

Researching Customers Experience with The Takealot Brand

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Declaration

I, Frederik van Huyssteen [REDACTED] declare that the Research Thesis submitted for the Bachelor of Commerce (Honours) in Strategic Brand Management 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. I further declare that all sources cited or quoted are indicated and acknowledged by means of a comprehensive list of references, and that I:

1. Understand what plagiarism is.
2. Acknowledge that it is an offence to plagiarise.
3. Understand that all work submitted has to be originally my own work.
4. Recognise patch work as a serious form of plagiarism.



10 December 2020

.....
Signature

.....
Date

Acknowledgements:

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Dedication:

I toyed with the idea of dedicating my honours research thesis for a long time, I have at the end of the day decided to dedicate this honours research thesis to my Mom, Sister and Ouma.

To my darling mom and sister, Jayde and Jess, you two are two of the strongest women I have ever met in my life. Our lives have not always been easy, but the three of us have made it a life I am happy to have lived, and I cannot wait for what next is in store for us, I love you both so much.

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With all my love (and tears while writing this):

Ricky x

Abstract:

The underlying theme of this small-scale research thesis is the way in which Takealot had made use of technology to enhance the customer brand experience with them, to ultimately become a dominant force in the South African online retail industry. This study made use of a qualitative research approach to assess how Takealot has made use of technology to enhance the customer brand experience of their customers, in an ever-growing South African online retail market. Due to the rapid growth of the online retailer market in South Africa, Takealot underwent rapid growth and expansion, which necessitated a technological shift in the Takealot business model, in order to grow their customer base and retain previous customers. A research survey was sent to customers who shop with Takealot. The findings emerging from this study could help to advance the limited body of knowledge relating to online retail stores in South Africa, as not much research has been conducted on this topic.

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Overview of Research

1.1 Introduction

This research explored how one of South Africa's major online retailers, Takealot, successfully made use of technology to enhance the experience of their customers, to remain one of the most successful online retailers, in an ever-growing and increasingly competitive online retail market. The purpose of this research was to understand whether customers are satisfied with the Takealot brand. This research could help those wanting to explore the South African Online retailer industry.

1.2 Rationale

The rational and relevance behind this research as based around the fact that the decade starting 2020 was known as 'The decade of agile brand building' and therefore this research looked at how satisfied customers are with the Takealot brand. This study is significant, due to the fact that online shopping is growing in popularity and more and more people are beginning to do online shopping for a range of different products. If shortcomings were identified, recommendations were made to address them so as to improve the customers online experience and thus to enhance the Takealot brand and contribute to client retention, attraction and increased sales.

1.3 Journal of Publication recommendation

This research can be published in journals relating to e-commerce, my suggestion would be to publish this thesis in the Journal of *Electronic Commerce Research*.

1.4 Research Problem

With the fast-paced life that consumers live, businesses have had to find new ways of leveraging technology to enhance their consumers' experience with their brands. Takealot being an online-only store, has disrupted traditional brick and mortar stores in South Africa, and they therefore disrupted the way that consumers could shop. By removing the bother of having to wait for shops to open, drive to a mall, find parking and then go shopping, the online system affords greater flexibility to consumers. With the Covid-19 lockdown in South Africa, many more consumers and thus retailers (eg; Checkers, Pick n Pay, Woolworths etc) have resorted to online and this could begin to erode Takealot's market share.

Takealot appears to have a good brand image amongst its client base, but with the increasing number of online stores in South Africa, their market share could be under pressure. It was perceived that with the ever more consumers moving to online shopping, there is a need to determine the extent to which Takealot's online experience satisfies its consumers or not, and if not what can be done to improve this. The study also aimed to evaluate what Takealot could do to remain at the forefront of customer satisfaction through the use of technology to enhance customer brand experience.

1.5 Research Goal

The purpose of this research was to identify whether customers are satisfied with Takealot and to identify what their perceptions are of Takealot. The purpose of this research is to determine whether Takealot will have failings in their online business model, as if issues go unaddressed they could lose market share and sales, to other online stores. If shortcomings are identified, recommendations will be made on how they could be remedied, to slow or stop these shortcomings from affecting Takealot.

1.6 Research Question

How is Takealot using technology to enhance the experience of their customers with the Takealot brand?

1.7 Research Objective

1.7.1 Objectives

The objectives were to determine:

1.7.1.1 Whether the consumers find the Takealot website easy to navigate.

1.7.1.2 Whether the customers are satisfied with the product range and pricing.

1.7.1.3 Whether the customers are satisfied with the online purchasing process on the website.

1.7.1.4 Whether any aspects of the Takealot website customers find displeasing.

1.7.1.5 Other online shopping experiences and why they are perceived to be better than Takealot.

1.7.2 Hypothesis

Due to the nature of this study being a qualitative study, there is no hypothesis, as hypotheses are reserved for quantitative studies. The lack of a hypothesis also removes any bias from the research study, from the onset (Hansen, 2012).

1.8 Conclusion

This chapter introduced the overall research, outlined the rationale behind the research, and stated the research problem, the research question as well as the research objectives.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This research explores the use of technology to enhance customer brand experience, in the context of this research, how Takealot has used technology to enhance customer brand experience. The primary research question that drives this research study, looks how Takealot is using technology to enhance the customer brand experience and what can be done to improve customer's online experience. The purpose of this research, was to identify the ways that Takealot is using technology to enhance customer experience with their brand and ultimately look at how they could increase their brand equity and determine how Takealot could improve their online experience. This research, sought to determine if Takealot has failings with their online-only business model and aimed to identify whether they could lose market share and sales to other, similar online stores, if such failings are not remedied. If shortcomings are identified, recommendations will be made, as to how they could be remedied, to prevent these shortcomings from adversely affecting Takealot. The paradigm of this research is *Interpretivism*. According to du Plooy-Cilliers (2014) *Interpretivism* is the study of human beings, and researchers in this paradigm believe that human beings cannot be studied in the same way as natural sciences, as human beings are constantly changing and the environment, in which they find themselves, is constantly influencing them. The research adopted a Phenomenological perspective, which aims to interpret and gain an understanding of human actions and then describe these, from the point of view for the person or group being studied, (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014).

The literature discussed below, provides both the conceptual and theoretical framework, on which this research study is based. The literature provides a synthesis of all previous literature related to the topic and each of the objectives of this research study. The literature review also introduces the two models on which this research will be based, these are the SERVQUAL Model and the Keller Model of Brand Equity. These models are discussed in-depth, before a connection is made between them, to illustrate how they will work with each other, to give meaning to this research study.

2.2 Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

The objectives of this research were to determine client perceptions of the Takealot website in terms of navigation, how easy it is to select a product and add it to the cart, whether the website offers enough information about the product, how easy it is to make a safe and secure payment, is the product is delivered timeously and in good order and whether clients have problems concerning returning items.

According to Gounaris, Dimitriadis and Stathakopoulos (2010) the internet allows for e-commerce businesses to provide customers with accurate, timely and inexpensive information, and as a result of this, customers can easily compare prices and choose their preferred supplier, or the supplier of the item with the lowest price. E-commerce stores such as Takealot must deliver superior service to their customers, if they want to maintain their competitive advantage and encourage repeat purchases (Gounaris, Dimitriadis and Stathakopoulos, 2010). Gounaris, Dimitriadis and Stathakopoulos (2010) states that poor service quality, accounts for 80 percent of all customer complaints about e-commerce stores. It is well known that online shopping represents an inherently different shopping environment, to that of a traditional brick and mortar store (Gounaris, Dimitriadis and Stathakopoulos, 2010).

According to Gounaris, Dimitriadis and Stathakopoulos (2010) the rapid growth and development of e-commerce and the challenge of building a sustainable competitive advantage in the e-commerce space ultimately lead online businesses to better understand how consumers perceive and react to the offerings of these e-businesses. Gounaris, Dimitriadis and Stathakopoulos (2010) goes on to say that constructs and concepts such as service quality and satisfaction and the effects of these need to be re-examined as the internet provides a different shopping environment and experience as compared to traditional brick-and-mortar stores.

According to Chang and Chen (2009) in traditional commerce, there are salespeople to help influence customer satisfaction in the traditional retail environment, however in e-commerce, these salespeople have been replaced by the customer interface of the website, which provides information pertaining to a product to prospective customers and helps to counter the disadvantages of impersonal shopping websites. Chang and Chen (2009) say that the quality of the customer interface can ultimately influence the customers purchases intentions, in addition to this is that customers have perceived beliefs about security, this is according to Chang and Chen (2009) possibly due to the fact that customers no longer interact with a salesperson and must rather rely on online payment methods. According to Chang and Chen (2009) customer interface quality and security on online stores positively effects customer satisfaction and ultimately leads to return business and growing a sustainable competitive advantage.

According to Jiang and Rosenbloom (2005) the quality of service delivered is a key component of the marketing of businesses and helps to create customer satisfaction. Jiang and Rosenbloom (2005) states that non-price competitive advantages, such as service quality, have become even more critical in retaining and attracting customers to your online business. Jiang and Rosenbloom (2005) go on to state that the primary thing that drives online customers back to a particular online store is a sense of loyalty that comes from an e-commerce business offering better service than their on-line competitors.

In the e-commerce industry, there are varying degrees of customer satisfaction that takes place as the various stages of the online shopping process and this satisfaction is ultimately asymmetric, in that during the initial shopping stage of searching for a product, the satisfaction is relatively high and then begins to decline rapidly as customers move through the purchasing funnel (Jiang and Rosenbloom, 2005). Jiang and Rosenbloom (2005) state 'customers have more positive price perceptions about e-retailers who are more reliable in fulfillment, and therefore with regards to reliability, e-retailers may need to price their product categories differently.' Jiang and Rosenbloom (2005) goes on to say that e-commerce businesses with better reliability of service may actually be able to charge a higher or lower price for a product.

Website quality reflects whether a website satisfies the customers needs (Shon, Moritz and Heuermann, 2016). Shon, Moritz and Heuermann (2016) states that the quality of the e-commerce store website will influence customers overall website satisfaction, Shon, Moritz and Heuermann (2016) also demonstrate that website quality has a stronger effect on customers, when customers use a mobile device instead of a desktop device. Generally a customer's satisfaction with e-commerce can be managed by giving customers an aesthetically pleasing, user-friendly and informative online shop (Shon, Moritz and Heuermann, 2016). E-commerce retailers should aim to adapt their stores content to mobile device requirements, as ultimately high website quality standards are crucial in order to satisfy the needs of all customers (Shon, Moritz and Heuermann, 2016).

According to Amoako, Dzogbenuku and Doe (2016) organizations and businesses that operate in emerging markets such as Ghana, or in the case of this research, South Africa, must aim for perfect service to win customers and maintain their competitive advantage. This can be achieved by improving the service quality offered to consumers. 'Service quality is described as the difference between customer service expectations and perceived service outcomes (Amoako, Dzogbenuku and Doe, 2016). If the perceived quality of the service is less than what was expected by the customer, this could result in customer dissatisfaction, and therefore delivering quality service means there needs to be some form of service compliance in line with the expectations of customers (Amoako, Dzogbenuku and Doe, 2016).

According to Amoako, Dzogbenuku and Doe (2016) the SERVQUAL model helps measure service quality by comparing the customer expectations with the actual service received. Amoako, Dzogbenuku and Doe (2016) defines customer satisfaction as "the consumers fulfillment response. It is a judgement that a product or service feature, or the product or service itself, provided a pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfillment, including under- or over fulfillment". According to Amoako, Dzogbenuku and Doe (2016) service quality has a greater effect on customers, as compared to service quality affecting brand loyalty and that the impact of service quality on customers is the strongest force and in turn customer satisfaction had a greater impact on brand loyalty as compared to service quality.

Rose, Clark, Samouel and Hair (2012) state that the increasing complexity of the e-commerce landscape linked with the importance of customer experience to business performance, ultimately means that e-retailers must deliver an optimum online experience for their customers. According to Rose, Clark, Samouel and Hair (2012) the skill and technical capabilities of a user no longer determines the experience on a website, and speed is no longer viewed as part of the judgement of experience. What has become more important to consumers recently is the degree of control and empowerment they have. This is important to note as control, influences the emotional feelings of customers when completing an online transaction. Another important aspect according to Rose, Clark, Samouel and Hair (2012) is the ease-of-use of a website, as well as the ability of a customer to customize his or her shopping preferences.

According to Chang and Chen (2008) the rapid growth and expansion of the internet has allowed businesses to offer their products and services online and this has ultimately undermined their ability to retain their customer base. Chang and Chen (2008) states that in e-commerce, it has become difficult to build customer loyalty, due in large to the low switching costs. According to Chang and Chen (2008), customer interface on the website functions as the salesperson that provides information to customers in e-commerce, and therefore Chang and Chen (2008) states that customer interface is one of the most important success factors for e-commerce.

According to Chang and Chen (2008) interface quality is critical in the establishment of e-loyalty, as convenience directly links and contributes to e-loyalty, in turn this implies that if a website is logical, easy to navigate and use, and allows for quick transaction, it is more than likely that customers will return. Chang and Chen (2008) further states that customization and interactivity both impact e-loyalty by delivering customer satisfaction.

Sureshchandar, Rajendran and Anantharaman (2002) say that at the centre of marketing theory and practice is service quality and customer satisfaction. In the increasingly competitive world the main driver of a sustainable competitive advantage lies in delivering high quality service. Sureshchandar, Rajendran and Anantharaman (2002) suggest that customer satisfaction is the precursor for customer retention and loyalty. The overall satisfaction of a customer, stems from all of the encounters or experiences with the organization. Sureshchandar, Rajendran and Anantharaman, (2002) state that there is a

high correlation between the service quality experienced by a customer and the customer satisfaction. According to Sureshchandar, Rajendran and Anantharaman, (2002) service quality and customer satisfaction are seen as two of the main goals of e-retailers to enhance business performance and grow their competitive advantage.

2.3 SERVQUAL

According to Mulder (2018) and Ravichandran, Mani, Kumar and Prabhakaran (2010) the Service Quality Model or more commonly known SERVQUAL model was initially developed in 1988, by three academic researchers (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry). It is a model that captures and measures various aspects of service quality experienced by consumers. According to Mulder (2018) SERVQUAL has become an important tool to investigate and analyse service quality, and if used correctly, can give organisations a larger competitive advantage.

The SERVQUAL model is used to expose shortcomings in the quality of service to consumers, and address these. SERVQUAL, according to Mulder (2018), is a gap analysis in that it compares the expected service quality and the actual service quality experienced.

These measurements are based on the customers perceptions, and is an external analysis of customer needs in relation to the quality of services that they experienced, when determining these customer needs, the gap between the expectations and the service experienced are taking into consideration.

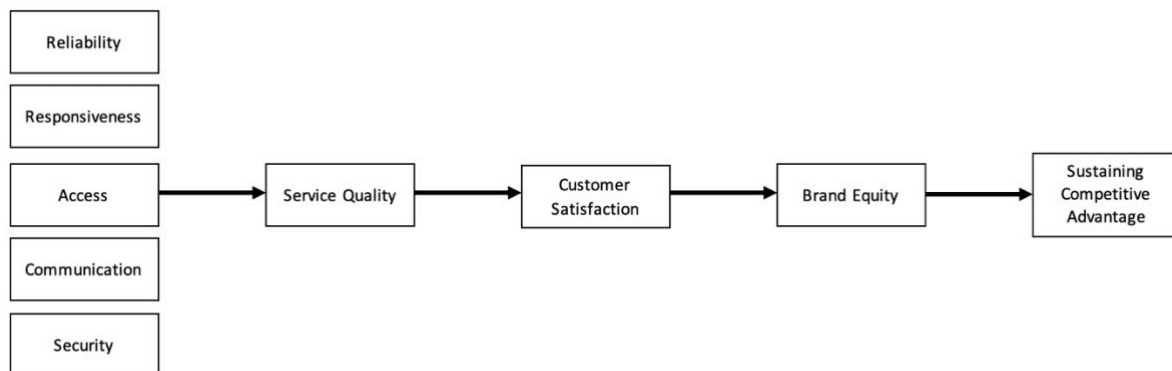


Figure 2.1 SERVQUAL Model with adaptations, based on the model used in Ravichandran, Mani, Kumar and Prabhakaran (2010).

According to Mulder (2018) 'The SERVQUAL model enables organisations to learn which factors play a role and how customer expectancy patterns are formed.' In this way, organisations can improve their service to customers, and get the best results from the improved service.

Ravichandran, Mani, Kumar and Prabhakaran (2010) say that the SERVQUAL model aims to evaluate 10 dimensions related to service delivery, however for this research study will only look at 5 of these dimensions, these being Reliability, which measures how accurate and honest the service received is. Responsiveness, which refers to how quickly a customers query is responded to, Access, determines how quickly and easily consumers can access your website as well as how accessible the departments are for communication, Communication, refers to clear, honest and prompt information being made available to customers throughout their shopping experience, and Security, which examines how trustworthy a brand is and in the case of this research how trustworthy the Takealot website is. This is indicated in the above Figure 2.1.

This model is relevant in terms of this research as it is one of the most used and referenced models when looking at service quality, in various industries.

Mulder, (2018) states that the communication between both the customer and organisation are of vital importance in connection with the quality of service rendered, therefore according to Ravichandran, Mani, Kumar and Prabhakaran (2010) SERVQUAL identifies 5 gaps that arise between the customers needs and the service offered. These 5 gaps, according to; Ravichandran, Mani, Kumar and Prabhakaran (2010) are; Knowledge Gap, Standards Gap, Delivery Gap, Communications Gap, and the Satisfaction Gap. This research will focus on the Standards, Delivery, Communications and Satisfaction Gaps.

2.4 Keller Model of Brand Equity

The second model that was considered as it is fundamental to this research is Kevin Keller's Model of Brand Equity. According to Bhasin (2019) and Keller, Apéria and Georgson (2012) brand equity is the most important cornerstone of branding. Bhasin (2019) states that there are many ways of increasing the brand equity of a brand, but one of the best ways to do this, is by making use of Keller's Brand Equity Model, or otherwise known as the CBBE (Customer based brand equity) model of Keller.

Bhasin (2019) says that overtime marketing has evolved and has become more customer focused, if businesses keep their customers happy with their offering, they will profit, however this can only be done by building a strong brand.

The CBBE model is a pyramid model which suggests ways to build your brand equity by understanding your customers and developing and implementing strategies that align accordingly (strategic brand management pp53-102). According to Bhasin (2019) if there is a connection between the consumer and the brand, it will result in a positive brand equity and has a better chance of attracting and keeping customers engaged with the brand.

The image below depicts Keller's Brand Equity model:

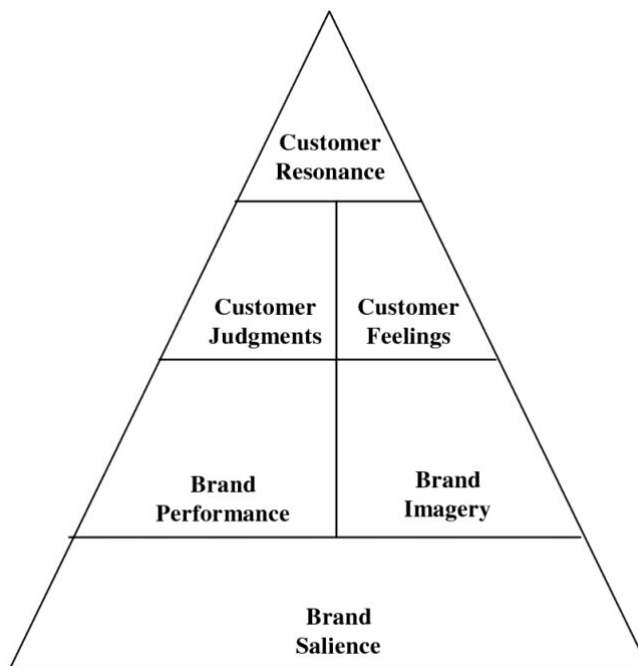


Figure 2.2 Keller Brand Equity Model (Murray, 2011)

The CBBE model has four levels that move from the bottom to the top (Bhasin, 2019). Brand Salience or commonly referred to as Brand Identity refers to the manner in which customers distinguish one brand from another or how the brand has defined itself in the eyes of the consumer (Bhasin, 2019). Level two refers to the customer understanding what the brand is and trying to know more about it. This level is divided into two sections, Brand Performance, which refers to the performance of the brand over time and the second section of brand imagery which refers to the image of the brand in the eyes of the consumer. Level 3 of the Keller CBBE model refers to the feelings a consumer may have for a brand, there are also 2 levels that make up the third level, these being customer judgements and customer feelings (Bhasin, 2019). The last level, level 4, of the CBBE model is Brand Resonance, which is the level where the customer and brand really connect. According to Bhasin (2019) very few brands reach level 4.

According to Bhasin (2019) the Keller Model of Brand Equity is an excellent model when evaluating brand equity as it details what stage a brand is at and what that brand can do to move up to the next level. The end result should always be brand resonance and ultimately a sustainable competitive advantage (Bhasin, 2019).

This model will be used in analysing the current brand equity of Takealot and will examine, how they can move up the model of Brand Equity, if they have not already reached the top, in order to sustain a competitive advantage and keep their place in the e-commerce market in South Africa. This model will be used as it aids brands in understanding where their current brand equity lies and how they can improve on this, so that they can retain and grow their customer base.

2.5 Conceptualisation of Key Concepts

2.5.1 SERVQUAL

According to The Marketing Study Guide, n.d., SERVQUAL is defined as a measure of service quality. It is a form of market research that splits service into five areas. The model is based on a survey of 22 questions, that asks customers about the expected service from a specific industry, and then asks customers questions about the service received from a specific firm within that industry.

In the case of this research it would aim to get an understanding of the service from the online shopping / e-commerce industry in South Africa and then move on to focus on Takealot.

2.5.2 Takealot

According to Takealot.com, (2020) takealot.com is South Africa's largest and most innovative e-commerce retailer, employing over 2000 employees and at the core of everything that Takealot does is their customer. Takealot are passionate about the customer experience that they offer and want this experience to begin from when customers begin shopping right until the product is in the hands of the consumer (Takealot.com, 2020).

Takealot is the main brand that this research will be conducting research on and will base all questions off of Takealot and their app and website.

2.5.3 Online Store

According to pcmag, n.d., an online store is defined as a website or app that offers products or services for sale, using the Internet.

The nature of Takealot being an online store, calls for this to be defined and explained as most people have a general idea and understanding of what an online store is, but they do not have a concrete definition.

2.5.4 Customers

According to (Bloomenthal, 2020) a customer is either an individual or a business, who purchase another individuals products or services.

Takealot customers were targeted for this research, as without the input of the customers, as this research cloud neither produce any findings nor conclusions and recommendations.

2.5.5 Keller Brand Equity Model

Keller's Brand Equity Model says that, building a Powerful Brand, (n.d.) , one needs to shape how customers think and feel about your brand, and if this thought and feeling is strong in customers it will encourage repeat purchases from the brand and will help in increasing the brand loyalty between a customer and a brand.

Keller's Brand Equity Model was used in this research to determine the brand equity that Takealot has with their consumers and to identify ways in which Takealot can sustain or grow their brand equity with their customers.

2.5.6 Brand Equity

According to Hayes, (2019) brand equity is defined as the added value that a brand generates from their product or service offering, when compared to a generic or another brand that offers similar products or services.

Brand equity is an important term in this research, because with a poor brand equity, Takealot will no longer remain as the leading e-commerce retailer in South Africa, and with the growing online competition in South Africa, Takealot needs to ensure that their brand equity with their customers will remain favourable.

2.5.7 Service Quality

According to What is service quality? definition and meaning, n.d., service quality is an assessment of how well the service quality expected by a customer meets the service quality experienced by the customer from a brand or business. Service quality is often reviewed by business to improve their service, identify problems and give better customer satisfaction.

This is an important term as this research is based on the service quality that Takealot offers and how customers perceive this service quality, and what can be done to rectify any issues that will be identified to help Takealot remain at the forefront of being the leading e-commerce store in South Africa.

2.6 Conclusion

The literature reviewed, has drawn upon two models, the SERVQUAL Model, developed by Zeithmal, Parasuraman and Berry in 1988 as well as the Keller Model of Brand Equity, which was developed by Kevin Keller in 1993. The research that is to be conducted will be primary research by applying the SERVQUAL and Brand Equity models to a questionnaire that will be sent out to customers that shop on Takealot, to assess the customers satisfaction with Takealot, and how this is impacting on Takealot's Brand Equity. The literature reviewed in has provided an overview of how service quality and various other factors can impact an e-commerce brand and how they should aim to avoid these shortcomings so as not to lose brand equity or lose their competitive advantage if they have one. The literature further provided an overview of what research has previously been conducted on this research topic, while there has been no research conducted on Takealot, there has been various research conducted on other e-commerce brands. This forms the basis of the primary research as this research will focus particularly on Takealot as an e-commerce store and how they can effectively manage any shortcomings in their service offerings. This study aims to evaluate what Takealot can do to remain at the forefront of customer satisfaction by using technology to enhance customer brand experience, and the service they provide to customers.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Research Paradigm

The research paradigm of the research is one of interpretivism. Du Plooy-Cilliers (2015:27) says that interpretivism is an appropriate paradigm in which to position research that aims to explore humanistic concepts and the study of societal associations. The research was positioned strongly in terms of exploring service quality and how it relates to Takealot growing their brand equity and sustaining their competitive advantage, by exploring how human behaviour has shaped the concepts associated with service quality and online shopping.

3.2 Research Approach and Design

The research design of this study is qualitative in nature and questionnaires and focus groups were incorporated into the design to gain a better understanding of people's perceptions of Takealot and the service quality associated with Takealot. The research made use of the SERVQUAL model (Mulder, 2018). Though SERVQUAL is quantitative in nature, it was adapted to be a qualitative research tool for this research. The second model that used in this research was the Keller Model of Brand Equity. This research was a non-experiential and an interactive research study based on textual analysis.

3.3 Population and Sampling

The population of a research study is defined by Pascoe (2014) as the group of people from which data is required in order to inform the research. For this research the population were customers who shop on the Takealot online store, of varying age ranges. By using these parameters in the population, the research gathered data from the participants in order to inform this research and to determine gaps in the Takealot offering compared to the theories and concepts discussed in the literature review. The accessible population was too large to quantify but based on feedback from municipal officials, it would be several hundred thousand. The population for this research comprised of people that the survey could be emailed to, primarily in the Durban area, specifically in Umhlanga, La Lucia and Ballito.

Pascoe (2014) says that the population size is not critical for qualitative research and that the process of sampling will allow for the accessible population to be identified. Due to the nature of the current Coronavirus Pandemic, the sample size of this study was limited to 20 survey participants. There was also an online focus group which of 5 people. According to Pascoe (2014) A sample is a subset of the population, which is generally considered to be representative of the entire population in quantitative research, this is a sample that shares characteristics with the larger population. If the sample is selected and representative of the entire population, then it can be assumed that the findings can be generalised (Pascoe, 2014). As this was qualitative research, the sample was not representative of the population and the sample size was adequate for the study as beyond 16 to 20 respondents one finds that saturation is reached where no new information comes to light (Pascoe, 2014). According to Pascoe (2014) probability sampling is suitable for qualitative research, as it removes any form of human bias from the sampling method. The sampling for this research was convenience and snowball sampling.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

This research was comprised both primary and secondary research.

3.4.1 Secondary Research

The research highlights the secondary research in the literature review, which has discussed the conceptual and theoretical foundations of this research. The secondary research has looked at the sources of data on the research topic and has looked at how service quality and brand equity have aided brands to grow and maintain their competitive advantage. The primary model that has shaped this research, SERVQUAL, is a seminal source and formed the basis of this research.

3.4.2 Primary Research

This research gathered primary research by using Takealot as the brand of focus. Due to this research study focusing on service quality and how it can be used to build brand equity to sustain competitive advantage, primary research was collected from customers who shop on the Takealot website in order to gain an understanding of what drives these consumers to either return and make another purchase or to determine what drives these consumers to never shop with Takealot again. The qualitative primary research collection consisted of a survey aimed at customers who have or who currently shop on Takealot.

Qualitative Survey

du Plooy-Cilliers and Cronje (2014) state that surveys are one of the most effective methods of gathering data from population groups. This research made use of a qualitative survey that contained open-ended questions. Due to the limitations imposed by the Coronavirus pandemic, the survey was in an email form that was distributed to the convenience sample of twenty participants, via email. Due to the time constraints, the survey was cross-sectional in design which allowed for survey responses to only be collected once. Prior to the distribution of the survey to the participants, the questions of the survey were piloted and

reviewed by a research supervisor to ensure that the questioning was clear, concise and in accordance with the design of the research.

Online research services such as Survey Monkey and Google Forms were used to develop a questionnaire, consisting of indirect questions which will dictate specific answers and a variety of open-ended questions to account for the conversational element often lacked within survey research and explore deeper perceptions related to service quality. The use of purposive sampling helped to ensure that the respondents fell within the population parameters of Umhlanga, Ballito and La Lucia.

Online Focus Group

While this research intended to make use of a focus group as another data collection tool of, between three and five participants on a virtual meeting platform, such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams, it was decided to not proceed with this focus group, as South Africa was experiencing load shedding during the data collection process and therefore it would've become quite difficult to plan and conduct the focus group with the varying load shedding schedules. This focus group was originally intended to consist of open-ended questions which would have allowed for the participants to have an open discussion about their responses to the questions posed to them. This meeting was going to be recorded and the responses were going to be typed up into a Word document.

Due to the fact that the research could not make use of an online focus group it was decided that the survey would serve as the primary and only means of primary research data collection for this research dissertation, while this is not ideal, as it does not allow for the triangulation of the data collection, the research was conducted in the midst of a global pandemic as well as during load shedding in South Africa, and therefore it was decided that it would not be able to conduct a focus group as the complications of this would have made it an unreliable data collection method.

Application of Collection Methods

The Data collection began by asking people who live in the Umhlanga, La Lucia, and Ballito areas if they would be willing to participate in the research study, this was then followed by creating a WhatsApp group of all the participants who had agreed to be a part of the research

study, the researcher then proceeded to collect the participants email addresses and emailed the participants the consent form that they needed to complete prior to answering the research survey. However, after doing this it was decided to create a consent form on Google forms for the participants to fill in to acknowledge that they agreed of their own free will to be a part of this study.

Following on from creating the consent form on Google Forms, the researcher began creating the online survey on Google Forms and ensured that the questions were acceptable and appropriate. Once the survey had been created the link was sent to the participants via the WhatsApp group, where the participants were asked to please complete the survey. As of the 12th of September 2020, 10 respondents have completed the survey, which amounts to exactly 50% of the respondents identified for this research study.

Google Forms was used as it is a free survey platform, that collates the data in an easy to read manner. Google Forms also allows for the researcher to monitor who has submitted their responses via the survey and can see this data collection happening in real time.

3.5 Data Analysis Methods

While making use of a qualitative methodology to analyse data related to service quality and how it impacts on building brand equity and creating a sustainable competitive advantage, the specific analysis method or approach is deductive in nature, as secondary data has already developed an existing theoretical framework and foundation, which will guide the data that will be obtained from the primary research. According to Bezuidenhout and Cronje (2014), deductive analysis is the process whereby the specific is analysed against the established theories and concepts, in order to determine to what extent, the primary data supports or agrees with the secondary findings.

3.5.1 Thematic Analysis

The data analysis methods of this research study will be a thematic analysis of the various themes that stem from the responses gathered during the data collection. The qualitative data will be collected, categorised into various themes that arise, and the common views of the respondents will be grouped together and considered for analysis (Bezuidenhout and Cronje, 2014).

Application of Analysis Method

Although the complete data set has not been collected as yet, when all the data has been collected from the participants of the research, this data will then be collated into various recurring themes that appear in data, this will then be analysed to determine if the data collected reflects and backs up the data that was presented in the secondary research that was collected. This will happen by means of a thematic analysis to analyse the regular themes that occur in the answers from the respondents. This is known as Thematic coding, whereby a process of data reduction took place, by means of identifying themes, making use of deductive coding drawn up from a list of themes that were known to the researcher that were derived from the literature review (Bezuidenhout and Cronje, 2014). A thematic analysis and deductive coding approach involves an immersive and close reading of the text. The development of the codes and the themes from the data collected is an iterative

process, in that you are constantly reading through the data and deciding on dominant trends and themes that appear in the data (Bezuidenhout and Cronje, 2014).

3.6 Ethical Considerations

This research will need to be cleared as being ethical by the Independent Institute of Education (IIE) upon meeting the various criteria set and outlined in the IIE Postgraduate Handbook.

Ethical considerations are an essential part of the research process and cannot be ignored at any point. These considerations ensure that the safety and confidentiality of all participants at all stages of the research study are maintained and that various stakeholders can make use of this research as a source (Louw, 2014).

The respondents of this research were required to give consent to their responses being used in this research, and they had to be assured about their confidentiality. Participants were informed that their participation in this research was completely voluntary and that they may withdraw from the research at any time. No under eighteens were surveyed and no mentally or otherwise disabled people were surveyed and no incarcerated people were surveyed either.

All of the responses collected from this research were stored securely on an offline, external hard drive with password protections to ensure the privacy of all respondents, with only the researcher and research supervisor had access to these.

All of the above helped to ensure that this research was trustworthy, credible, transferable, dependable and conformable.

3.7 Limitations

This research intended to make use of a focus group as well as a survey to gather the data. The focus group would allowed for a freer flow of interview and cross pollination and discussion. Due to Coronavirus Pandemic and the regulations on social distancing and the number of people allowed to gather in a venue, the research data collection had to be redirected to be an online survey consisting of open-ended interviews and an online focus group on Zoom. Due to the fact that the research data collection was not conducted at Takealot, there was no requirement of a gate-keepers letter. A further limitation to focus groups was that some of the participants were unable to access Zoom or Microsoft Teams due.

3.8 Conclusion

The research methodology has been introduced and determined in relation to the research design, which was established as being qualitative in nature and positioned in the interpretivism paradigm. The research population and sampling have been discussed in terms of the research study, and clear population parameters have been established, and a sampling method identified. The data collection methods were identified and discussed, data collection consisted of both primary and secondary research. The primary research was conducted using a survey, that contained both open and closed ended questions, the survey was designed on Google Forms and was emailed to the participants. The data analysis was a thematic review of the most common themes that appeared from the responses gathered from the survey and then comparing these to common trends that were presented in the secondary research. This research aimed to contribute to the already existing knowledge related to e-commerce stores in South Africa and the use of service quality to drive brand equity and grow or sustain a competitive advantage in a market segment that is rapidly growing. The ethical considerations relating to this research study have been discussed and methods to minimise any ethical risk have been discussed and described to protect the integrity of this research study. Possible limitations were identified for this research study and have been taken into consideration throughout the research methodology, to ensure that they are minimised to the best possible standards, this includes, removing any form of data collection that would require people to meet face to face during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Chapter four presents the findings of this research.

Chapter 4: Findings and Interpretations

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the data findings that was collected from customers who shop online at Takealot, through an online based survey. The data collection method that was implored for this research study, was appropriate and made for easy data collection during the COVID-19 Global Pandemic (Hedding et al., 2020). The data that was collected was analysed and interpreted and the findings of the research have been displayed in graphs, figures and word clouds to improve the understanding of this collected data. This research study was a small scale study, and therefore the findings cannot really be generalised to the wider population. This research collected valuable and insightful findings relating to Takealot and their use of technology to enhance the customer experience with the brand.

4.2 Respondent Profiles

The profile of respondents was used to document the number of participants in the interview schedule. In the case of this research study, there were 20 survey respondents in total, of which 7 respondents were male and 13 respondents were female, as depicted in the graph below.

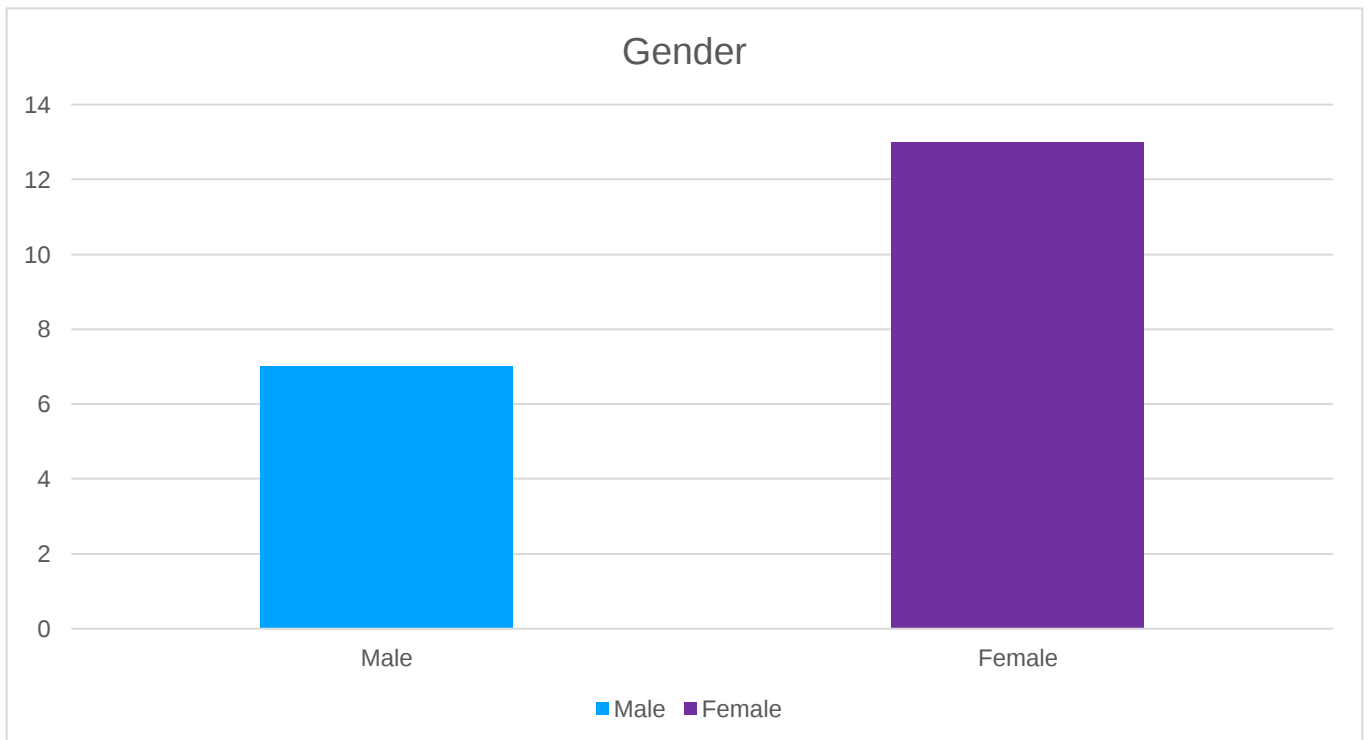


Figure 4.1 Graph depicting the gender representation of survey respondents

4.3 Presentation of Findings in Relation to Objectives

There were five research objectives established in chapter one, which were used to group survey questions together, from the data collected. This data has been visually represented in word clouds and figures (graphs) below.

4.4.1 Objective 1 –

4.4.1.1 Discussion of findings

Question 1: If you Shop on Takealot how do you perceive the Takealot brand?



Figure 4.2 Word cloud depicting how respondents perceive Takealot

Survey respondents were asked about their perceptions of the Takealot brand, the common descriptions that came across were that Takealot is a reliable company, with competitive prices, speedy delivery, efficient customer service, and overall easy to use. Along with these other words that were used to describe the Takealot brand included convenience, excellence, simplistically, enjoyable, and easy to use. Some respondents also associated Takealot with wither daily deals that they run. A handful of respondents had mentioned that they have noticed that Takealot sell a number of replica products, and do not clearly mark these, so you may inadvertently end up buying a replica product and not the real product.

Question 2: Why do you choose Takealot over other online stores?

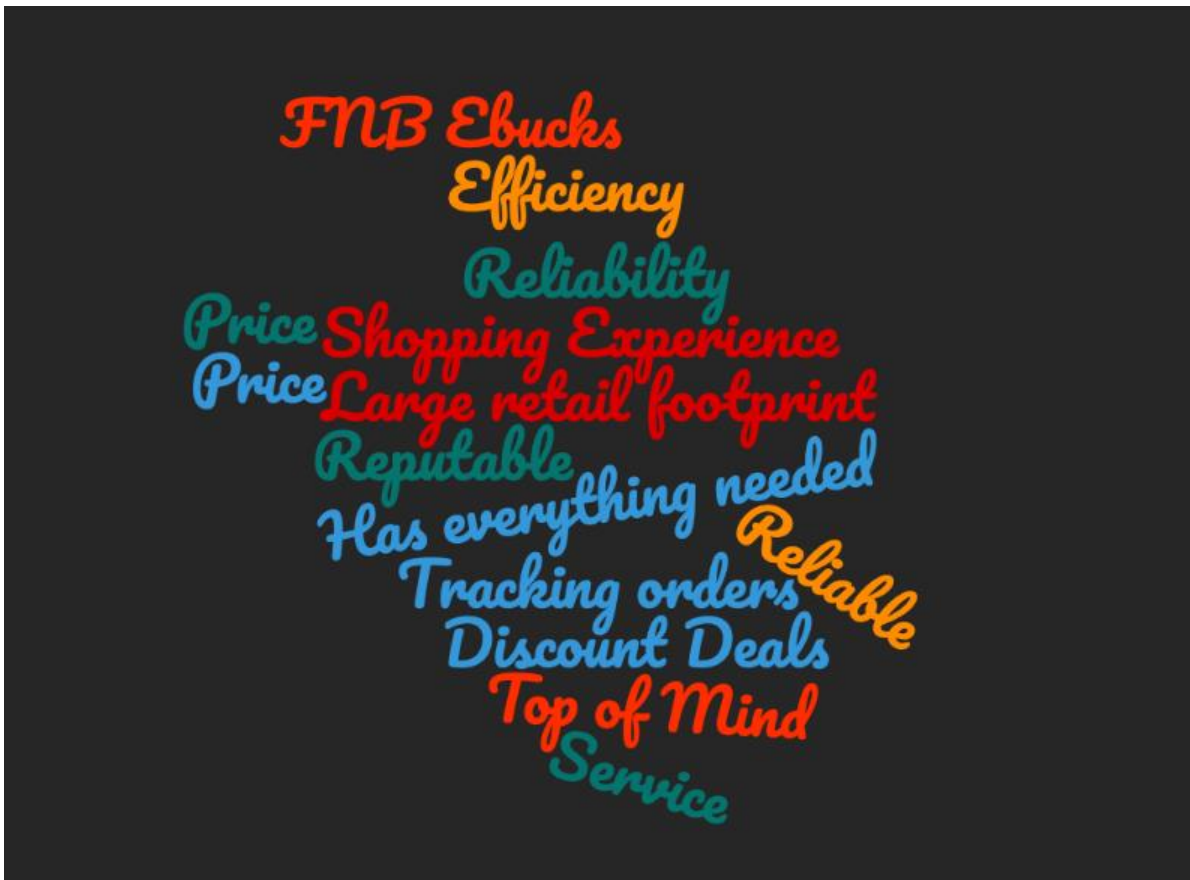


Figure 4.3 Word cloud depicting why respondents choose Takealot over other online stores

Survey respondents were asked why they as a consumer would choose Takealot over other online stores. Common responses collected from this question include that shoppers shop on Takealot because of the shopping experience offered, the quality of service they get, the reliability, reputability and efficiency of Takealot, the ability to track orders, the short delivery times and the discounts or deals offered by Takealot. Other respondents said that they shop on Takealot due to their partnership with FNB Ebucks, and some simply said that it is because Takealot is convenient and that they have everything that they are looking for, and that Takealot has a large footprint in South Africa and therefore is the first online store that comes to mind.

Question 3: Do you shop on the Takealot website or app or both?

Do you shop on the Takealot website or app or both?

20 responses

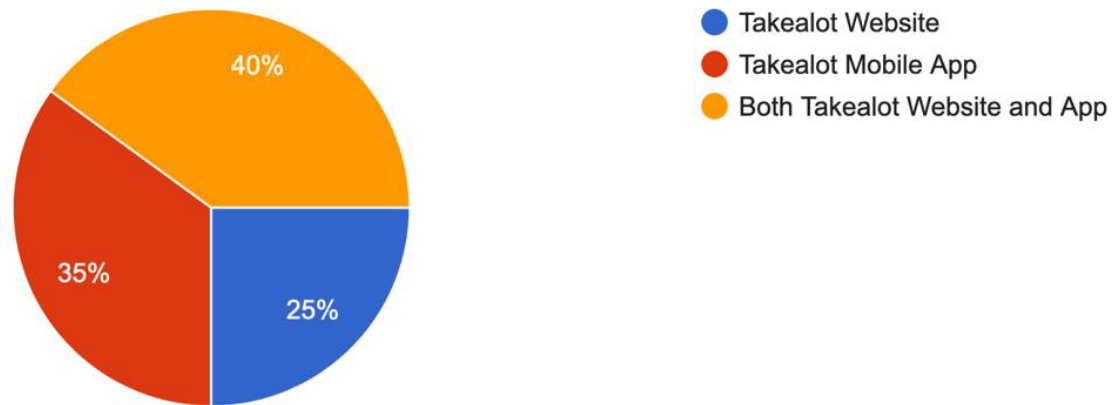


Figure 4.4 depicting whether respondents shop on the app or website

Survey respondents were asked which platform they normally buy from Takealot on, of the 20 respondents that the survey, 8 said that they shopped on both the app and website, 7 shop on only the Takealot app and 5 shop only on the Takealot website. This shows that people are aware that there is both a want and a need for an app and a website.

Question 4: Do you find the website to be user friendly and is it easy to find a product and make your selection and pay for your item/s?

Do you find the website to be user friendly and is it easy to find a product and make your selection and pay for you item/s?

20 responses

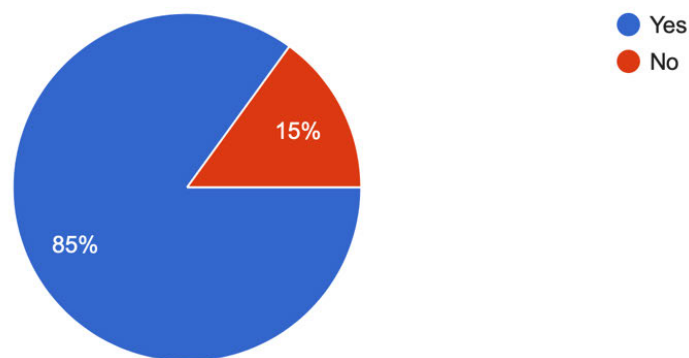


Figure 4.5 depicting whether respondents find the website to be user friendly

The survey respondents were asked if they find the website to be user friendly and if it is easy to find a product and make a selection and checkout, of the 20 respondents, 17 answered yes to the question and 3 answered no. This shows that while there were a number of respondents that said that the website was good, there is obviously place for improvement on the website given that not all respondents agreed.

Question 5: Do you find the app to be user friendly and is it easy to find a product and make your selection and pay for your item/s?

Do you find the app to be user friendly and is it easy to find a product and make your selection and pay for you item/s?

20 responses

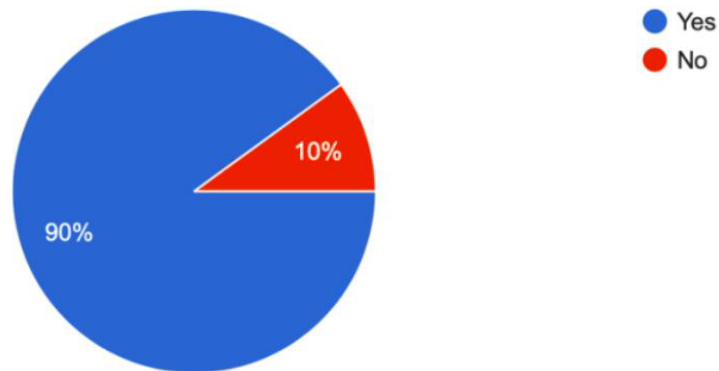


Figure 4.6 depicting whether respondents find the app to be user friendly

Survey respondents were asked, similarly to the previous question, whether they find the Takealot app to be user friendly and easier to use overall. Some 18 respondents said, yes the app is easier to use and only 2 respondents said that the app is not easy to use. This indicated that the app was easier to use and doesn't need as much improvement as the website does.

4.4.2 Objective 2 –

4.4.2.1 Discussion of findings

Question1: Why do you shop on Takealot?

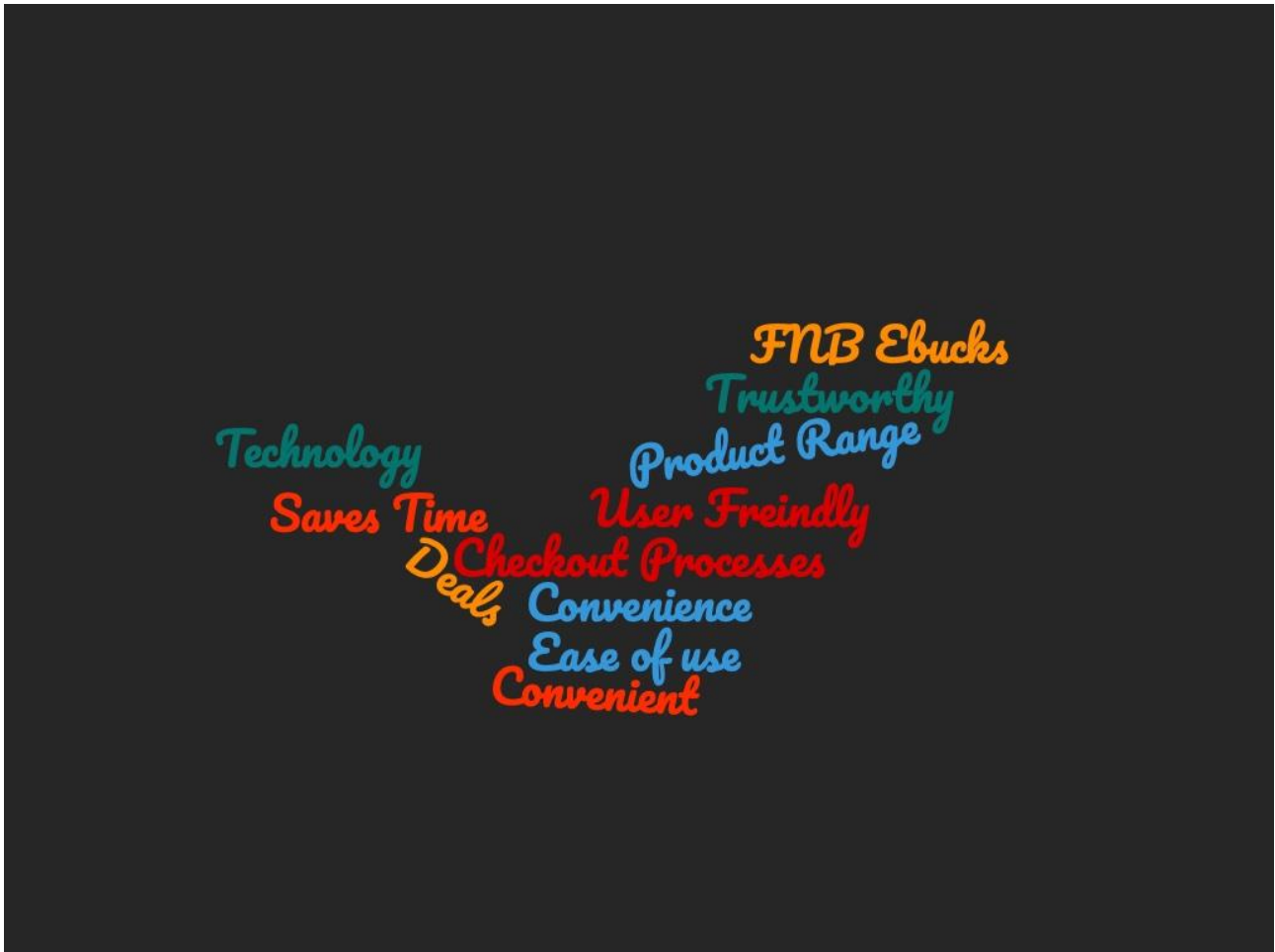


Figure 4.7 Word cloud showing respondents reasons for shopping on Takealot

Survey respondents were asked, why they shop on Takealot, and a number of interesting findings came up in these responses. Some of the terms used to describe why consumers preferred to shop on Takealot were, the ease of use, the simple checkout process, the trustworthiness and convenience of Takealot, shopping online on Takealot saves time, its user friendly and convenient. Some respondents even said that its easier and cheaper to buy technology on Takealot and that they can earn Ebucks.

Question 2: If you shop online, how often do you do so?

If you shop online how often do you shop online?

20 responses



Figure 4.8 showing how often respondents shop online

Respondents were asked, how often they shop online, the most common response was when the price is cheaper online, followed by less than a month, and then once a month, followed equally by once a week, once every two weeks, and lastly only when consumers have to buy something that they cannot find in a physical store.

Question 3: Are you happy with the product range available on the Takealot pages? i.e. can you find everything that you want, or do you want them to stock more items?

Are you happy with the product range available on the Takealot pages? i.e. can you find everything you want, or do you want them to stock more items?

20 responses



Figure 4.9 showing whether respondents are happy with the current Takealot product ranges

Respondents were asked if they are happy with the current product range available on Takealot, of the 20 respondents, 12 said yes they are happy, 6 said that they are happy, but feel that Takealot should widen their range, and 2 said no they are not happy, and that Takealot should be stocking more items.

Question 4: Please Elaborate on your answer above, what additional products?



Figure 4.10 Word cloud depicting what additional products respondents want Takealot to stock

In relation to the above question, survey respondents were asked, what additional products they would want Takealot to stock, some of the common responses received are items such as food stuffs, more sporting equipment, more stationery and art supplies, more pet care products and pet food and more natural and environmentally friendly products.

Question 5: Do you believe Takealot offers value for money / do you think that their prices are satisfactory? Why do you think so?

Do you believe Takealot offers value for money / do you think their prices are satisfactory?

20 responses

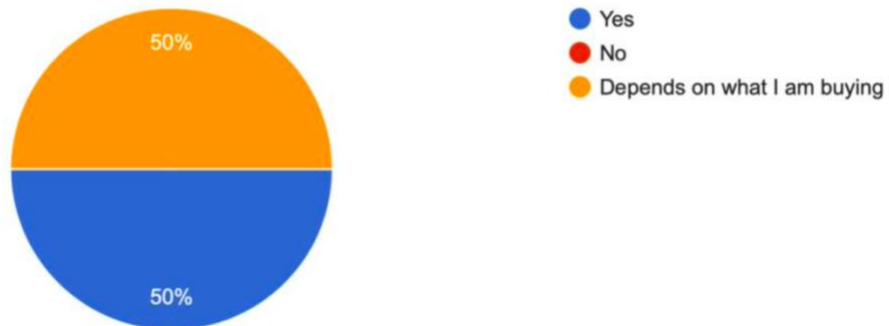


Figure 4.11 depicting whether respondents believe Takealot offers value for money



Figure 4.12 Word cloud depicting why respondents believe Takealot offers value for money

Ten of the survey respondents said that they did believe Takealot was offering value for money, while the other 10 respondents said that it depended on what they were shopping for, the determined whether they thought Takealot was offering value for money. When asked to elaborate on their answers, the three biggest trends that occurred were that Takealot often has cheaper products, due to the way that they bundle their items, and that Takealot also have better deals on everyday products and technology, as well as Takealot offering some of the best deals in South Africa.

4.4.3 Objective 3 –

4.4.3.1 Discussion of findings

Question 1: What method of delivery have you used with Takealot? Collection for collection point or delivery? Did this delivery meet your satisfaction? i.e box was not damaged etc.

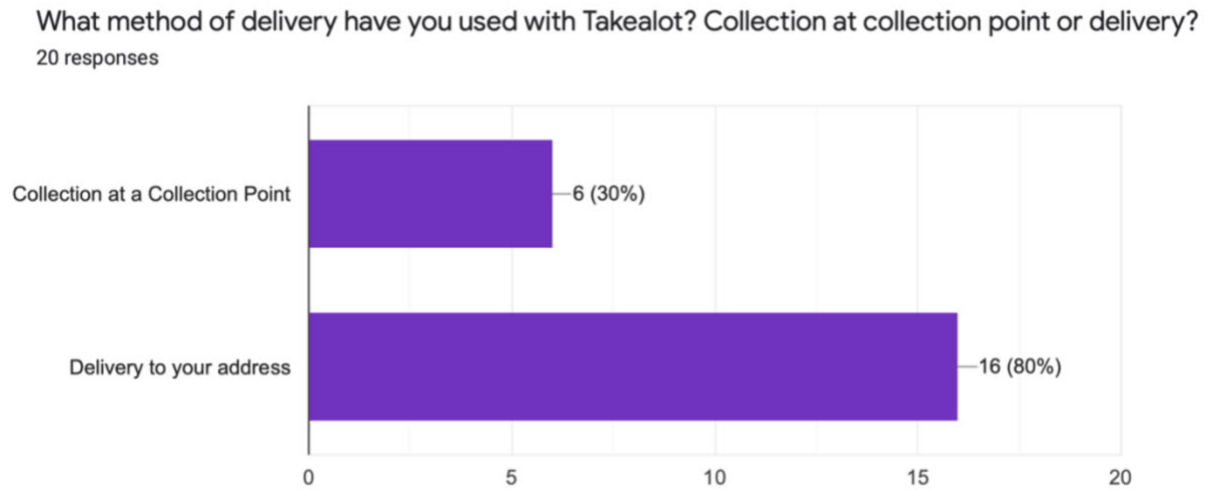


Figure 4.13 depicting what method/s of delivery respondents had made use of

Did your delivery from Takealot meet your satisfaction? i.e. the box was not damaged, staff were friendly and packaged arrived on the correct date.

20 responses

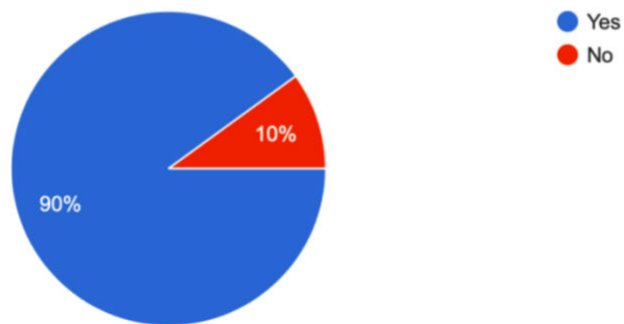


Figure 4.14 depicting whether respondents were satisfied with their delivery

A large portion of the respondents, prefer to have their orders delivered to their home addresses, while only a small portion of respondents, opted to collect their orders from Takealot collection offices around the country. It is also interesting to note that 2 respondents have had an issue with their deliveries from Takealot, and that most respondents were happy with the level of service that they received with their deliveries.

Question 2: Do you wait to only purchase when you can meet the R400 minimum order amount requirement for free delivery? If not why not?

Do you wait to only purchase when you can meet the R400 minimum order amount requirement for free delivery?

20 responses

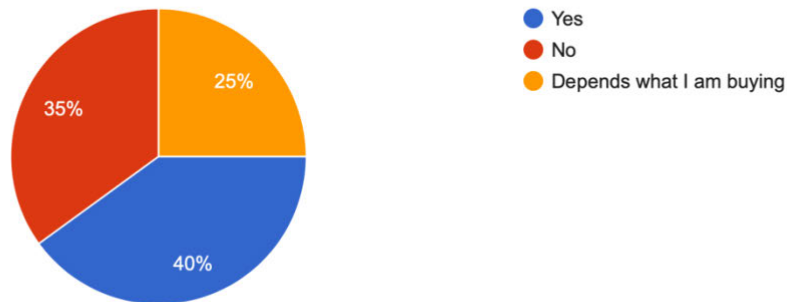


Figure 4.15 depicting whether or not respondents waited for the minimum R400 to purchase

Of the 20 survey respondents, 8 said that they wait until they have a cart of R400 or more before ordering from Takealot, to get free delivery on their order, 7 said no they do not wait, and would be happy to pay the delivery fee, and 5 respondents said that it would depend on what they were purchasing from Takealot if they would wait to meet the minimum order amount for free delivery.

4.4.4 Objective 4 –

4.4.4.1 Discussion of findings

Question 1: Do you find anything on the website or app displeasing from a user perspective?

Do you find anything on the website or app displeasing from a user perspective?
20 responses

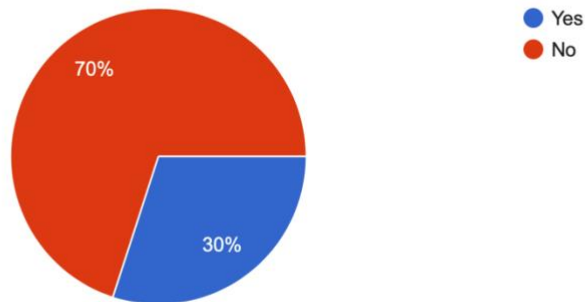


Figure 4.16 depicting the percentage of respondents who found user elements displeasing

Of the 20 respondents surveyed, 14 said that nothing on the Takealot website or the Takealot mobile is displeasing from a user perspective and only 6 said that they found something displeasing on the Takealot website or the Takealot mobile app.

Question 2: What do you think Takealot could change to make your online shopping experience better?



Figure 4.17 World cloud depicting what respondents believed could be done to better their online shopping experience

The survey respondents were asked what they feel Takealot could change on their website or app to make their shopping experience better, and the common trends that accrued were that they feel as though the website is cluttered, that the categories are confusing and that the search filters need to be updated so that irrelevant products can be excluded. Respondents also said that they would like better product descriptions / information and that they want a better out of stock / low stock tag on products.

4.4.5 Objective 5 –

4.4.5.1 Discussion of findings

Question 1: How do you rate the Takelaot online shopping experience compared to other online stores you have visited? 1 being poor and 10 being excellent.

How do you rate the overall Takealot online shopping experience compared to other online stores you have visited? 1 being poor and 10 being excellent.

20 responses

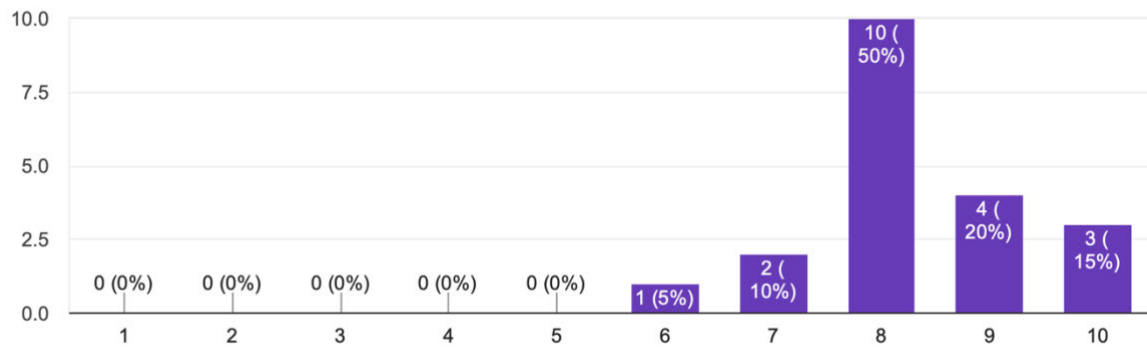


Figure 4.18 depicting how respondents rated Takealot

Survey respondents were asked how they would rate the Takealot online shopping experience, with a majority of respondents rating the experience an 8 out of 10, 4 respondents rated the experience a 9 out of 10, 3 respondents rated the experience a 10 out of 10 and 2 respondents rated it a 7 out of 10 and 1 respondent rated it a 6 out of 10 . This shows that overall people are satisfied with the quality and experience of online shopping with Takealot.

Question 2: Where / how do you think it could be improved?



Figure 4.19 Word cloud showing respondents views on where Takealot could improve

When asked the survey respondents stated the following as areas that Takealot can improve upon, common answers were, that Takealot should introduce more food items to their product lines, shorten delivery time, enhance their product descriptions, make general improvements to the website (i.e. search feature and categories) and ultimately overall enhance the user interface for their customers. Takealot should also take measures to easily identify replica items, so that it is easier for customers to know what is the real product and what isn't.

Question 3: Which other stores have very good online shopping set-ups and what is good about them?



Figure 4.20 Word cloud showing other online stores that are user friendly

The survey respondents were asked what other online stores they had shopped on that they had had a pleasant shopping experience, the following stores other online stores were listed most commonly, Rebel Fitness, Raru, Amazon, Wish, Woolworths, Mr Price, Zando, Asos, Zara, Cotton On. Clicks, Superbalist, Me & B, Loot, Faithful to Nature, and Sweetpeas Handmade. Most the reasons for these being listed as some of the most pleasant were factors such as short delivery times, easy to search for and find products, clear and concise categories and a user-friendly UI.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter presented and interpreted the research findings, obtained from the data collected in the research survey. Findings that relate to the research objectives and research problem were clearly explained and built on the findings already found in the literature review. Chapter five presents the conclusions and recommendations of the research.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations in relation to each research objective. The findings are presented under the five objectives and then draw on the literature presented and discussed in Chapter 2 and from the survey conducted in chapter four, which are followed by a conclusion and recommendation under each objective. In addition to this, suggestions for further research on the topic are considered with a closing comment to end off the chapter.

5.2 Research Objective 1: To determine whether the consumers find the Takealot website easy to navigate

5.2.1 Findings from Survey

The common descriptions that came across were that Takealot is a reliable company, with competitive prices, speedy delivery, efficient customer service, and that the Website is overall easy to use. Along with these, other words that were used to describe the Takealot brand included convenience, excellence, simplistically, enjoyable, and easy to use. Respondents also associated Takealot with the daily deals that they run, however a handful of respondents also associated Takealot with selling a number of replica products, and that these products are not clearly marked as being replica products, so you may inadvertently end up buying a replica product and not the real product.

Respondents were asked why they as a consumer would choose Takealot over other online stores, some common responses collected indicated that they shop on Takealot because of the shopping experience offered, the quality of service they get, the reliability, reputability and efficiency of Takealot, the ability to track orders, the short delivery times and the discounts or deals offered by Takealot. Other respondents said that they shop on Takealot due to their partnership with FNB Ebucks, and some simply said that it is because Takealot is convenient and that they have everything that they are looking for, as well as the fact that Takealot has a large footprint in South Africa and therefore is the first online store that comes to mind.

Respondents were asked which platform they normally buy from Takealot on, of the 20 respondents, 8 said that they shopped on both the app and website, 7 shop on only the Takealot app and 5 shop only on the Takealot website. This shows that people are aware that there is both a want and a need for an app and a website.

Respondents were asked whether they find the website to be user friendly and if it is easy to find a product and make a selection and checkout, of the 20 respondents, 17 answered yes to the question and 3 answered no. This shows that while there was a number of respondents that said that the website was good, however there is place for improvement on the website. Respondents were also asked, whether they find the Takealot app to be user friendly and easier to use overall, and it is interesting to note here, that 18 respondents said, yes the app is easier to use, and only 2 respondents said that the app is not easy to use. This indicated that the app was easier to use, and didn't need as much improvement as the website did.

5.2.2 Findings from Literature

Gounaris, Dimitriadis and Stathakopoulos (2010) argued that the internet has allowed for e-commerce businesses to easily provide their customers with accurate, timely and inexpensive information of products, and consumers can therefore easily compare prices, and information of products, before making a purchase. make a purchase. Gounaris, Dimitriadis and Stathakopoulos (2010) further argued that e-commerce businesses must deliver superior service to their customers if they want to maintain their competitive advantage, and encourage repeat purchases. Shon, Moritz and Heuermann (2016) state that website quality reflects whether a website satisfies the customers' needs and further states that the website quality will ultimately influence a customers overall shopping experience. Shon, Moritz and Heuermann (2016) add that customer satisfaction can be managed by giving them a website that is aesthetically pleasing, user friendly and informative. Rose, Clark, Samouel and Hair (2012) added to this and said that the skills of the users no longer play a role in determining the experience of users on a website, and that what has become more important is the amount of control and empowerment that customers have on the website. According to Chang and Chen (2008), customer interface on a website or app functions as the salesperson that provides information to customers in e-commerce and therefore Chang and Chen (2008) find that customer interface is one of the most important success factors for e-commerce to succeed.

5.2.3 Conclusion

It is clear that from the findings of the survey, that the common perceptions of Takealot is that it is a reliable company, with competitive prices, efficient customer service and that the website is easy to use. The survey respondents further indicated that they choose Takealot over other online store as the shopping experience and quality of service offered by Takealot. Both of these findings from the survey are backed up by the findings from the literature which found that e-commerce businesses must be able to provide accurate, timely and inexpensive information to consumers before they make a choice and is backed up further by the literature finding that e-commerce must deliver superior service to maintain their competitive advantages. The survey further found that website was largely user friendly when it came to searching for a product and filtering for that product, however concerns were raised about replica products being sold on Takealot without clear warning, and this something that the literature discussed to say that e-commerce websites must give accurate information and descriptions of products being sold, as it builds trust and will help grow the competitive advantage of the e-commerce store, in this case Takealot.

5.2.4 Recommendations

A recommendation to be made here is that Takealot should take active steps to clearly mark out products that are not the original products, to help customers avoid buying replica products or parallel imports. Takealot should also take active steps to better their filters to ensure that when a customer filters for a product they are only shown relevant products, and not all products within a category.

5.3 Research Objective 2: To determine whether the customers are satisfied with the product range and pricing

5.3.1 Findings from Survey

Survey respondents were asked, why they shop on Takealot, and a number of interesting findings came up in these responses. Some of the terms used to describe why consumers preferred to shop on Takealot were, the ease of use, the simple checkout process, the trustworthiness and convenience of Takealot, shopping online on Takealot saves time, its user friendly and convenient. Some respondents even said that its easier and cheaper to buy technology on Takealot, and that they can earn Ebucks.

Respondents were asked, how often they shop online, the most common response was when the price is cheaper online, followed by less than a month, and then once a month, followed equally by once a week, once every two weeks, and lastly only when consumers have to buy something that they cannot find in a physical store.

Respondents were asked if they are happy with the current product range available on Takealot, of the 20 respondents, 12 said yes they are happy, 6 said that they are happy, but feel that Takealot should widen their range, and 2 said no they are not happy, and that Takealot should be stocking more items.

In relation to the above question, survey respondents were asked, what additional products they would want Takealot to stock, some of the common responses received are items such as food stuffs, more sporting equipment, more stationery and art supplies, more pet care products and pet food and more natural and environmentally friendly products.

10 of the survey respondents said that they did believe Takealot was offering value for money, while the other 10 respondents said that it depended on what they were shopping for, the determined whether they thought Takealot was offering value for money. When asked to elaborate on their answers, the three biggest trends that occurred were that Takealot often has cheaper products, due to the way that they bundle their items, and that Takealot also have better deals on everyday products and technology, as well as Takealot offering some of the best deals in South Africa.

5.3.2 Findings from Literature

According to Chang and Chen (2009) in a traditional commerce setting, salespeople ultimately help influence a consumers decision, however in e-commerce these sales people have been replaced by websites, which needs to provide the information pertaining to products, which needs to ultimately help make the consumer make the decision. Chang and Chen (2009) further argued that the quality of customer facing interfaces (such as websites and apps) can and will ultimately influence whether a customer makes a purchase or not, or if they will even look for a product on the e-commerce store. Chang and Chen (2009) further point out that it is important to ensure that all product information and descriptions are easily accessible on websites and apps of e-commerce stores, or customers may view the process as being to intricate and therefore opt to not shop.

5.3.3 Conclusion

The survey found that customers view Takealot as a safe, secure, trustworthy and convenient online store. The survey findings indicate that customers are happy with the product offerings of Takealot, however some survey respondents said that they felt as though Takealot could expand their product offerings slightly. When asked what products they would like to see Takealot expanding into categories of food stuffs, better sporting equipment and stationery as well as pet supplies. Survey respondents also believed that Takealot did offer good value for money, by offering products for cheaper, and by having their daily deals on their website and app. The findings ion the literature concur with this to say that salespeople in traditional brick and mortar stores have been replaced with the websites of e-commerce stores, and that these websites need to look of a high quality as this will affect whether or not a consumer makes a purchase, and the literature further makes note of websites offering accurate product descriptions and making this easy to access.

5.3.4 Recommendations

A recommendation to Takealot would be to look at what product categories they can expand into and how this can be done to further satisfy their consumers changing wants and needs. Another recommendation for Takealot is to look into how they can further offer better value for their customers to retain them and bring new customers on board that have previously

not shopped with Takealot, this could be achieved by expanding their product ranges into categories that they currently do not stock, or have limited items on, this will further allow Takealot to grow their competitive advantage over other online stores in South Africa.

5.4 Research Objective 3: To determine whether the customers are satisfied with the online purchasing process on the website.

5.4.1 Findings from Survey

A large portion of the respondents, prefer to have their orders delivered to their home addresses, while only a small portion of respondents, opted to collect their orders from Takealot collection offices around the country. It is also interesting to note that 2 respondents have had an issue with their deliveries from Takealot, and that most respondents were happy with the level of service that they received with their deliveries.

Of the 20 survey respondents, 8 said that they wait until they have a cart of R400 or more before ordering from Takealot, to get free delivery on their order, 7 said no they do not wait, and would be happy to pay the delivery fee, and 5 respondents said that it would depend on what they were purchasing from Takealot if they would wait to meet the minimum order amount for free delivery.

5.4.2 Findings from Literature

Jiang and Rosenbloom (2005) state that in the initial shopping stage of searching for a product, customer satisfaction is generally relatively high, and begins to decline rapidly as customers begin to move through the purchasing funnel. Jaing and Rosenbloom (2005) go on to state that customers have a more positive price perception about e-retailers, who are more reliable in fulfilment, and therefore with regards to reliability, e-retailers may have to price their product categories differently.

5.4.3 Conclusion

The survey responses indicate that most people are generally quite happy with the quality of delivery and the manner in which the deliveries take place. The survey also found that

the minimum order amount of R400 does not really influence when they make a purchase, and that it rather depended on what they were buying to determine if they would wait for the minimum order fee. The literature found that customers generally have a more positive price perception about retailers and that customers found that e-retailers were more reliable in the fulfilment of their wants and needs and therefore for e-retailers to remain reliable, they may have to price their products differently to those of a traditional shopping store

5.4.4 Recommendations

I would recommend that Takealot consider dropping the minimum order fee from R400 to R250, this could get more customers to order in smaller batches, instead of having customers wait for their carts to build up to R400 before placing an order, or an alternative to this recommendation is to review the pricing on certain products that Takealot sell, as sometimes there is no big difference in price on Takealot when compared to a traditional store, and this could deter customers from shopping on Takealot.

5.5 Research Objective 4: To determine whether any aspects of the Takealot website customers find displeasing.

5.5.1 Findings from Survey

Of the 20 respondents surveyed, 14 said that nothing on the Takealot website or the Takealot mobile app is displeasing from a user perspective and only 6 said that they found something displeasing on the Takealot website or the Takealot mobile app.

The survey respondents were asked what they feel Takealot could change on their website or app to make their shopping experience better, and the common trends that accrued were that they feel as though the website is cluttered, that the categories are confusing and that the search filters need to be updated so that irrelevant products can be excluded. Respondents also said that they would like better product descriptions / information and that they want a better out of stock / low stock tag on products.

5.5.2 Findings from Literature

Chang and Chen (2008) state that interface quality is critical in the establishment of e-loyalty, as convenience directly links and contributes to e-loyalty. This implies that if a website is logical, easy to navigate and use and allows for quick transaction, it is more than likely that customers will return for repeat business (Chang and Chen, 2008). Rose, Clark, Samouel and Hair (2012) backed this up by saying that the ease-of-use of a website and the ability of customers to be able to customise their shopping preferences will directly impact on a customer's satisfaction with the website.

5.5.3 Conclusion

A large majority of the survey respondents have said that they find no displeasing elements with the Takealot website and the mobile app. When asked about what they believe Takealot could change to make the website or app more appealing, survey respondents mentioned things such as the website landing page feels cluttered, some of the categories are confusing and the filters do not always work, and that product descriptions need to be written better and that a banner to show low or no stock on the product thumbnail before clicking

into the product description. The findings of the literature concur with the findings of the survey, in saying that the interface of the website is critical in the establishment of e-loyalty, and that if the website is easy to use and navigate it is more likely that customers will return for repeat business. The literature also found that if the customer facing interfaces are easy to use, it will directly impact on the customers satisfaction.

5.5.4 Recommendations

Possible recommendations to make to Takealot include adding, out of stock or low stock banners to products, and to make their website pages less cluttered and make product categories less confusing and easier to sort through.

5.6 Research Objective 5: To determine other online shopping experience, and why they are perceived to be better than Takealot.

5.6.1 Findings from Survey

Survey respondents were asked how they would rate the Takealot online shopping experience, with a majority of respondents rating the experience an 8 out of 10, 4 respondents rated the experience a 9 out of 10, 3 respondents rated the experience a 10 out of 10 and 2 respondents rated it a 7 out of 10 and 1 respondent rated it a 6 out of 10. This shows that overall people are satisfied with the quality and experience of online shopping with Takealot.

When asked the survey respondents stated the following as areas that Takealot can improve upon, common answers were, that Takealot should introduce more food items to their product lines, shorten delivery time, enhance their product descriptions, make general improvements to the website (i.e. search feature and categories) and ultimately overall enhance the user interface for their customers. Takealot should also take measures to easily identify replica items, so that it is easier for customers to know what is the real product and what isn't.

The survey respondents were asked what other online stores they had shopped on that they had had a pleasant shopping experience, the following stores other online stores were listed most commonly, Rebel Fitness, Raru, Amazon, Wish, Woolworths, Mr Price, Zando, Asos, Zara, Cotton On. Clicks, Superbalist, Me & B, Loot, Faithful to Nature, and Sweetpeas Handmade. Most the reasons for these being listed as some of the most pleasant were factors such as short delivery times, easy to search for and find products, clear and concise categories and a user-friendly UI.

5.6.2 Findings from Literature

Gounaris, Dimitriadis and Stathakopoulos (2010) state that the rapid growth and development of e-commerce, linked with the challenge of building a sustainable competitive advantage in e-commerce had led many online businesses to learn to better understand how consumers perceive and react to the offerings of these e-businesses. Gounaris, Dimitriadis and Stathakopoulos (2010) go on to say that service quality and satisfaction and

the effects of these on consumers and businesses alike need to be re-examined as the internet has provided a different shopping environment and experience as compared to traditional brick and mortar stores. Chang and Chen (2008) say that in e-commerce it has become difficult to build customer loyalty and this is due, in part, to the low switching costs of e-commerce shopping.

5.6.3 Conclusion

A majority of respondents rated Takealot overall an eight out of 10, and shows that customers are largely satisfied with Takealot and the service they offer. Survey respondents are also well aware of other e-retailers, most of these being clothing retailers, and listed reasons such as easy to search and find what is being looked for, webpages are clear and concise and they have a user-friendly UI. The awareness of other e-retailers means that customers won't be hesitant to take their business to other retailers, and Chang and Chen (2008) concur with this when they say that the switching costs of in e-commerce are relatively low.

5.6.4 Recommendations

Final recommendations for Takealot include that Takealot needs to introduce more food products, shorten their delivery time by building more warehouses in more provinces, enhance or better describe products and make general improvements to their website and app. Takealot need to immediately take steps to warn customers of replica products or parallel imports.

5.7 Suggestions for Further Research

It is suggested that in order to create a more accurate representation of the views and feelings of Takealot consumers that a larger research study should be conducted, that will consist of a larger number of respondents. It is suggested that studies are conducted on how Takealot got it right to be one of the biggest and most well known online retailers in South Africa, as well as research on the broader e-commerce market can be suggested. This will help grow the knowledge pool of how e-commerce or online retailers managed to get it right and be successful in a third world country, such as South Africa.

5.8 Concluding Remarks

This research study research Takealot's use of technology to enhance customer experience with the brand. The study aimed to discover the ways in which Takealot are making use of technology to enhance the customer brand experience with the brand, as an e-commerce retailer in South Africa. The study was based on an interpretivist outlook throughout the research. Qualitative data was collected through an online survey and a literature review (Chapter 2) was conducted to provide an academic foundation of data to the research study. All the data that was collected was analysed by making use of a thematic analysis.

It is through the findings evident that Takealot has successfully leveraged the use of technology to enhance their customers brand experience. Key literature showed other examples from around the world, of how technology can be used to enhance the customer experience with e-commerce retailers. Drawing on the conclusions and recommendations made, if these recommendations are implemented, will help Takealot remain at the forefront of an ever growing e-commerce market in South Africa, and achieve even greater success.

This study found that ultimately Takealot is succeeding in terms of Service Quality offered to their customers, and ultimately customers are satisfied with the offerings of Takealot. In the minds of customers, it would appear from the findings that Takealot has managed to reach the top of the Keller Brand Equity Prism, i.e. Takealot has reached customer resonance in the brand equity prism, which has helped Takealot build a competitive advantage. If Takealot implement the recommendations made by this research and monitor the implementation, they are likely to improve client, online service experience, out-perform competitors in this regard and Takealot are likely to benefit from implementation of the recommendations.

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Appendix A: Ethical Clearance



31 July 2020

Student name: Frederik van Huyssteen

Student number: [REDACTED]

Campus: VEGA - Durban

Re: Approval of BCOM Honours in Strategic Brand Management Proposal and Ethics Clearance

HONOURS/PGDIP ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER

Your research proposal and the ethical implications of your proposed research topic were reviewed by your supervisor and the campus research panel, a subcommittee of The Independent Institute of Education's Research and Postgraduate Studies Committee.

Your research proposal posed no significant ethical concerns and your supporting documents and instruments are in order to proceed. We hereby provide you with permission to proceed with your research.

In the event of you deciding to change your research methodology in any way, kindly consult your supervisor to ensure all ethical considerations are adhered to and pose no risk to any participant or party involved. A revised ethical clearance letter will be issued.

We wish you all the best with your research!

GENERAL CONDITIONS TO BE FULFILLED IN RELATION TO RESEARCH

Permission is granted to proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met and may be withdrawn should any of these conditions be flouted.

Please note: The panel has not considered the merits, accuracy or ethical soundness of the research. The only merits examined are the use of The IIE as a sample.

Permission is granted subject to the following conditions:

1. You will need to obtain informed consent in writing from all of the participants in his/ her sample if the study is not anonymous.
2. You may only use the data collected for research purposes and in no other way.
3. Photographs of human subjects may only be taken if relevant to the research, informed consent was obtained, and even with informed consent, the photographs may not be published on any online platforms.
4. You are responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.
5. No names or identifying information of participants may be used within the research and the research must be voluntary. Minors may not participate and nor may people who have been committed to an institution.
6. Please make it clear that the information will not be used punitively in any way and participants may in no way be counselled/advised based on this.
7. Research must be conducted in the public domain.

ARBoZas 04/08/20

Supervisor: **A R Bozas**

Campus Postgraduate Co-ordinator (CPC): **Carolanda Du Toit**

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Takealot and the use of technology to enhance customer experience with the brand.

This research is being conducted by myself, Frederik van Huyssteen, under the supervision of Alec Bozas, towards completion of my Bcom Honours degree in Strategic Brand Management. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

**Required*

1. What is your name? *

2. I have consented to participate in this research study, and I will aim to be as honest as possible in my answers. *

Mark only one oval.

☐ Yes

☐ No

3. If you shop on Takealot, how do you perceive the Takealot Brand as a whole? i.e. Do you think they offer value for money etc. *

4. Why would you choose Takealot over other online stores? *

5. Do you shop on the Takealot website or app or both? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Takealot Website
- ☐ Takealot Mobile App
- ☐ Both Takealot Website and App

6. Do you find the website to be user friendly and is it easy to find a product and make your selection and pay for you item/s? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

7. Do you find the app to be user friendly and is it easy to find a product and make your selection and pay for you item/s? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

8. Why do you shop on online at Takealot? *

9. If you shop online how often do you shop online? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Less than once a month (i.e. every 2nd or third month)
- ☐ Once a month
- ☐ Once a week
- ☐ Once every 2 week
- ☐ Only when I have to buy something that I cannot find in a physical store
- ☐ When the price is cheaper online than in store

10. Are you happy with the product range available on the Takealot pages? i.e. can you find everything you want, or do you want them to stock more items? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes I am happy with the range they offer.
- ☐ No I am not happy. I think that they need to offer more products
- ☐ Yes I am happy, however I would like them to stock more items.

11. Please elaborate on your answer above, what additional products would you like Takealot stock to make your experience better?

12. Do you believe Takealot offers value for money / do you think their prices are satisfactory?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Depends on what I am buying

13. Please elaborate on your answer above. Why do you think so? *

14. What method of delivery have you used with Takealot? Collection at collection point or delivery? *

Tick all that apply.

- ☐ Collection at a Collection Point
☐ Delivery to your address

15. Did your delivery from Takealot meet your satisfaction? i.e. the box was not damaged, staff were friendly and packaged arrived on the correct date. *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

16. Do you wait to only purchase when you can meet the R400 minimum order amount requirement for free delivery? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Depends what I am buying

17. Do you find anything on the website or app displeasing from a user perspective? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

18. If you answered YES to the above question, what elements do you find displeasing?

19. What can Takealot change to make your online shopping experience better? *

20. How do you rate the overall Takealot online shopping experience compared to other online stores you have visited? 1 being poor and 10 being excellent. *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Poor	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	Excellent

21. Where / how do you think it could be improved? *

22. Which other online stores have you shopped on and had good online shopping experience / set-ups with and what is good about them / these experiences? *

Appendix C: Consent Form



CONSENT FORM TEMPLATE

Explanatory information sheet and consent form for participants
To whom it may concern, My name is Frederik Van Huyssten and I am a student at [VEGA: School of Brand Leadership]. I am currently conducting research under the supervision of Alec Bozas about Takealot and their use of service quality to enhance brand equity and build or sustain their competitive advantage. I hope that this research will enhance our understanding of how service quality can impact brand equity and how this can ultimately either hinder or grow a brands competitive advantage. I would like to invite you to participate in my study. In order to explain to you what your participation in my study will involve, I have formulated questions that I will try to fully answer so that you can make an informed decision about whether or not to participate. If you have any additional questions that you feel are not addressed or explained in this information sheet, please do not hesitate to ask me for more information. Once you have read and understood all the information contained in this sheet and are willing to participate, please complete and sign the consent form below.
What will I be doing if I participate in your study?
I would like to invite you to participate in this research because I believe that your input and contributions are important in a growing industry in South Africa. If you decide to participate in this research, I would like to have you participate in a survey of approximately 20 questions for this research study. You can decide whether or not to participate in this research. If you decide to participate, you can choose to withdraw at any time or to decide not to answer particular interview questions.
Are there any risks/ or discomforts involved in participating in this study?
Whether or not you decide to participate in this research, there will be no negative impact on you. There are no direct risks or benefits to you if you participate in this study. If you find at any stage that you are not comfortable with the line of questioning, you may withdraw or refrain from participating.
Do I have to participate in the study?
• Your inclusion in this study is completely voluntary; • If you do not wish to participate in this study, you have every right not to do so; • Even if you agree to participate in this study, you may withdraw at any time without having to provide an explanation for your decision.
Will my identity be protected?

I promise to protect your identity. I will not use your name in any research summaries to come out of this research and I will also make sure that any other details are disguised so that nobody will be able to identify you. I would like to ask your permission to record the interviews, but only my supervisor, I and possibly a professional transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings. Nobody else, including anybody at **VEGA: School of Brand Leadership**, will have access to your interview information. I would like to use quotes when I discuss the findings of the research, but I will not use any recognisable information in these quotes that can be linked to you.

What will happen to the information that participants provide?

Once I have finished all interviews, I will write summaries to be included in my research report, which is a requirement to complete my **BCOM Honours in Strategic Brand Management degree**. You may ask me to send you a summary of the research if you are interested in the final outcome of the study.

What happens if I have more questions about the study?

Please feel free to contact me or my supervisor should you have any questions or concerns about this research, or if there is anything you need to know before you decide whether or not to participate.

You should not agree to participate unless you are completely comfortable with the procedures followed.

My contact details are as follows:

Frederik van Huyssteen

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The contact details of my supervisor are as follows:

Alec Bozas

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Consent form for participants	
I, _____, agree to participate in the research conducted by Frederik van Huyssteen about Takealot and their use of service quality to enhance brand equity and build or sustain their competitive advantage. This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that:	
• I agree to be interviewed for this research.	
• My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private.	
• My participation in this research is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. There will be no repercussions should I choose to withdraw from the research.	
• I may choose not to answer any of the questions that are asked during the research interview.	
• I may be quoted directly when the research is published, but my identity will be protected.	
Signature	Date

Make the consent form below legible

Consent Form – Frederik van Huyssteen

To whom it may concern,

My name is Frederik Van Huyssteen and I am a student at VEGA: School of Brand Leadership. I am conducting research under the supervision of Alec Bozas about Takealot and how their online store and app store enhance customer experience with the brand. This research will enhance our understanding of how service quality and technology can impact customer experience with a brand and how this can ultimately either hinder or grow a brands competitive advantage.

I would like to invite you to participate in my study. Information below informs you as to what your participation in my study will involve, so that you can make an informed decision about whether or not to participate. If you have any additional questions that you feel are not addressed or explained in this information sheet, please do not hesitate to ask me for more information. Once you have read and understood all the information contained in this sheet and are willing to participate, please complete and sign the consent form below.

What will I be doing if I participate in your study?
If you decide to participate in this research, I would like to (explain exactly what participation will involve).

You can decide whether or not to participate in this research. If you decide to participate, you can choose to withdraw at any time or to decide not to answer particular interview questions.

Are there any risks/ or discomforts involved in participating in this study?
Whether or not you decide to participate in this research, there will be no negative impact on you. There are no direct risks or benefits to you if you participate in this study. If you find at any stage that you are not comfortable with the line of questioning, you may withdraw or refrain from participating.

Do I have to participate in the study?
- Your inclusion in this study is completely voluntary;
- If you do not wish to participate in this study, you have every right not to do so;
- Even if you agree to participate in this study, you may withdraw at any time without having to provide an explanation for your decision.

Will my identity be protected?

I promise to protect your identity. I will not use your name in any research summaries to come out of this research and I will also make sure that any other details are disguised so that nobody will be able to identify you. I would like to ask your permission to record the interviews, but only my supervisor, I and possibly a professional transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings. Nobody else, including anybody at VEGA: School of Brand Leadership (Durban), will have access to your interview information. I would like to use quotes when I discuss the findings of the research, but I will not use any recognisable information in these quotes that can be linked to you.

What will happen to the information that participants provide?
Once I have finished all interviews, I will write summaries to be included in my research, which is a requirement to complete my BCOM Honours in Strategic Brand Management degree. You are welcome to request an emailed copy of the research if you wish.

What happens if I have more questions about the study?
Please feel free to contact me or my supervisor should you have any questions or concerns about this research, or if there is anything you need to know before you decide whether or not to participate.

You should not agree to participate unless you are completely comfortable with the procedures followed.

My contact details are as follows:
Frederik van Huyssteen

[REDACTED]

The contact details of my supervisor are as follows:
Alec Bozas

[REDACTED]

***Required**

Name and Surname *

Your answer

I agree to participate in the research conducted by Frederik van Huyssteen about Takealot and the use of technology to enhance customer experience with the brand.

- ☐ Yes, I agree.
- ☐ No, I do not agree.

This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that: I agree to be interviewed for this research. My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private. My participation in this research is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. There will be no repercussions should I choose to withdraw from the research. I may choose not to answer any of the questions that are asked during the research interview. I may be quoted directly when the research is published, but my identity will be protected.

- ☐ I understand and agree to the above.
- ☐ I do not understand the above and do not agree.

Consent

- ☐ I hereby consent to participating in this research.
- ☐ I hereby do not consent to participating in this research.

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Appendix D: Final Research Summary Document Table

TITLE: *Researching Customers Experience with The Takealot Brand*

Research Purpose / Objective	Primary Research Question	Research Rationale	Seminal Authors/ Sources	Literature Review – Conceptual Framework	Paradigm	Approach	Data Collection Method(s)	Ethics	Key Findings	Recommendations
The purpose of this research was to identify the ways in which Takealot is using technology to enhance customer experience with them as a brand. If shortcomings are identified, recommendations will be made on how they could be remedied, to slow or stop these shortcomings from affecting Takealot.	How is Takealot using technology to enhance the experience of their customers with the Takealot brand?	The rational and relevance behind this research study was based around the fact that the decade starting 2020 was known as 'The decade of agile brand building', and therefore this research looked at how Takealot used technology in order to remain at the forefront of championing customer satisfaction with the brand. This study is significant, due to the fact that online shopping is growing in popularity and more and more people are beginning to do online shopping for a range of different products. If shortcomings are identified, recommendations will be made to address them so as to improve customer online experience and thus to enhance the Takealot brand	Hsin Hsin Chang and Su Wen Chen, have both written extensively on the idea of customer loyalty and satisfaction in the ecommerce space. They have authored two research papers, one in 2008 and the other in 2009 on this topic of customer satisfaction and loyalty in ecommerce. Another Seminal Source is the model of SERQUAL.	Theme 1: Servqual Model Theme 2: Service Quality Theme 3: Knowledge Gap Theme 4: Standards Gap	Paradigm Interpretivism, Epistemology I want to generate more knowledge surrounding online shopping in South Africa and what service customers expect from online shopping stores. Ontology Reality is relative. Knowledge is socially constructed and is not objectively constructed. There is no single reality. Axiology Research should be concrete, based on the views of others, that will have developed opinions on the subject of study.	Qualitative Population The population of a research study is defined by Pascoe (2014) as the group of people from which data is required in order to inform the research. For this research the population is customers who shop on the Takealot online store, of varying age ranges. By using these parameters in the population, the research will gather data from the participants in order to inform this research, and determine whether or not the theories and concept discussed in the literature review are relevant to a practical example. The accessible population for this research will be those that the survey can be	My data collection method will be a survey, which is emailed out to participants.	This research will need to be cleared as being ethical by the IIE upon meeting the various criteria set and outlined in the IIE Postgraduate Handbook. The respondents of this research will need to give consent to their responses being used in this research, and they will need to be confident about their confidentiality. Participants will be informed that their participation in this research study is completely voluntary and that they may withdraw from the research at any time. No under eighteens will be surveyed and no mentally or otherwise disabled people will be surveyed and no incarcerated people will be surveyed either. All of the responses	It is evident through the findings that Takealot has successfully leveraged the use of technology to enhance their customers brand experience. Key literature showed other examples from around the world, of how technology can be used to the enhance the customer experience with e-commerce retailers. Drawing on the conclusions and recommendations made, if these recommendati	Recommendations included increasing the current product offerings of Takealot into the food market, as well as adding banners to inform customers of parallel imports and replica products. Overall most of the respondents had a positive view and experience with Takealot, and would happily make a return purchase.

		and contribute to client retention, attraction and increased sales.				emailed to, primarily in the Durban area, specifically in Umhlanga, La Lucia and Ballito.	collected from this research will be stored securely on an offline, external hard drive with password protections to ensure the privacy of all respondents, with only the researcher and research supervisor having access to this folder.	ons are implemented, will help Takealot remain at the forefront of an ever growing e-commerce market in South Africa, and achieve even greater success.	
Research Problem	Secondary Questions/ Hypotheses / Objectives	Key Concepts	Key Theories	Theme 5: Delivery Gap		Sampling	Data Analysis Method(s)	Limitations	Key Contribution
With the fast-paced life that consumers live, businesses have had to find new ways of leveraging technology to enhance their consumers' experience with their brands. Takealot being an online-only store, has disrupted traditional brick and mortar stores in South Africa, and	1. To determine whether the consumers find the Takealot website easy to navigate. 2. To determine whether the customers are satisfied with the product range and pricing. 3. To determine whether the customers are satisfied	SERVQUAL Service Quality Takealot Online Store Customers Keller Brand Equity Model Brand Equity	Servqual Model of service quality. Keller Model of Brand Equity	Theme 6: Satisfaction Gap Theme 7: Keller Model of Brand Equity Theme 8: Brand Equity		Convenience Sampling Survey respondents' was 20 people.	Unit of Analysis The qualitative data will be categorized into themes, so that the common views of the respondents can be group together and considered. Data Analysis Method(s) My data analysis method will be a thematic analysis of the themes that stem from the objectives of	This research originally intended to make use of a focus group as well as a survey to gather the data. The focus group would have allowed for more open-ended questions to the participants, while the survey allowed for closed	The key contribution made by this study, is the expansion of knowledge on the growing e-commerce industry in South Africa, and lessons from Takealot that new e-commerce stores can use and leverage to ensure their success in the industry.

they therefore disrupted the way that consumers could shop. By removing the bother of having to wait for shops to open, drive to a mall, find parking and then go shopping, the online system affords greater flexibility to consumers. With the Covid-19 lockdown in South Africa, many more consumers and thus retailers (eg; Checkers, Pick n Pay, Woolworths etc) have resorted to online and this could begin to erode Takealot's market share	with the online purchasing process on the website. 4. To determine whether any aspects of the Takealot website customers find displeasing. 5. To determine other online shopping experience, and why they are perceived to be better than Takealot.						the research.	ended questions. Due to current Coronavirus Pandemic, and the regulations on social distancing and the number of people allowed to gather in a venue, the research collection has had to be redirected to be a survey consisting of both open-ended and closed ended questions.		
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