-service quality namely, efficiency, fulfilment, system availability, privacy (Parasuraman *et al.*, 2005) and customer satisfaction.

Respondents were required to rate each item based on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). The Likert scale involved two parts namely the item, which is the statement, and the evaluation which illustrates the level of how much the respondent agreed or disagreed with the statement (du-Plooy-Cilliers & Cronje, 2014:159). These two parts were coded accordingly. Coding assists in reducing the quantity of data into a form that can be easily analysed. This involves assigning a number to each item instead of writing out the full statement. Furthermore, the items were then quantified which enables the use of statistical analysis. The Likert scale was convenient to measure constructs such as e-service quality dimensions and customer satisfaction. The survey questions appeared randomly on the survey and were pre-tested prior to distribution to individuals who do not form part of the sample population to ensure that the survey would not be confusing and easy to complete.

The coded survey and raw data can be seen in Annexure E and Annexure F respectively.

4.7 Data analysis method

As this research study used a quantitative methodology and is descriptive in nature, statistical methods are used to analyse the data collected. Statistical analysis enables objective conclusions can be drawn from findings (Khan, 2014:206). Objectivity entails avoiding bias which corresponds with the epistemological position of positivism. Statistics involves a set of mathematical techniques used to analyse data (Khan, 2014:206).

As the aim of this research study is to test the predetermined hypotheses, quantitative and descriptive statistical data analysis methods were used. This was done by making use of Microsoft Excel. The findings are presented using pie charts. Each item measuring the four dimensions of e-service quality and customer satisfaction are coded to quantify the statements. The evaluation of each item coincides with a 7-point Likert scale where strongly disagree is represented as 1; neither agree nor disagree is represented as 4, and strongly agree is represented as 7; etc. With these numbers, the average, median, mode, and percentages could be easily calculated to assist in the further interpretation of the findings.

This will determine whether the hypotheses will be accepted or rejected. Visual representations are provided and explained in detail to ensure the reader can understand the data being presented.

The findings will then be further be discussed through making use of deductive reasoning. The premise of deductive reasoning is to approach a general statement and deduce it to a conclusion (Antwi & Kasim, 2015:220). However, as this research study is rooted in the positivist paradigm and is descriptive in nature, deductive reasoning was not used to explain the relationship of e-service quality and customer satisfaction but just described this relationship.

5. CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Presentation and interpretation of findings

Overall 33 respondents contributed to the survey – all of which provided consent. Of these respondents, only 22 fell within the inclusion criteria and was used in the data analysis process. The respondents were deduced as follows: only 26 respondents were between the ages of 25 and 35 years old; 24 of these respondents buy or have previously bought products online, and 22 of these respondents have bought products from Takealot.com. Thus, the number of responses that were analysed were 22 (n=22).

5.1.1 Demographics – Gender

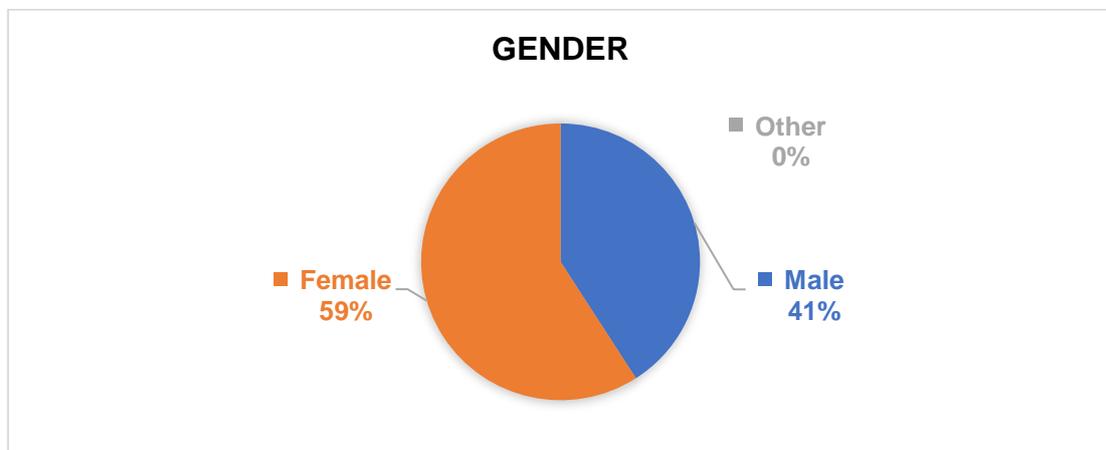


Figure 1: Demographics - Gender

Most respondents (59%) were female and 41% were male. The average, median, and mode for this data set are female.

5.1.2 Efficiency

The overall results for the efficiency dimension of e-service quality are as follows:

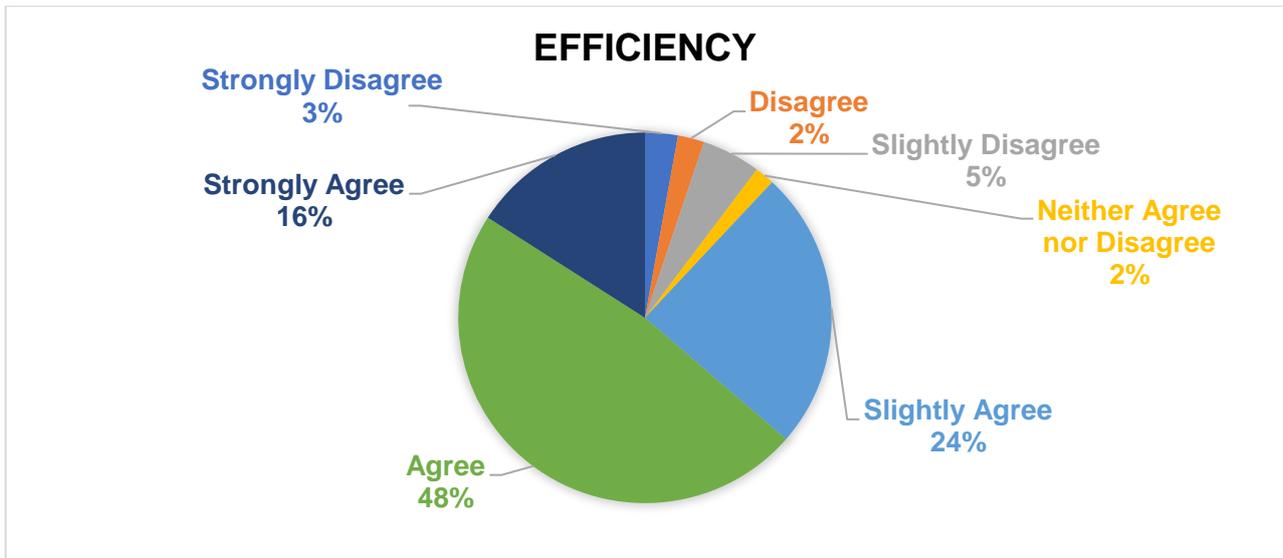


Figure 2: Efficiency Dimension Results

48% of respondents agree with the statements made regarding the efficiency of Takealot.com. 24% of respondents slightly agree with the statements whilst 16% strongly agree. This shows that 88% of respondents rate the efficiency of Takealot.com positively. Here, the average is 5,5 which lies in between 'slightly agree' and 'agree'. The median and mode for this data set are both 6; which is 'agree'. This high rating indicates that customers agree that the Takealot.com website is easy to use, organised, etc. In other words, there is a positive level of evaluation or agreement regarding efficiency.

5.1.3. System availability

The overall results for the system availability dimension of e-service quality are as follows:

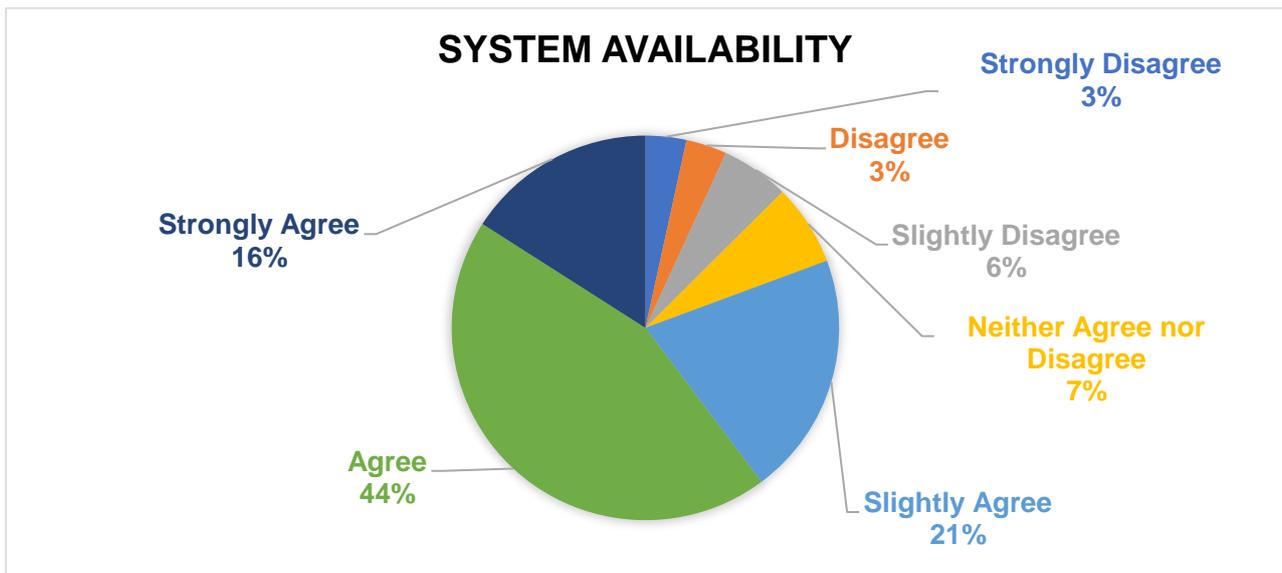


Figure 3: System Availability Dimension Results

44% of respondents agree with the statements made regarding the system availability of Takealot.com's website. 21% of respondents slightly agree with the statements whilst 16% strongly agree. This shows that 81% of respondents rate the system availability of Takealot.com positively. Here, the average is 5,3 which lies in between 'slightly agree' and 'agree' but is leaning more towards the former. The median and mode for this data set are both 6; which is 'agree'. This rating indicates that customers agree with the statements made regarding the technical functioning and availability of the Takealot.com website.

5.1.4. Fulfilment

The overall results for the fulfilment dimension of e-service quality are as follows:

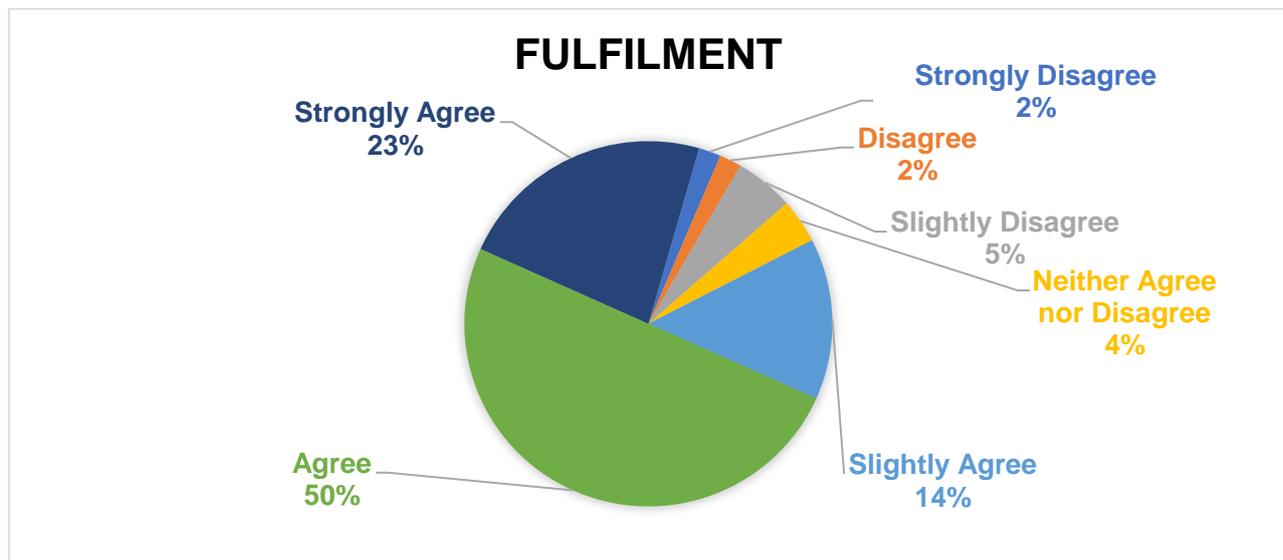


Figure 4: Fulfilment Dimension Results

50% of respondents agree with the statements made regarding the fulfilment of Takealot.com. 23% of respondents strongly agree with the statements whilst 14% slightly agree. This shows that 87% of respondents rate fulfilment Takealot.com positively. This dimension involves the extent to which Takealot.com fulfils their promises concerning convenience, delivery, and availability of products (Parasuraman *et al.*, 2005). Furthermore, the average is 5,7 which lies between 'slightly agree' and 'agree'. The median and mode for this data set are both 6; which is 'agree'. This indicates that respondents positively agree with the statements made concerning whether products are in stock and whether the ordered products are delivered on time.

5.1.5. Privacy

The overall results for the privacy dimension of e-service quality are as follows:

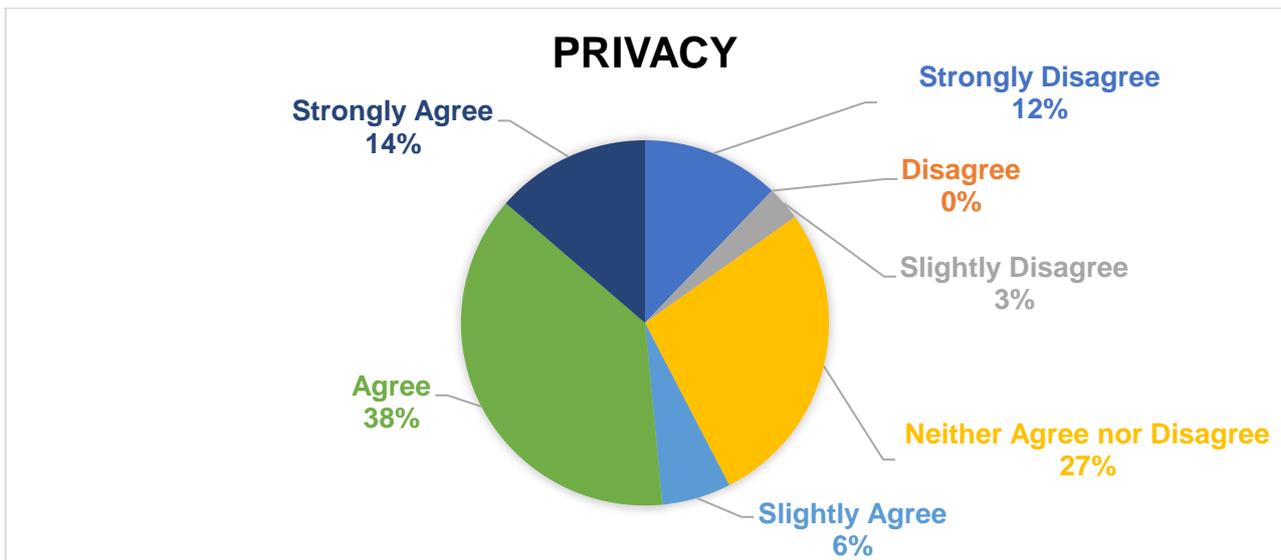


Figure 5: Privacy Dimension Results

38% of respondents agree with the statements made regarding the privacy dimension of e-service quality when assessing their experiences with Takealot.com. On the other hand, 27% noted that they do not agree nor disagree with the items (statements) presented. The average evaluation here is 4,8 which lies in between ‘neither agree nor disagree’ and ‘slightly agree’. On the other hand, the median and mode are both 6 which is ‘agree’.

When looking at the e-service quality dimension of privacy, it shows the lowest average even though the mode and median are the same as the other dimensions and customer satisfaction. This indicates that some customers are unsure of whether Takealot.com are protecting their personal information and information about their online shopping behaviour. On the other hand, it is important to note that the average (4,8) does lean towards the positive side of agreement – indicating that there is a positive level of evaluation or agreement regarding privacy.

5.1.5. Customer satisfaction

The overall results for customer satisfaction are as follows:

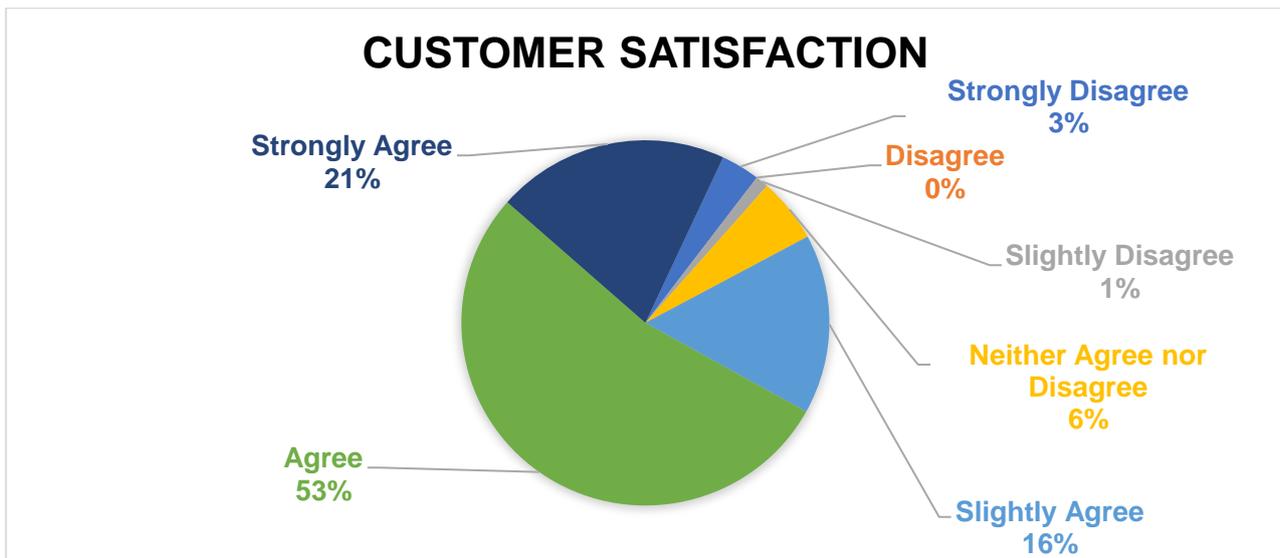


Figure 6: Customer Satisfaction Results

53% of respondents agree with the statements given regarding their overall satisfaction with Takealot.com. 21% of respondents strongly agree with the statements whilst 16% slightly agree. This shows that 90% of respondents are satisfied during and after purchasing on Takealot.com. The average is 5,7 which lies between 'slightly agree' and 'agree'. The median and mode for this data set are both 6; which is 'agree'. This indicates that the majority of respondents enjoyed shopping on the website and had a good experience with Takealot.com.

5.1.6. Inter-relationship findings between e-service quality and customer satisfaction

When analysing each dimension in relation to customer satisfaction the following was found. Firstly, there is a significant and positive relationship between efficiency and customer satisfaction. This can be seen through the individual data – respondents who have rated the statements as 'slightly agree' or higher, have subsequently rated the customer satisfaction statements as 'slightly agree, or higher. This is also supported by the similarity in the mode and median for both mentioned data sets which is 'agree' (6). The reasoning behind this can be due to the website – Takealot.com – which is an established and popular brand in South Africa.

Secondly, the findings illustrate that there is a significant and positive relationship between system availability and customer satisfaction. This is supported by looking at the individual data points. The 81% of respondents rated the relevant statements as 'slightly agree' or higher have rated the customer satisfaction statements as 'slightly agree' or higher. Thirdly, the findings show that there is a significant and positive relationship between fulfilment and customer satisfaction. When looking at individual data points, 87% of respondents rated

statements regarding fulfilment positively i.e. 'slightly agree' or higher; have rated customer satisfaction statements as 'slightly agree' or higher as well

Additionally, this is supported by what was found by Santouridis *et al.* (2014) and Parasuraman *et al.* (2005). This can be due to Takealot.com having access to various resources to invest in maintaining the functionality of the website as well as providing a consistent delivery system.

The findings show that there is not a significant and positive relationship between privacy and customer satisfaction when it concerns the online retailer Takealot.com. As previously noted, the average of the privacy dimension is 4,8 which does indicate that the data leans towards the positive side. Individual responses show that respondents who have rated privacy as 'neither agree nor disagree' or lower, have rated, in contrast, customer satisfaction as 'slightly agree' or higher. This supports what was found by Parasuraman *et al.* (2005) and contradicts what was found by Santouridis *et al.* (2014) – which involved the level of importance customers place on privacy when evaluating their satisfaction with websites.

5.2 Validity and Reliability

The terms 'validity' and 'reliability' are most commonly used in quantitative research as opposed to the term 'trustworthiness' in qualitative research (Koonin, 2014:252). Validity and reliability are related to the measurability of results.

5.2.1 Validity

Validity is ensured when it can be determined whether this research study actually measured what it set out to measure (Koonin, 2014:256). There are two types of validity in quantitative research – internal and external validity. Internal validity is concerned with whether the research methodology will assist in answering the research question (Koonin, 2014:257). External validity refers to the ability to generalise findings from the sample to the target population (Koonin, 2014:257).

For this research study, validity was ensured through two methods. Firstly, the online survey questions were based on the E-S-QUAL model as created by Parasuraman *et al.* (2005) as well as the customer satisfaction scales by Nejati and Moghaddam (2013:1596) and Hanzaee and Rezaeyeh (2013:821). Secondly, any completed surveys that are invalid were discarded. Invalid surveys are those who did not comply with the population parameters i.e. responses where the individual are not between the ages of 25 and 35 years and those who

do not purchase products online or who have not previously purchased from the online retailer Takealot.com.

5.2.2 Reliability

Reliability is related to the credibility of the research. It is concerned with whether the same results will be found in the study were to be done in a different location or by different research with a different methodology (Koonin, 2014:254). The ability of the research study to be generalised is also included in the reliability of the study. To ensure reliability, the purpose and rationale of the study were clearly defined to ensure the study achieved what it is meant for. Additionally, more than 20 surveys were distributed in order to ensure that 20 valid responses were collected. This enabled the findings to be generalisable as it complied with the set population parameters and sample size.

6. CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

The focus of this research paper was to describe online service quality and its influence on customer satisfaction. Here, the aim was to close the gap of knowledge regarding this topic in the context of South Africa. Chapter Two discussed the expectancy disconfirmation theory which provided a theoretical background before addressing the research problem. Chapter Three provided a review of previous literature and conceptualisation of concepts. Chapter Four consisted of a detailed research methodology outlining the strategy followed to address the hypotheses. Chapter Five involved presenting and discussing the findings of the data collected.

6.1 Hypotheses Addressed

However, looking at the overall mode and median for both the constructs (customer satisfaction and e-service quality) – which is 6 for all. This supports the notion that even though privacy does not have a significant and positive relationship with customer satisfaction, e-service quality does have an influence on customer satisfaction. This answers the research question.

Furthermore, the hypotheses are concluded as follows:

H ₁ : There is a significant and positive relationship between fulfilment and customer satisfaction	Accepted
H ₂ : There is a significant and positive relationship between efficiency and customer satisfaction	Accepted
H ₃ : There is a significant and positive relationship between system availability and customer satisfaction	Accepted
H ₄ : There is a significant and positive relationship between privacy and customer satisfaction	Not Accepted

6.2 Implications of findings for future practices

These results show that e-service quality influences customer satisfaction. This has a number of implications for brands. It is crucial to identify customers' perceptions of the quality of services offered. This would allow management to better adapt their offering and to

confirm that customers' expectations are met thus maintaining the objective of maximising profit (Agbor, 2012:70). E-commerce brands can utilise the E-S-QUAL scales to track over time, as well as competitors, various trends that will assist in identifying strengths and weaknesses associated with online service quality dimensions.

Additional knowledge regarding consumer research and satisfaction provide brands with the foundation to develop strategies that are focused on retaining current customers and attracting new customers. It is important for Takealot.com, and other e-commerce brands, to satisfy customers by ensuring they obtain good quality services. This links to brands investing in total quality management to improve quality as it influences customer satisfaction.

This study could guide other researchers in various directions to further describe the relationship between e-service quality and customer satisfaction using different samples (Subrahmanyam, 2016:182). Also, as customer satisfaction is a worldwide phenomenon this study is flexible and can be replicated in other countries.

6.3 Ethical implications

Ethics in research is crucial as it affects respondents, the researcher and the research itself (Louw, 2017:263). Ethics provide the researcher with a moral code of conduct to conduct research.

6.3.1 Ethical issues regarding participants

It is key that all respondents that are participating in the research study provide consent for the researcher to use their responses. Respondents must be informed on whether their identity will be protected, how their information will be utilised, and whether the information will be confidential (Louw, 2017:264). These issues were addressed by providing the respondents with a clear and detailed consent form which highlighted what is expected from them and how their information will be protected. Without signed consent forms, the researcher is not allowed to use their information without permission. Questions included in the survey refrained from sensitive issues to ensure the comfortability of respondents. Respondents was also given the option to stop at any point during the survey without any explanation. The consent form can be seen in Annexure D.

6.3.2 Ethical issues regarding the researcher

The researcher ensured that no information was changed or fabricated to as this will result in unethical conduct. Information collected will not be used for any another research study, as the respondents did not provide their consent to participate. Distorting results to alter the findings of the study is strictly be prohibited. Additionally, the researcher must not be influenced by any biases when conducting research and describing findings which are also driven by the positivist paradigm.

The researcher conducted the research following the IIE Code of Conduct Guidelines and Clearance. Respondents was informed of this as well. Ethical research is also ensured by the partnership between the researcher and their supervisor, who consults and guide the researcher during the research study. Lastly, the researcher will safeguard this study and all findings for a minimum of five years.

6.4 Limitations

The limitations of a research study refer to all the relevant and uncontrollable constraints the research might encounter (Enslin, 2017:275). The possible limitations of this research study will be discussed. Firstly, time constraints. The time frame in which this study was conducted limits the amount of data that can be collected and analysed. Secondly, the resources of the researcher are limited. Thirdly, as the sample size is small – consisting of 22 respondents – there will not be a truly representative of the population. It is crucial that the chosen sample is enough in collecting data that could describe the relationship of e-service quality and customer satisfaction despite the findings not being representative.

This study is limited to South Africa and the sample limited to the city of Pretoria. Additionally, online retailers, such as Takealot.com, offer a large variety of product categories including health and beauty products, electronics, books, groceries etc. thus the study may not represent online retailers that specialise in a specific product category (Kandulapati & Bellamkonda, 2014:186). Also, the majority of data collected came from female respondents, which is 59% or 13 out of the 22 respondents.

This research study made use of a cross-sectional research design which may not capture connections between the measured variables. Lastly, due to the personal attributes of the respondents, such as the level of familiarity with Takealot.com, their quality assessments have not been controlled.

6.5 CONCLUSION

This study was conducted in order to describe the influential relationship between e-service quality and customer satisfaction. The findings emphasise that the quality of online service does, in fact, influence customer satisfaction. The E-S-QUAL measurement scales was used to address the predetermined hypotheses. The final recommendation for brands entails that more attention should be given to improve the overall service quality to meet customers' expectations and in turn, increase profitability.