

# **DURBAN CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS OF THE DISCHEM ONLINE SHOPPING EXPERIENCE**

**By**

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**Research Report**

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## DECLARATION

I Talia Sardha declare that this dissertation, submitted to The Independent Institute of Education for the BA Honours in Strategic Brand Communications degree, is my own original work. Any secondary research material that has been used throughout this dissertation is peer reviewed and has either been a print source or from the Internet.

All sources that have been referenced and accessed for this work have been acknowledged and accurately referenced according to the Harvard referencing technique. The date, author and page number have been cited for the in-text references and a thorough reference list of all authors mentioned and cited in the work has been included at the end of the article. This includes all written, digital, audio, visual, audio-visual and other sources. Images, tables and figures have also been referenced adequately in the text as well as in the reference list.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study is qualitative in nature and aims to identify the Durban Consumer Perceptions of the Dischem Online Shopping Experience.

The study analysed Dischem's service quality and specifically the extent to which consumers like/dislike their online experience and consumer feedback on the effect Covid-19 has had in terms of their on-line usage of the Dischem online shopping experience. As this was a qualitative study the size of the population was not determined however it consisted of people who have shopped online at Dischem using a small sample of 14 respondents.

The information gathered in this study was collected through the use of a qualitative interview schedule, which was revised after a pilot study had been conducted. The key findings and insights from this research led to suitable recommendations being made to address weaknesses in the Dischem online platform.

Through the research conducted, it was concluded that respondents were happy with the overall Dischem online shopping experience. There were few concerns and mostly minor ones that customers had with the experience.

Recommendations have been made which will alleviate the concerns that customers had regarding the online shopping experience, as well as for how future methods could allow for the gain of more loyal and future customers.

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## Chapter 1 – Introduction and Overview

### 1.1 Introduction

Dis-Chem has been South Africa's first choice in pharmacies since 1978, with their linked dispensaries, family clinics, wound-care clinics and comprehensive self-medication centres. As a leading retailer in beauty, healthy food, sport supplements, health and well-being, Dischem offers a wide range in these categories and expert advice (Dischem, 2020).

Despite a R200 million reduction in turnover at the height of the lockdown in March, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Dischem has also experienced a surge in online sales as Covid-19 accelerated the move to e-commerce (Gunnion, 2020). This study was qualitative in nature and describes the impact Covid-19 had on customers' online shopping experience and how Dischem was impacted.

### 1.2 Field of Study

This research was within the online pharmacy, health, beauty and multipurpose retailing market and discusses the online shopping experience and its impact on a brand. The research methodology used, helped identify key findings held by retailers on the processes, communications and impact of the Durban Consumer Perceptions on the Dischem Online Shopping Experience.

### 1.3 Proposed Journal

The proposed journal for this study is the *Journal of Perceptions on E-Commerce*. This journal would be suitable for this study to be published, as this journal sheds light on the understanding of e-commerce. The topics within this journal deal with issues that involve e-commerce and brand perceptions.

The anticipated contribution of this study was therefore towards academic journals and articles on e-service quality measurements, consumers' decision process amongst alternatives and customer relationship management.

#### **1.4 Problem Statement**

Retail shopping has been facing a threat of a gradual move by consumers to online purchasing. The onset of Covid-19 lockdown resulted in more consumers choosing to buy online. The perceived problem is whether or not the Dischem online trading process is consumer friendly and easy to use because if site navigation is difficult, consumers could opt to shop online at competing outlets such as Sparksport and Clicks.

#### **1.5 Purpose Statement**

During a global pandemic, Dischem could be thriving in-store due to them being a pharmacy, health and beauty retailer. If their shopping website is difficult to navigate, then clients may move to competing retailers. As a result, this will determine weaknesses in the Dischem online system and recommend how to remedy the situation, to retain and attract clients.

#### **1.6 Research Questions**

##### **Research Question 1:**

Do online Dischem consumer's find it easy or problematic to navigate and use the website?

##### **Research Question 2:**

Are the payment methods on the Dischem websites safe and secure?

##### **Research Question 3:**

How is the overall online experience for the consumer and how could it be improved?

#### **1.7 Research Objectives**

##### **Research Objective 1:**

To determine whether consumers have increased their use of online platforms and particularly the Dischem one, since the Covid-19 lockdown has been in force.

##### **Research Objective 2:**

To ascertain the extent to which consumers; like/dislike the Dischem online experience.

**Research Objective 3:**

To determine which online platforms consumers prefer and why.

**Research Objective 4:**

To ascertain whether consumers intend to migrate to more online purchasing post the Covid-19 lockdown being lifted.

**1.8 Rationale and Relevance**

Dischem is a pharmacy, health, beauty and multipurpose retailer that we require to shop at on a weekly basis and could be thriving in this time of the global pandemic, COVID-19. However, this pandemic is contagious resulting in people avoiding leaving their homes and therefore Dischem's online platform should be booming now more than ever. The research wanted to understand the online customer experience, how it was affected through this global pandemic and what Dischem could do to make the online shopping experience easier.

**1.9 Limitations**

The following limitations have been identified in this study. Due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the research only made use of digital communications and research to avoid being infected. The study was based on a nine-month time period, which impacted the amount of information collection and reported on. The accessibility of participants was limited to the KwaZulu-Natal province due to the pandemic, time constraints and financial resources. People responded and a further two responses were discarded due to respondents failing to complete them sufficiently.

**1.10 Summary**

This research will analyse the Durban Consumer Perceptions of the Dischem Online Shopping Experience. The research is relevant to all online retail platforms and will help inform these retailers on where they can improve. There are various limitations to the study such as social distancing, a limited study duration and accessibility, yet primary and secondary research will be used in order to gain qualitative insights into the research objectives.

## **1.11 Chapter Outline**

### **Chapter One: Introduction and Overview of Research**

Chapter one provides an introduction to the research study in the form of explaining the field of research, the problem statement, and the key research questions and objectives which will be researched in this study.

### **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

Chapter two analyses and discusses various secondary research findings in accordance to the research objectives. This chapter discusses various models relevant to this research study.

### **Chapter Three: Research Methodology**

This chapter establishes the research approach and design used within the study, as well as the data collection and analysing methods to be used. The population and sample are identified. Limitations of the research are expressed.

### **Chapter Four: Presentation and Discussion of Findings**

Chapter four details and illustrates the research findings from the primary research conducted. Various significant findings and insights are highlighted, and each research question is answered.

### **Chapter Five: Research Conclusions and Recommendations**

The final chapter presents concise research findings from both the primary and secondary research conducted. It also provides recommendations and suggestions for further studies.

## **Chapter 2 – Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Retail shopping has been facing a threat of a gradual move by consumers to online purchasing in recent years. The enforcement of the Covid-19 lockdown in South Africa, appears to have accelerated this process and resulted in more consumers opting to buy online. This research investigated the perceived problem of whether or not the Dischem online trading experience is consumer friendly and easy to use. As a result, literature is presented that suitable to the topic and objectives of the research. If this is not the case and the site navigation is difficult to use, consumers may opt to shop online at competing outlets such as Clicks and Sparkport Pharmacies amongst others.

According to Hartzenberg (2020) the Covid-19 pandemic has pushed businesses to embrace online sales channels to maintain revenue streams flowing and are encouraging consumers to switch to digital shopping and payment alternatives. Jonathan Smit, the MD of online payment processing solution PayFast states, “this pandemic has had a shot of adrenaline in the arm of e-commerce. Habits formed now are going to continue in the future”, (Hartzenberg, 2020).

This research allowed for a clearer understanding of the many different elements within different frameworks, on how the quality of online services impacts relationships with the company and its customers. An in-depth analysis on how the responsiveness, navigation and reliability of an online retailer is crucial to itself was done.

This chapter presents frameworks and models that Dischem should make use of in evaluation of their online platform; in addition, it presented literature that was applicable and relevant to each of the objectives of this research. The primary research questions were well applicable to frameworks and models that are examined in this literature. Literature that was studied will flow from, primarily on customer satisfaction, relationships and e-service quality from an interpretivist point of view.

Closely explored frameworks and models that were examined in this study are; E-Service Quality Measurements, the Engel-Kollat-Blackwell (EKB) Model and Winer’s framework for customer relationship management.

## **2.2 Theoretical Foundation**

Du Plooy-Cilliers (2014: 34) states that the reason for interpretivist research is to “describe meaningful social actions and experiences” by using theories to have an in-depth understanding of people’s realities by telling a story. Therefore, interpretivism was applied throughout this research. Interpretivists want to understand human behaviour by gaining an in-depth, empathetic understanding of people by seeing the world through the eyes of those they are studying. In order to appreciate those who are being studied and how they experience daily life to understand what is relevant and meaningful to them, the research is required to spend many hours in direct contact with them, Du Plooy-Cilliers (2014).

According to Du Plooy-Cilliers (2014), human beings cannot be studied in the same way that objects are studied in science, because humans are constantly being influenced and changed. Interpretivism utilized influential factors namely; phenomenology, hermeneutics and symbolic interactionists, which all holistically deals with how humans make sense of things, their actions and contextual situations for them. Du Plooy-Cilliers (2014) explains that phenomenology aims to analyse how individuals make sense of society as well as the world around them. Du Plooy-Cilliers (2014: 28) quotes Bryman (2012) as saying, “hermeneutics is concerned with the ‘theory and method of the interpretation of human action’”. Lastly, symbolic interactionism is an intellectual tradition that sees society and the world around it, as symbolic and constructed Du Plooy-Cilliers (2014).

The axiological position of interpretivism allows for interpretivists to understand the complexity of unique realities and openly include their own opinions and values that shape their research and the methodological position utilizes methods that are sensitive namely; groups, in-depth interviews, ethnography and narrative inquiry (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). The metatheoretical position “aims to reveal the meanings and values of the people studied, because researchers want to help us understand people directly involved in a particular phenomenon” (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014: 30),

The interpretivist paradigm was useful in aligning with data, findings and insights with regards to a humanistic approach. An online consumer experience is solely based on humans and how their interaction with the online world is like. The interpretivist paradigm was relevant to this research as the research focused on understanding experiences in different situations and multiple interpretations of the same experience, with the end goal of gaining a deeper understanding (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014).

The research aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of Durban consumer perceptions of the Dischem online shopping experience, by doing so - the E-Service Quality Measurements framework was used to assess Dischem's online system.

## **2.3 Key Theories and Literature Identified**

To ensure all relevant literature has been covered in this study, the review of each objective has been aligned to the relevant literature and concepts for this study.

### **Research Objective 2 – To Ascertain the Extent to Which Consumers; Like/Dislike the Dischem Online Experience**

#### **2.3.1 E-Service Quality (e-SQ) Measurements**

According to Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Malhotra (2005), "E-service quality can be described as overall customer evaluations and judgments regarding the excellence and the quality of e-service delivery in the virtual marketplace". Parasuraman et al., (2005) state that all phases of a customer's interactions with a website are encompassed by e-SQ, to the extent of where a website facilitates effective shopping, purchasing and delivery. E-service quality scales were developed to measure the heterogeneous services on the internet, using advanced telecommunications, information, and multimedia technologies.

##### **2.3.1.1 e-SERVQUAL**

According to Parasuraman et al., (2005:21), "e-SERVQUAL is a multi-dimensional research instrument, designed to capture consumer expectations and perceptions of a service along the five dimensions that are believed to represent service quality". The extent to which consumers' pre-consumption expectations of quality are confirmed or disconfirmed by their actual service experience is understood as service quality. The instrument (i.e. questionnaire) created a breakthrough for service quality when using measuring methods for research. The *model of service quality's* – equation, supported e-SERVQUAL by conceptualizing a framework for the development of the instrument. The instrument has become the dominant service quality measurement scale widely used and in a variety of contexts (Parasuraman et al., 2005). The questionnaire consists of five dimensions namely which are; *reliability* - the ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately, *assurance* - the knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence, *tangibles* - the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel and communication materials, *empathy* - the provision of caring, individualized attention to

customer and lastly, *responsiveness* - the willingness to help customers and to provide prompt service (Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithaml, 1998). e-SERVQUAL focuses on personalization, accessibility, responsiveness, reliability, privacy, etc. that was developed by Zeithaml et al., (2002). The model was split into two parts: 1. *core e-service quality scale* that consists of four dimensions such as efficiency, reliability, fulfillment and privacy; and 2. *recovery e-service quality scale* that consists of three dimensions such as: responsiveness, compensation and contact.

Parasuraman et al., (1998) state that the questionnaire must be administered in a face-to-face interview as it is designed that way to examine behavioural intentions (intention to revisit/ repurchase, loyalty intentions and propensity to give word-of-mouth referrals). Even though e-SERVQUAL is quantitative, the model was adapted for this qualitative research. Due to limitations of this research, the interview schedule was administered online and via emails. The framework coincided with the research by relating and linking to the interpretivist paradigm with regards to a humanistic approach.

Effective shopping, purchasing and delivery of products is facilitated by the internet and is a function of e-service quality and therefore the e-SERVQUAL of the literature linked well with the research. As a result, e-SERVQUAL formed the basis of measuring the quality of the e-service experience, including the cues that occur before, during and after the e-purchase transaction (Kaila, 2013).

#### **2.3.1.2 SITEQUAL**

The growth and value of internet-based transactions has been on the rise and is becoming a new way to market to consumers. According to Donthu and Gracia (1999:2), “consumers are rapidly adopting Internet shopping, including baby boomers’ and seniors’, making them the Internet’s fastest-growing demographic groups”. Malls have gradually become substitutes for internet shopping sites; however, the quality of sites is important for survival and success as internet shopping increases (Weltevreden, 2020). Yoo and Donthu (2001) state that the quality of internet sites will play an important role in differentiating sites as internet shopping gradually moves from a novelty to a routine way of shopping. SITEQUAL was developed by Yoo and Donthu (2001) aimed to develop a psychometric measure of service quality of online shopping websites and a way to measure the perceived quality of an internet shopping site by consumers.

Three aspects of internet shopping sites' perceived quality are emphasized when developing SITEQUAL namely; 1. The perception of consumers is what the researcher is interested in capturing as they are the ultimate judges of the quality, 2. The definition of internet site quality is explained in layman's terms and 3. A different definition of quality that is not included in SITEQUAL domain is developed by internet sites without shopping features.

There are four components to the model that purely measure the quality aspects of the site namely; 1. *Ease of use* - of website and ability for information search, 2. *aesthetic design* - the creativity of a website in terms of excellent multimedia and colour graphics, 3. *processing speed* - online processing promptness and interactive responsiveness to consumers' requests and 4. *security* - of financial and personal information (Yoo and Donthu, 2001).

According to Yoo and Donthu (2001), studies have shown that consumer behaviour and attitudes with respect to; site equity and loyalty, attitude toward the site, site revisit intention and purchase intention are determined by the quality of the internet shopping sites. Consumer search patterns and buying decisions can be examined by SITEQUAL to study how a site quality affects visitors' online behaviours. "SITEQUAL should not be regarded as a final measure but as a starting point toward a better measure", (Yoo and Dhonthu, 2001:9).

### 2.3.1.3 PIRQUAL

The Perceived Internet Retail Quality Model (PIRQUAL) was developed by Francis and White (2002) to assess the service quality of e-tailers.

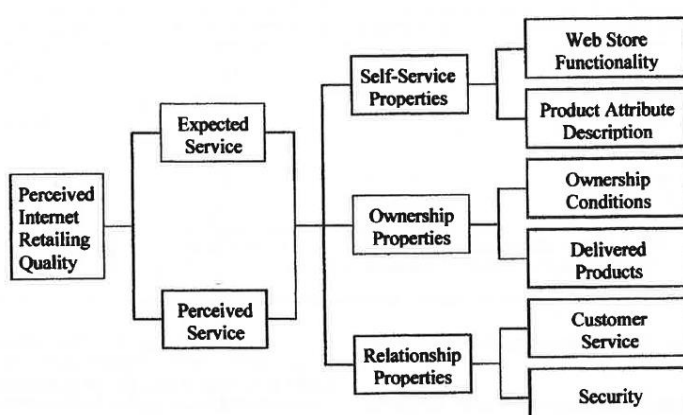


Figure 2.1: Francis and White (2002). PIRQUAL: A scale for measuring customer expectations and perceptions of quality in internet retailing, Conference: AMA Winter Educators' Conference, (Francis and White, 2002:268).

The structural elements in the Perceived Internet Retailing Quality model above identifies structural elements of PIRQUAL that illustrates the gap between the expected service and the perceived service (Francis and White, 2002). The expected service and perceived service eventually is categorized in three sections namely; self-service properties, ownership properties and relationship properties. Aspects that consumers use, of these internet retailer facilities in order to shop or purchase products, are represented by self-service properties. The services that are associated with consumers purchasing their goods and taking ownership is represented by ownership properties. The quality of the relationship and engagement of the consumer and the online retailer is represented by relationship properties. Web store functionality, product attribute description, ownership conditions, delivery, customer service and security are the six dimensions that the PIRQUAL scale consists of (Francis and White, 2002).

#### **2.3.1.4 eTailQ**

It is a given that online versus brick and mortar environments present different shopping experiences no matter the product or service. With an online environment, customers interact with the brand in a virtual space with a technical interface and with a brick and mortar environment, customers interact with employees in a physical space. The online shopping experience raises issues of Self-Service Technologies (SSTs) as well as customers being weary and aware of their need for privacy and security - which is rarely an issue when purchasing offline at a physical store (Wolfinbarger and Gilly, 2002). According to Yoo and Donthu (2001), since online businesses are increasing, there is an increasing pressure to better understand consumer experiences and expectations within online quality. It is important to define and measure online e-tail quality (eTailQ) and by doing so, a conceptual framework needs to be developed in order to understand the entire process from the beginning to the end of the transaction, including website navigation, customer service interactions, information search, customer service interactions, delivery and satisfaction with the ordered product.

According to Wolfinbarger and Gilly (2002), website functionality is a strong factor that affects customer loyalty, fulfillment and reliability is a strong factor that affects customer satisfaction and customer service is a strong predictor of customer loyalty and satisfaction. eTailQ was a scale developed by Wolfinbarger and Gilly (2003) to measure e-tailer quality within four factors namely; *website design* - includes all elements of the consumer's

experience at the website (except for customer service), including navigation, information search, order processing, appropriate personalization and product selection, etc., *fulfillment/reliability* - the accurate display and description of a product so that what customers receive is what they thought they ordered, and delivery of the right product within the time frame promised, *privacy/security* - is security of credit card payments and privacy of shared information and *customer service* - is responsive, helpful, willing service that responds to customer inquiries quickly.

Wolfenbarger and Gilly (2002) found that the most vital building blocks of online quality are providing outstanding website functionality in terms of in-depth information, good selection, time savings, easy transaction and just the right amount of personalization - *fulfillment/reliability*. These attributes weigh the greatest to online consumers.

#### **2.3.1.5 E-S-QUAL**

The retailing market on the internet is increasing and growing at a rapid rate and those who use the internet as a retailing channel have realized how important service quality and service delivery is for online retailing (Boshoff, 2007). Parasuraman et al., (2005) states that the leading model for the measurement of e-service quality is E-S-QUAL and is vital when measuring core service attributes of websites. Boshoff (2007) describes E-S-QUAL as the first scale that effectively captures the nature of online shopping through a retail website of electronic service quality.

The scale measures four dimensions of electronic service quality namely; *efficiency* - the ease and speed of accessing and using the site, *fulfillment* - the extent to which the site's promises about order delivery and item availability are fulfilled, *system availability* - the correct technical functioning of the site, and *privacy* - the degree to which the site is safe and protects customer information (Parasuraman et al., 2005). E-S-QUAL is a 5-point scale that is used where respondents rate a website's performance, 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree. The items shown below should appear in random order on a survey, however it is grouped by dimension for expositional convenience.

There is a need to effectively measure the quality of service offered by internet retailers and this need, to date, has been fulfilled by the most effective scale developed by Parasuraman et al., (2005). The E-S-QUAL instrument was an excellent instrument that was used by the Dischem online store to measure electronic service quality.

**Research Objective 1 - To Determine Whether Consumers Have Increasingly Used Online Platforms and Particularly the Dischem One, Since the Covid-19 Lockdown Has Been in Force**

**Research Objective 4 - To Ascertain Whether Consumers Intend to Migrate to More Online Purchasing**

#### 2.4. Engel-Kollat-Blackwell (EKB) Model

The Engel-Kollat-Blackwell model describes consumers' decision process and how decisions are made when choosing amongst other alternatives. The EKB model builds on the field of environmental factors and consumer psychology that influence consumer purchase decisions (Osei and Abenyin, 2016).

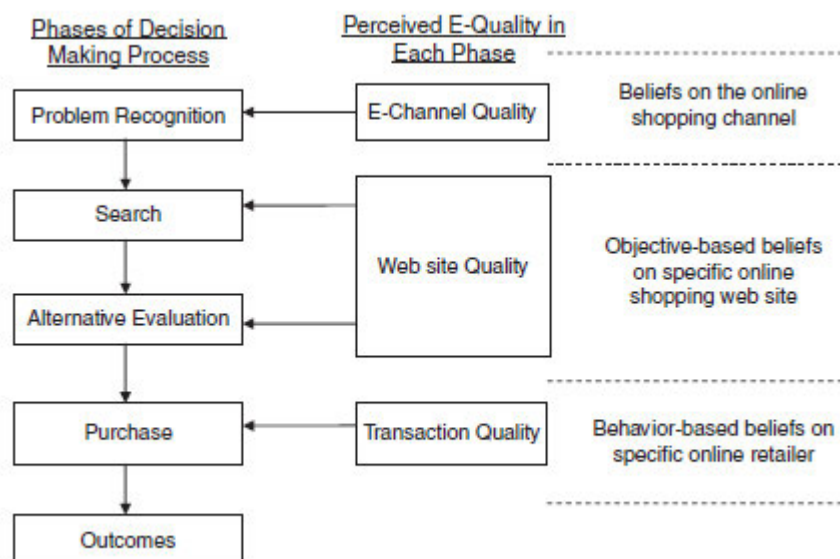


Figure 2.2: Wen, Prybutok, Blankson and Fang, 2014. *Perceived e-quality along decision-making process framework*. School of Business, Eastern Illinois University, Charleston, Illinois, USA, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas, USA, University of North Texas, Denton, Texas, USA, University of Electronic Science and Technology of China, Chengdu, China, (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Malhotra, 2014: 8).

The EKB framework (Figure 3) is a comprehensive framework that can be applied to the consumer decision-making process within the setting of e-commerce (Darley et al., 2010). This 'problem-solving process' is to understand how customers make decisions to satisfy their wants, needs and expectations due to customers wanting to fulfill their needs (Wen et al., 2014). The framework explains how operations managers can improve their online

service as well as how customers perceive quality within their online shopping decision-making process. The model comprises five steps where information is obtained before purchase and consumption decisions are made which include problem recognition, search, alternative evaluation, purchase, and outcomes (Wen et al., 2014).

### **Step 1: Problem Recognition**

The first step of the decision-making process is where the consumer identifies a need that needs to be satisfied or a problem which needs to be solved. If the first solution a buyer thinks of - is your company, your company will have a huge leg up therefore, it is extremely important having built brand awareness (Yarnold, 2014). In terms of problem recognition in e-commerce, customers decide whether they are shopping online or in a physical store, as a result the quality perceived by online consumers in step one is known as *e-channel quality*. Customers compare these shopping experiences based on factors such as; how easy it is to use the online platform, the product prices, the availability of multiple choices, convenience and usefulness (Wen et al., 2014).

### **Step 2: Information Search**

The second of the decision-making process involves gathering information of all possible solutions. In the brick-and-mortar environment, design tangibility, product availability, etc. are the perceived quality services from retailers however, with online shopping, website design, easy navigation, website security are the perceptions of website quality (Wen et al., 2014). When purchasing online a consumer usually is very thorough in the information search process regarding pricing, features, ease of use, etc., this is known as *website quality* (Yarnold, 2014). The e-commerce websites that are secure, efficient, accessible and well-designed are more likely to be chosen by customers.

### **Step 3: Alternative Evaluation**

The third step of the decision-making process is often a tedious step which involves choosing what the dealmaker is and what the deal-break is in the eyes of the consumer. The customer usually has a variety of options to choose from, especially when it comes to e-commerce as there is a variety of a similar product to choose from. A company's marketing should speak to the interests and needs of the buyer so as they evaluate, they keep your brand in mind. Personalizing your emails, website and content to the buyer attributes will make sure your company stays relevant and resonates with the buyer (Yarnold, 2014).

#### **Step 4: Purchase**

The fourth stage of the decision-making process is the purchase stage which includes; agreement, delivery and return. Once the customer has made up their mind, they have a solution and no longer a problem (Yarnold, 2014). The buyer will agree to finish the online transaction, then wait for the product to be delivered and lastly, identify if there is or is not a problem with the product and may or may not return the product to the online retailer. In this stage quality perceived by online consumers is defined as *transaction quality*, which are the perceptions developed of the quality of products and services that are offered (Wen et al., 2014).

#### **Step 5: Post-Purchase**

The fifth and final step of the decision-making process is where it is only the beginning of a customer's value for your company. Creating long-term relationships with your consumer is the new goal of the company, thus ensuring customers get the most value out of your products and services and ensuring you give the most value to your customers. This is done by optimizing every stage of the e-commerce process by personalizing your website and the consumer journey, building brand awareness, etc.

The next purchase decision is highly influenced by the previous online shopping experience and the dynamic and on-going decision-making process is depicted by the EKB framework. Due to the numerous uncertain external and internal factors, this framework is suitable for determining the Durban consumer perceptions of the Dischem online shopping experience.

#### **Research Objective 3 - To Determine Which Online Platforms Consumers Prefer and Why?**

### **2.5. Customer Relationship Management Framework**

According to Winer (2001) by combining abilities to highly interact with customers, customize their experience and respond directly to their requests and so much more, the internet allows companies to build better relationships with customers compared to doing so in the offline world. In this way companies have a greater opportunity to establish, nurture and sustain long-term customer relationships, as a result, "this revolution in customer relationship management (CRM)' has been referred to as the new "mantra" of marketing".

There is a need for the retail industry to better understand consumer behaviour and focus on those customers who could deliver long-term profits as a result of their loyalty (Winer,

2001). The customer relationship management model is used when retailers figure out what they need to know about their consumers and how that information is applied to the model. The model below contains 7 basic components of the CRM model namely; 1. A database of customer activity, 2. Analysis of the database, 3. Given the analysis, decisions about which customers to target, 4. Tools for targeting the customers, 5. How to build relationships with the targeted customers, 6. Privacy issues and lastly, 7. Metrics (Winer, 2001:4).

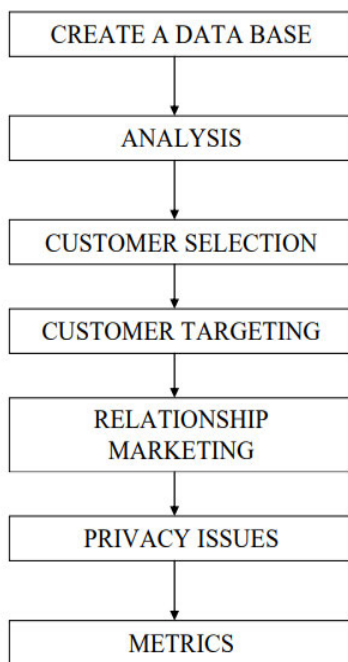


Figure 2.3: Winer, 2001. Customer Relationship Management Framework. Stern School of Business, New York, (Winer, 2001:25).

Apart from understanding the concept of customer relationship management, the framework goes beyond by elaborating on customer retention programs. Delivering a higher level of customer satisfaction than competitors is the overall goal of relationship programs as “research has shown that there is a strong positive relationship between customer satisfaction and profits” (Winer, 2001: 98). The relationship programs include; customer service, frequency/loyalty programs, customization, rewards programs and community building. The framework complements online personal interactions and relationships with a company and their customers.

## 2.6 Conceptualization

### The model of service quality

Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithaml (1998) developed the model of service quality to propose a scale for measuring service quality (SERVQUAL), establish the components of service quality and identify possible causes of service quality issues. The model helps diagnose possible causes of a problem that is identified by the SERVQUAL instrument. The *expectancy-confirmation paradigm* which forms the model of service quality, suggests that consumers perceive quality in terms of their perceptions of how well service delivery meets their actual expectations of that delivery.

The model of service quality can be conceptualized into an equation namely:

$$SQ = P - E$$

where;

**SQ** is service quality

**P** is the perception of a service delivery

**E** is the expectations of a service delivery

When perceptions are greater than expected delivery, service quality is high but when expectations exceed perceptions of delivery, service quality is deemed low (Parasuraman, Berry and Zeithaml, 1998).

### Customer satisfaction

ASQ.org (2020) defines customer satisfaction as a measurement that determines how happy customers are with a company's services, products and capabilities. A company can make use of tools such as ratings, polls, focus groups and surveys to determine how to best change or improve their services and products. It is important to make use of these tools as it helps understand the voice of the consumer - instead of assuming what the customer wants, in this way the company can gain insights as to how their products or services meet or exceed expectations and or best tailor their products or services to the needs of the consumer.

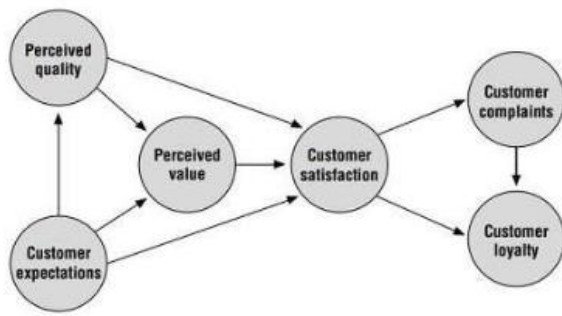


Figure 2.4: ASQ.org, 2020. Model of Customer Satisfaction. What is customer satisfaction? (ASQ.org, 2020).

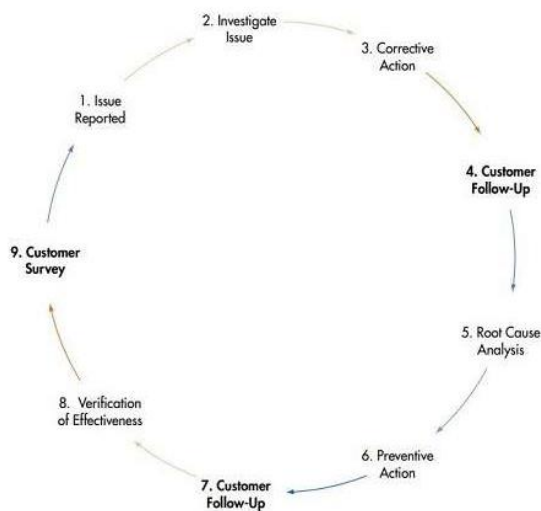


Figure 2.5: ASQ.org, 2020. Customer Satisfaction Process Improvement. What is customer satisfaction? (ASQ.org, 2020).

## 2.7 Conclusion

The multiple e-service quality measurements, EKB model and the customer relationship management framework that was examined above, formed a firm basis for the research as it aligned directly with the relevance of the research. There were many similarities between every framework that was studied in this chapter which allowed for the research to be analyzed in different ways. There were many links between these frameworks as they shared a common and very similar process, characteristics, goals and the identification of factors that have affected the e-commerce and online shopping within the Dischem experience. Chapter 3 will expand upon the research methodology and how it aims to establish answers to the research questions.

## **Chapter 3 – Research Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The core purpose of this chapter is to expand and justify the chosen methodology of the primary data for this research. Through the methodology, the research paradigm and its motives are reviewed. The chapter explores the research approach, research strategy options as well as the selected data collection methods. The chapter examines research specifies in the information required to address issues, and it explained the method for collecting information. Effective research implements the data collection process, analyses the results and communicates the findings and their implications.

### **3.2 Population**

Du Plooy-Cilliers (2014) defines population as, “the total group of people or entities from whom information is required”. Population is all units with attributes or characteristics that fall within the population parameters in which the research study is interested (Davis, 2014). The target population was consumers aged 30 and above that reside in Durban, who have volunteered to be part of this study. According to the South African Council of Shopping Centres (2018), online shoppers fall within the LSM 7-10 and above bracket, whilst the non-online shoppers are of the lower LSM bracket that don’t shop online yet. The respondents of this study are those individuals whose standard of living sets the standards LSM 7-10. As a result of the younger generation constantly and effectively shopping online, this research wanted to determine if individuals 30 and above have now joined the trend and, or if they find the online Dischem shopping experience efficient. It was challenging to determine the exact population of this study as the Covid-19 outbreak posed limitations and restrictions to study in terms of not being able to target a population.

The research made use of the broad population parameters in Durban in line with the online consumer experience context. The research gathered data from respondents who have perceptions based on their online Dischem experience. Respondents helped help the research process in determining - to what extent Dischem can improve, better their customer’s online experience as well as the similarities in terms of attitudes and motivations that consumers share.

The population parameters include targeting people in the following:

- Consumers who shop online at Dischem
- Consumers who have experience shopping online at Dischem

### **3.3 Sampling**

After identifying the population parameters, the target population and accessible population can be distinguished (Pascoe, 2014). Creswell (2016) states that the sample size is dependent on what will have credibility, the purpose of the inquiry, what one wants to know and what can be done with available resources and time. Due to limitations imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, the sample size consisted of fourteen participants, administered to Durban consumers via an email interview schedule. Small samples can be adequate in providing accurate and complete information about the 'experience' under investigation as the research is a phenomenological study (Creswell, 2016). Vasileiou, Barnett, Thorpe and Younge (2018) state that, "samples in qualitative research tend to be small in order to support the depth of case-oriented analysis that is fundamental to this mode of inquiry". According to Vasileiou et al., (2018) in (Clarke and Braun, 2013; Fugard and Potts, 2014; Guest, Bunce and Johnson, 2006), the minimum sample size of at least 12 participants is required in qualitative studies before reaching data saturation. Therefore, a sample of 14 was deemed sufficient for the qualitative analysis and scale of this study.

#### **3.3.1 Unit of Analysis**

The unit of analysis is the major entity that is being investigated and analysed in the study. It is the 'what' or 'who' that is being studied. A unit of analysis in a study could be anything from individuals, groups, social interactions, artefacts and even geographic units. According to Trochim (2020), it is called unit of analysis because "it is the analysis you do in your study that determines what the unit is'. For the purpose of this research, the unit of analysis referred to individuals that reside in Durban, who are aged 30 and above, that shop on the Dischem online platform.

#### **3.3.2. Non-Probability Sampling Methods**

There are two types of sampling methods: probability sample and non-probability sampling. The difference between probability sampling and non-probability sampling is that probability sampling is based on principles of randomness whilst non-probability sample does not involve random selection (Pascoe, 2014). This research study will make use of non-probability sampling as it allows engagement specifically with participants who are able to

provide the necessary information required for the success of the research. There are six types of non-probability sampling methods namely: accidental sampling, convenience sampling, purposive sampling, quota sampling, snowball sampling and volunteer sampling. The study has made use of purposive sampling and quota sampling. According to Sekaran (2003: 296), “in qualitative studies, only small samples of individuals, groups, or events are invariably chosen, in view of the in-depth nature of the study”. Generalising of findings is very restricted due to qualitative studies utilising small samples (Sekaran, 2003). The sample size consisted of 14 participants.

Convenience and snowball sampling were used to obtain information from the interview schedules. Convenience sampling has four main benefits; namely the lower cost of the research, greater accuracy of results, greater speed of data collection and availability of population elements. Snowball sampling allows for the respondents of the study to suggest others that fit the population parameters of the study (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014).

The sample design reflected the nature and purpose of the research. The type of qualitative research is that it is not based on a sample size that needs to represent the population as is the case in quantitative research but rather, is based on forming constructs, and as such sample size is of lesser importance than it would be in quantitative research (Maree, 2016).

### **3.3.3. Sample Size**

According to Creswell (2016), sample size depends on what one wants to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what will have credibility and what can be done with the available time and resources. As a result of the study being phenomenological research, a small sample can be quite adequate in providing accurate and complete information about the topic under investigation (Creswell, 2016). The sample size for this research was 14 people, however, it has selected respondents who have fitted the criteria of the study.

The members of the sample were found by posting requests on social media, calling for people that fitted the criteria of the research. After receiving responses from potential participants, interview schedules were then sent out via email.

Sixteen individuals were chosen, where respondents volunteered to participate in the research. Only fourteen out of the sixteen individuals fully answering the interview schedules via email; however, it was still an adequate number to analyse data and feedback by thoroughly understanding the views of respondents without too many repeated answers (Vasileiou et al., 2018). Fourteen interview schedules were conducted and completed by the respondents.

### **3.4 Data Collection Method(s)**

The instrument of data collection would have been in-depth interviews and surveys where participants would have been asked open-ended broad questions which allow for them to share their experiences and views with the brand (Strydom and Bezuidenhout, 2014).

Due to the impact and limitations of the Covid-19 pandemic, the research made use of interview schedules sent via email to avoid the risk of anyone being infected. Face-to-face interviews would have been preferred to gain a deeper understanding and to observe the behaviour of consumers; however, in-depth interviews had to suffice. It would have been ideal to have a Skype or Zoom call with respondents; in addition the intention was to have focus group; however, due to the study's unit of analysis being individuals aged 30 and above, there was never time to do so as the targeted respondents' schedules did not afford an opportunity for a focus group at the time and load shedding played a role in making such calls impossible. This is a pity as on a video call one could have observed body language and one could have asked respondents to elaborate and explain their responses in greater detail.

#### **3.4.1 In-depth Interviews**

In-depth interviews allow the researcher to learn more about the participant's beliefs, opinions and views by posing questions to them with the aim of learning more. These types of interviews allow the researcher to interpret and understand the meaning behind participants' answers and to gain a more detailed explanation of their experience.

The general interview approach would have been utilised to predetermine questions that were stated, and a conversational approach would have been encouraged where freedom would have been given to the interviewee (Strydom and Bezuidenhout, 2014). Open-ended questions would have satisfied the study where the consumer experience perceptions would

have been explored and understood from the participants perspective, thoughts, behaviour and attitude. Closed-ended questions would have dominated the data collection on the online Dischem experience and would have correlated to the secondary research to have determined, evaluated, proved and disproved models and frameworks reviewed in the literature. Due to the Covid-19 outbreak and to avoid the risk of infection, the research did not make use of in-depth interviews.

### **3.4.2 Interview Schedule**

According to Du Plooy-Cilliers and Cronje (2014), surveys are one of the most popular research tools used to gather data about people's beliefs, opinions, impressions, attitudes, etc. For this study, an interview schedule was utilised consisting of open-ended questions.

The interview schedule was based on the objectives of the research and was modified after the literature research had been undertaken. As a result of the pilot study, a change was made to address an ambiguity and to correct a double-barrelled question. Gmail was the online platform that was utilised to develop and send out interview schedules for the research. A variety of open-ended questions were used gain a deeper understanding of the results from the interview schedule, along with allowing participants to express their opinions and experiences to explore deeper perceptions.

### **3.4.3 Pilot study**

The email interview schedule was reviewed and piloted on two respondents before distribution. The pilot study ensured that the questioning was concise, clear and relevant to the research design. It was determined that the interview schedule, there was an area of ambiguity and a double-barrelled question. These flaws were rectified. In addition, face validity of the instrument was confirmed.

The pilot study was a small-scale study that was tested on family and friends and then reworked before being distributed to the remainder of the sample. The final interview schedule used, allowed for holistic themes and responses to be identified.

### **3.5 Application of Data Collection**

Due to the limitations imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, the research only made use of email interview schedules. As a result of research's unit of analysis being individuals aged 30 and above, finding participants was quite challenging. There was a post sent out on Facebook and Instagram, messages on Whatsapp and a broadcast message to a much older audience to target people who formed the study's unit of analysis. After gathering potential participants contact details, they were then sent the interview schedules and consent forms via email.

### **3.6 Data Analysis Method(s)**

Bezuidenhout and Cronje (2014) quote De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2011:397) in saying, "the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of data" is described as qualitative data analysis. The iterative and ongoing process where data analysis and data collection and reporting are closely linked. The specific type of analysis guides the analysis of data that the researcher uses to follow and then determine the way in which data is collected and reached (Creswell, 2016). Content analysis and conversational analysis was utilised for this research.

#### **3.6.1 Content Analysis**

"A research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of identifying themes or patterns" is described as qualitative content analysis (Strydom and Bezuidenhout, 2014). This approach ensured that the data could be analysed to compress and interpret data that was collected into specific categories. Large quantities of data and findings can be shifted into different categories in order to discover meanings of different patterns. Content analysis assisted the research in identifying subjective patterns and themes that emerged from a specific text or statement. The research aimed to work in an interpretative paradigm and by doing so, content analysis was utilised with the goal of receiving a detailed understanding of the social reality mirrored in the statements.

Content analysis is also referred to as textual analysis which deals with "an educated guess of the most likely interpretations of a text", (Strydom and Bezuidenhout, 2014: 191). This inductive method focused on insightfully analysing open-ended questions, particularly in terms of interview schedules.

As a result, themes created patterns that were identified in the data collection process and were then placed into categories to make sense of the data. Once the data was understood and made sense of, it became more meaningful to the study.

### **3.6.2 Thematic Analysis**

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within data” is known as thematic analysis which is a widely used method in qualitative research. Thematic analysis allowed for flexibility and therefore provided detailed, rich and complex descriptions and findings of the data. This type of analysis provided an answer to the research question being addressed and fit the questions perfectly to the respondent’s perceptions, views and experiences (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Each research objective for this study served as a theme and therefore, the analysis was easier to conduct as the research process was able to assess responses to questions relevant to each object and or ‘theme’. Due to every objective representing a theme, this made it simpler to create word clouds for the presentation of findings. In this way, findings are easily and visually illustrated. The findings are considered against the literature presented in Chapter Two.

### **3.6.3 Application of Data Analysis**

The use of content and thematic analysis was appropriate in drawing interpretations and categorising the data collected to discover themes and patterns related to the research topic and questions. The qualitative data analysis methods required a great deal of time and effort in order to gain and perform a close and deep understanding and reading of text to provide detailed descriptions of the research findings (Du Plooy-Cilliers, et al., 2014). As a result, this enabled the research process to identify and describe themes and patterns of meaning that emerged from the data and therefore, answered the research questions and objectives in Chapter One of the study.

## **3.7 Conclusion**

This chapter has presented research methodology methods which included; population, sampling, data collection methods and data analysis methods. Qualitative research was selected as it enabled the research process to gather data, rich in detail on Durban consumers' perceptions of the Dischem online shopping experience. Along with this, came the respondent’s subjective perceptions, opinions and experiences of the research. Since

this research is a qualitative study, along with limitations brought about from the Covid-19 pandemic, a moderate and manageable sample size was identified. Clear and concise data collection methods and data analysis methods were identified, chosen and discussed according to the relevance of this study.

## **Chapter Four: Presentation and Discussion of Findings**

### **4.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, the findings, opinions and experiences from the respondent's interview schedules are presented in the forms of word clouds. Due to the limitations imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, the purpose of these interview schedules distributed to the sample discussed in Chapter 3, was to identify common attitudes, experiences and issues within the online Dischem platform.

The data collection process used semi-structured interview schedules with participants and the data generated was analysed using content and thematic analysis. All the results are discussed to generate a deeper understanding of the findings as well as meaningful and valuable insights, which were gained from the respondents of the online Dischem shoppers. It is important to note that this was a small-scale qualitative study, therefore it is not statistically represented.

### **4.2 Presentation and Discussion of Findings**

Findings found within the interview schedule that was gathered in the primary research process, will be illustrated in the form of tables and figures. Even though tables and figures are primarily used within quantitative analysis, they are also utilised in order to identify various patterns and themes within the qualitative primary research responses. In order to provide the research with an overview of common trends and attitudes with the responses, word clouds have been formulated.

### **4.3 Methodology Applied**

#### **4.3.1 Pilot Study**

The email interview schedule was reviewed and piloted on two respondents before distribution. The pilot study ensured that the questioning was concise, clear and relevant to the research design. The interview schedule did not allow for enough understanding or elaboration on important elements of the research.

The pilot study was a small-scale study that was tested on family and friends and then reworked before being distributed to the remainder of the sample. The final interview schedule used, allowed for holistic themes and responses to be identified.

#### **4.3.2 Interview Schedule**

To gain a holistic understanding of the respondents' views on the online Dischem shopping experience, interview schedules consisting of 10 qualitative questions were asked. The interview schedule included a tick-the-box question, sub-factors that allowed for elaborations, as well as lengthy qualitative questions.

The interview schedules and consent forms for the respondents were in Microsoft Word formats and were distributed via email. Out of the sixteen respondents, two were not included due to them having skipped answers and therefore the interview schedule was deemed invalid. The fourteen responses were of great detail and had common themes within the responses.

#### **4.4 Profile of Respondents**

The respondents of the interview schedule consisted of customers that reside in Durban, that shop at the online Dischem platform, ranging from the ages 30 to 60+. Many of the respondents were between the ages of 30-39 which consisted of nine participants, two respondents were between the ages of 40-49, two more participants were between the ages of 50-59 and one respondent was in the range 60+. All the respondents were contacted via email.

|        | 30-39 | 40-49 | 50-59 | 60+ |
|--------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| Female | 8     | 2     | 2     |     |
| Male   | 1     |       |       | 1   |

Figure 4.1: Respondents Age Profile

The respondents were profiled as the primary target audience and sample for this research. A visual representation of the respondents can be seen below.



Figure 4.2: Profile of Respondents

## 4.5 Responses Answering the Research Objectives

### 4.5.1 Objective 1 - To Determine Whether Consumers Have Increasingly Used Online Platforms and Particularly the Dischem One, Since the Covid-19 Lockdown Has Been in Force

#### 4.5.1.1 Discussion of Findings

The interview schedule consisted of various questions that allowed for findings and insights regarding research objective one, in terms of the increase in online shopping. A visual and written analysis shown below, depicts responses which were prompted by questions asked in line with the increase in online shopping - particularly Dischem.

**Question 4: Please indicate whether you have shopped more online since the Covid-19 lockdown than before? Specifically discuss this in relation to the Dischem online platform.**

Below is a word-cloud illustrating the key phrases from the responses to this question.



Figure 4.3: Have You Shopped More Online Since Covid-19?

Retail shopping in a brick-and-mortar store allows for consumers to physically interact with the products that meet their needs. Shopping at e-commerce stores can be quite challenging due to not being able to physically interact with products (Storm, 2020). Nevertheless,

several of the respondents mentioned that their purchasing habits have changed to shopping more online since the Covid-19 lockdown. There were two common themes identified, where the latter theme is more popular.

Retail shopping is the first theme identified where respondents still prefer to shop in a brick-and-mortar environment. Three respondents opted to physically go into the store on designated days to stock up and buy their essential items in bulk.

E-commerce being the latter theme was identified where respondents have shopped more online since the Covid-19 lockdown. Many of the respondents stated that they will continue shopping as it is more convenient, safer and it minimises exposure to getting infected by the Covid-19 outbreak. One respondent stated that they prefer shopping online as they live with elderly people and do not want to risk their health. A respondent mentioned that it is cheaper to shop online as you can just click and collect, as well as not having the 'tempting' and 'compulsive' feeling to purchase items that are not necessary. Another interesting response was where a respondent stated that they shop more online at Clicks as they receive more EBucks.

#### **4.5.2 Objective 2 – To Ascertain the Extent to Which Consumers; Like/Dislike the Dischem Online Experience**

##### **4.5.2.1 Discussion of Findings**

The responses to the questions pertaining to the second research objective have been illustrated below. These responses led to key insights into improving and solving the issue with Dischem's online platform.

**Question 5: Discuss your positive and negative views of the Dischem online platform in terms of ease of navigation and explain why you have those views?**

**And;**

**Question 6: What are extra features/things that the online Dischem platform can provide for consumers for the experience to be more effective and efficient?**

Below is a word-cloud illustrating the key phrases from the responses to question 5.



Figure 4.4: Positive and Negative Views of Dischem Online

Below is a word-cloud illustrating the key phrases from the responses to question 6,



Figure 4.5: Extra Features Dischem Can Provide

There were only a few respondents that were completely happy with the platform and felt that there is no need for any changes.

Many respondents had concerns of checkout processes needing to be faster, specials must match in-store and online, delivery needs to be faster, items always being out of stock, not

enough product descriptions, not enough segmentation, filters and comparisons between products.

Depending on the product, consumers are willing to wait for their delivery (Storm, 2020), however; many respondents feel that Dischem takes too long to deliver their products which poses a major issue when it comes to their medication. Another important factor that was part of many responses, was that items are always on the platform but never in stock which causes a lot of frustration.

Many respondents also expressed that the site does not provide adequate product information and comparisons and should also have easier filters to navigate through the site. These factors are major concerns because if there is not enough product information, consumers will choose to shop at competing retailers.

Question five relates to question six, in terms of what extra features Dischem can provide to make the experience more effective which links in with the negative views that respondents have on the online platform.

Many of the positive views of Dischem's online platform was, the site being easy to use, it being convenient to shop online rather than standing in a queue and them being fond of the promotion section of the site. The negative views are stated above.

#### **4.5.3 Objective 3 - To Determine Which Online Platforms Consumers Prefer and Why?**

##### **4.5.3.1 Discussion of Findings**

**Question 3: Discuss the online platform you often purchase on and what aspects of those sites make them enjoyable to use?**

Below is a word-cloud illustrating the key phrases from the responses to this question.



Figure 4.6: Online Platforms Often Utilised

The most common aspect that makes online shopping enjoyable for several of the respondents was easy navigation. Consumer mentioned that if the site is easy to locate, use and navigate, they're most likely going to enjoy shopping on that platform.

Another common aspect was speedy delivery. Online shoppers love shopping but hate waiting for their orders and therefore, if there is quick delivery, they are more likely to shop online than go into the physical store.

Having a variety of options, detailed product descriptions and having a good experience are some other major aspects that consumers take into mind when shopping online.

Respondents also mentioned a few other factors that determine them shopping at a specific online store, such as; getting rewards, convenience, price, specials, quality and customer service (Gunnion, 2020).

**Question 7: What are some competing online platforms that are better than Dischem?  
Please explain why in your response.**

Below is a word-cloud illustrating the key phrases from the responses to this question.



Figure 4.7: Competing Platforms

Many of the respondents mention multiple other platforms that are better than Dischem's platform.

Having faster delivery, a great experience and being affordable was the common noted aspects that other platforms are great at compared to Dischem. A few other factors that Dischem lacks in where competing platforms offer are; rewards, a variety of products and being more mobile friendly.

Respondents mentioned that there are no other competing stores to Dischem as the brand fulfils all their needs Hartzenberg (2020).

#### **4.5.4 Objective 4 - To Ascertain Whether Consumers Intend to Migrate to More Online Purchasing**

##### **4.5.4.1 Discussion of Findings**

**Question 2: Please comment on how important the following elements affect your satisfaction most during your previous shop online experience.**

- ☐ **Site Navigation**
- ☐ **Price**
- ☐ **Product Information**

- ☐ Loyalty for this online shop
- ☐ The speed of delivery
- ☐ Complaint Resolution
- ☐ The differences between your expectation and the real products or services

Below is a word-cloud illustrating the key phrases from the responses to this question.



Figure 4.8: Elements that Affect Your Online Shopping Experience

Several of the respondents stated that site navigation is very important to them because if they cannot use the site efficiently and effectively, they will not purchase from the site.

Pricing is not an important factor to the respondents because if they need it, like it and really want it, they will pay for it.

Product information is very important to most of the respondents because if they don't know what exactly they're purchasing, they will try another site.

Eight respondents found being loyal to a shop is very important and six respondents didn't find it important at all.

The speed of delivery, complaint resolution and the differences between their expectations and real products and services is very important to many of the respondents.

**Question 8: In terms of the online shopping experience, explain the extent to which that influences your buying behaviour and loyalty to the brand?**

Below is a word-cloud illustrating the key phrases from the responses to this question.



Figure 4.9: Influential Factors that Affect Buying Behaviour and Loyalty

As mentioned in the word-cloud above, all these factors influence the respondents' buying behaviour and if not met accordingly, it will affect their purchase decision.

**Question 9: How confident are you that your personal and payment information is kept confidential when purchasing products online?**

Below is a word-cloud illustrating the key phrases from the responses to this question.



Figure 4.10: Confidence in Confidentiality

Several of the respondents stated that they are very confident that their information is safeguarded as their banking is linked to their phone and they are very active in tracking their payments.

**Question 10: Post Covid-19, would you prefer shopping online or in-store? Please elaborate on your answer.**

Below is a word-cloud illustrating the key phrases from the responses to this question.



Figure 4.11: Shopping Online vs In-Store

Some of the respondents opt to shop online due to not having time to go into the store and shop, it being convenient and saving a lot of time. The other 50% of respondents opt to carry on shopping in the physical store as they want to know what they are purchasing to ensure quality, to look at and scrutinize all products as well as wanting the products on hand.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

The research findings conclude that several respondents are in fact, happy with the online Dischem experience, with only a few discrepancies here and there. Chapter 5 summarises the entire findings and addresses the research in relation to each objective in context of the research method applied.

## **Chapter 5 - Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **5.1 Introduction**

Through analyzing the primary research findings, the research was able to draw out key findings and themes. These findings more than often align with the key themes identified in chapter two, within the literature review. Chapter 5 presents conclusions and recommendations in relation to each objective. Findings are presented under the four objectives and draw on literature presented in Chapter 2, which are followed by a conclusion and recommendation under each objective. In addition, suggestions for further research are considered with a closing comment to complete the chapter.

### **5.2 Research Objective 1 - To Determine Whether Consumers Have Increasingly Used Online Platforms and Particularly the Dischem One, Since the Covid-19 Lockdown Has Been in Force**

#### **5.2.1 Findings from Literature**

Findings within the literature analyzed included that the study of customer relationships is an integral part of maintaining customers on the online platform.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the Customer Relationship Management Framework (CRM) revolved around the notion of combining abilities to highly interact with customers, customize their experience and build better relationships with them in the online world (Winer, 2001).

The Customer Relationship Management Framework with the online Dischem platform has clearly been an impressive framework for the brand as customers are happy with the experience and relationship, they have with Dischem online compared to competing platforms.

Apart from the concept of CRM, Dischem goes beyond by their customer retention programs by delivering a higher level of satisfaction to their customers with their loyalty programs, rewards programs, customization and customer service,

### **5.2.2 Findings from the Research**

Question 4 in the interview schedule led to responses that addressed objective 1.

The key findings were that respondents will continue shopping online as it is more convenient, safer and it minimizes exposure to getting infected by the Covid-19 outbreak.

Respondents also stated that they prefer shopping online as they live with elderly people and do not want to risk their health.

Respondents mentioned that it is cheaper to shop online as you can just click and collect, as well as not having the 'tempting' and 'compulsive' feeling to purchase items that are not necessary.

Another interesting response was where respondents stated that they shop more online at Clicks as they receive more EBucks.

### **5.2.3 Conclusion**

As the literature supported the primary research conducted, the main contributor to consumers increasingly utilizing the Dischem online platform since the Covid-19 lockdown, were found that it was more convenient and simpler to shop online. E-commerce being the theme identified, Dischem being an essential service provider and trading throughout the lockdown period, they experienced significant and online sales growth of 344 percent (Mchunu, 2020).

This means that over and above certain responses wanting to still shop in retail stores, e-commerce dominates the growth of Dischem's shopping experience.

### **5.2.4 Recommendations**

Whilst the findings suggest that e-commerce is dominating the Dischem company, there are still many individuals that prefer shopping in the physical retail environment as well as competing online platforms. Competing online platforms, such as Clicks that offer certain rewards, persuade customers to shop at their store and has limited Dischem's offerings. Dischem does a great job retail or e-commerce, however they need to emphasize more benefits and rewards of shopping online, especially post Covid-19. Dischem should ensure that they maintain the same customer service in both instances.

## **5.3 Research Objective 2 – To Ascertain the Extent to Which Consumers; Like/Dislike the Dischem Online Experience**

### **5.3.1 Findings from Literature**

The literature states that all phases of a customer's interactions with a website are encompassed by e-SQ, to the extent of where a website facilitates effective shopping, purchasing and delivery (Parasuraman et al., 2005).

Through analyzing the E-Service Quality (e-SQ) Measurements, the overall customer judgments and evaluations of Dischem's virtual marketplace had either excellent quality or a lot needing to be changed. When exploring the e-quality scales and applying their instruments, it was found that the performance and perceived quality of the platform lacked in many areas where their website functionality decreased and affected their customers satisfaction and loyalty.

Further insights into customers evaluations of the Dischem online platform that were obtained through primary research and are noted below.

### **5.3.2 Findings from the Research**

Questions 5 and 6 of the interview schedule addressed objective 2 as it provided insight into where the online Dischem platform lacks as well as suggestions to the platform.

Positive views of Dischem's online platform was, the site being easy to use, it being convenient to shop online rather than standing in a queue and them being fond of the promotion section of the site.

Respondents had concerns of checkout processes needing to be faster, specials not matching in-store and online, delivery needing to be faster, items always being out of stock which becomes highly frustrating, not enough product descriptions, not enough segmentation, filters and comparisons between products. Respondents stated that Dischem takes too long to deliver their products which poses a major issue when it comes to their medication. These factors are major concerns because if there is not enough product information, consumers will choose to shop at competing retailers.

### **5.3.3 Conclusion**

The literature and primary research findings were aligned. The service quality measurements from fulfillment, reliability, ease of use, processing speed to responsiveness were not fulfilled by the online Dischem platform. The basics of what is required from an online platform, as said above was not fulfilled by Dischem and therefore, this poses as an issue because to a point customers will get frustrated and choose competing stores and or maybe choose to shop at the brick and mortar store.

### **5.3.4 Recommendations**

From what respondents have mentioned in the interview schedule, they suggest that Dischem provides better filters, more ingredients and information on products and one of the most prominent suggestions was effective and speedy delivery. There are vital factors when ordering from an online platform, especially if there are competing stores that can do so more effectively and swiftly and therefore, online platforms must adhere to these factors.

## **5.4 Research Objective 3 - To Determine Which Online Platforms Consumers Prefer and Why?**

### **5.4.1 Findings from Literature**

The literature describes the consumers' decision process and how decisions are made when choosing amongst other alternatives. The Engel-Kollat-Blackwell (EKB) model analyses this by utilizing a model that builds on the field of environmental factors and consumer psychology that influence consumer purchase decisions (Osei and Abenyin, 2016). Along with understanding consumers decisions amongst alternatives, the literature analyses E-Service Quality (e-SQ) Measurements as well as the Customer Relationship Management Framework (CRM) and how building relationships with customers in the online world is essential.

Through analyzing the literature that predominantly applies to objective 3, it is found that customers to a certain extent do not entirely make their purchase decision on the quality of the online platform but on what the brand means to them and the relationship that they have with the brand. The CRM framework elaborates more on this. For example, even though the online Dischem platform has slow delivery, customers are still going to shop there because Dischem is perceived to be one of the most trusted brands.

#### **5.4.2 Findings from the Research**

Questions 3 and 7 of the interview schedule addressed objective 3 as it provided insight into the importance of online platforms and competing stores that were obtained through primary research.

Respondents stated that easy navigation is a factor that makes shopping more enjoyable and they will be most likely to return to the platform. Speedy delivery because respondents love shopping online but hate waiting for their orders and therefore, if there is quick delivery, they are more likely to shop online than go into the physical store. Having a variety of options, detailed product descriptions, rewards, customer service and having a good experience are some other major aspects that customers take into mind when shopping online.

Factors found from primary research that limits the online Dischem platform from being better than competitors are; having faster delivery, rewards, a better experience, variations, being mobile friendly and being affordable.

Several respondents mentioned that in their view no other stores compete with Dischem as the brand fulfils all their needs.

#### **5.4.3 Conclusion**

The literature and primary research findings were aligned. The service quality measurements, customer relationship factors and the EKB model was applied well when gathering findings from the research. Even though Dischem is one of the most trusted brands, it does not make them the most effective and efficient. Soon enough, the term is not going to phase customers and they are going to choose what works best for them.

#### **5.4.4 Recommendations**

From what respondents have mentioned in the interview schedule, it is suggested that Dischem ups their game in terms of being efficient, user-friendly and speedy.

In order for customers to want to shop again at Dischem online, the brand needs to make changes. Inhibiting factors mentioned above are the minor elements that websites and companies need to adhere to, to make their customers happy.

## **5.5 Research Objective 4 - To Ascertain Whether Consumers Intend to Migrate to More Online Purchasing**

### **5.5.1 Findings from Literature**

The literature mentions E-Service Quality Measurements, the Engel-Kollat-Blackwell (EKB) model and the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Framework, all in which elaborates on elements, factors and qualities that retain their customers and have them come back for more.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the Customer Relationship Management Framework (CRM) combines factors that highly interact with customers, customizes their experiences and builds better relationships with them in the online world (Winer, 2001). The framework perfectly complements the understanding of the online personal interactions and relationships with Dischem and their customers.

Fully understanding the extent that influences a customers' buying behaviour and loyalty toward a brand is presented and understood by the EKB model. The framework goes beyond understanding the five-step model and decision process amongst competitors by how online services can improve their platform.

Through analyzing the E-Service Quality (e-SQ) Measurements, the research is able to understand the level of confidence customers have in their personal and payment information that is on Dischem's website.

Further insights into customers migrating to more online purchasing that were obtained through primary research and are noted below.

### **5.4.2 Findings from the Research**

Questions 2, 8, 9 and 10 of the interview schedule addressed objective 4 as it provided insight into why consumers would or would not migrate to more online shopping, that were obtained through primary research.

Respondents mentioned; that site navigation is very important to them because if they cannot use the site efficiently and effectively, they will not purchase from the site, pricing is not an important factor to the respondents because if they need it, like it and really want it, they will pay for it and product information is very important to most of the respondents because if they don't know what exactly they're purchasing, they will try another site. Having

an efficient, reliable and easily accessible website, contributes to their behaviour and loyalty toward a brand and if not met accordingly, it will affect their purchase decision.

Respondents are very confident that their information is safeguarded as their banking is linked to their phone, they are very active in tracking their payments and they have never had an issue that resulted in them not trusting the brands that they purchase from.

Respondents opt to shop online due to not having time to go into the store and shop, it being convenient and saving a lot of time, whilst other respondents prefer to carry on shopping in the physical store as they want to know what they are purchasing to ensure quality, to look at and scrutinize all products as well as wanting the products on hand.

### **5.5.3 Conclusion**

The literature and primary research findings were aligned. The service quality measurements, the EKB model and customer relationship factors were applied well when gathering findings from the research.

Respondents that used to shop online before Covid-19 intend to still shop online and respondents that have migrated to shopping online intend to carry on doing so. There are multiple elements of a website that affect customers buying behaviour and behaviour and loyalty is dependent on certain factors, thus providing insight into the extent that customers may migrate to purchasing more online. Half the respondents have decided that they will continue shopping online and the remaining respondents will continue to purchase in a physical store.

### **5.5.4 Recommendations**

From what respondents have mentioned in the interview schedule, it is suggested that online stores in general find out what their consumers like, enjoy and prefer. This gets customers to keep coming back, being happy and staying loyal to the online platform. By making customers online shopping lives and experiences convenient, it allows for them to want to come back and may even stop going into the physical store.

## **5.6 Suggestions for Further Research**

It is suggested that in order to create a more accurate representation of the respondents, a larger study should be applied. Studies should be set up online and in key areas of where flagship Dischem stores are placed to gain wider insight. A national study should be rolled out for the brand to engage with a wider target audience.

Dischem should be able to gain market share information, and as such a larger qualitative study would be of great value to them to determine online purchasing challenges by reviewing the brand image and brand perceptions of customers. This would assist Dischem and allow them to be number one amongst competing stores.

## **5.7 Concluding Remarks**

This study discussed Durban Consumer Perceptions of the Dischem Online Shopping Experience. Secondary research in the form of a literature review was conducted, as well as qualitative primary research in the form of a pilot study, questionnaire and interviews were conducted.

The findings were depicted in visual and written formats. The key findings highlighted that overall, customers were happy with the online experience that they've had with Dischem online. A few concerns and issues were stated here and there; however, customers trust the brand fully and will probably not choose competing stores.

Due to the nature of this study, these findings cannot be generalized to a larger population. Suggestions for further research aligning with the findings of this study were made. Recommendations were made as to how future acquisitions can be made more effective and beneficial to Dischem, if implemented.

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## APPENDIX A – ETHICAL CLEARNACE



05 August 2020

Student name: Talia Sardha

Student number: [REDACTED]

Campus: Vega School Durban

Re: Approval of BA Strategic Brand Communication 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.

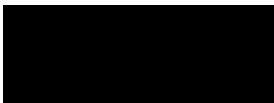
Please note: The panel has not considered the merits, accuracy or ethical soundness of the research. The only merits examined are the use of The IIE as a sample.

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. Neither minors nor people who have been institutionalized may be surveyed.
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 05/08/2020

Supervisor: Alec Bozas

 06/08/2020

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

## APPENDIX B – CONCEPT DOCUMENT TABLE

| Research Purpose/ Objective                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Primary Research Question                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Research Rationale                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Seminal Authors/ Sources                                                                                                   | Literature Review – Conceptual                                                                                            | Paradigm                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Approach                                                                                                                                                          | Data Collection Method(s)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Ethics                                                                                                     | Key Findings                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Recommendations                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
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| To ascertain the extent to which consumers like/dislike the Dischem online experience which then determines whether consumers have increasingly used the Dischem online platform since the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown has been in force.                                                                                                                                                                                    | Do online Dischem consumers find it easy or problematic to navigate and use the website?                                                                                                                                                              | Dischem is a pharmacy, health, beauty and multipurpose retailer that we require to shop at on a weekly basis and could be thriving in this time of the global pandemic, COVID-19. However, this pandemic is contagious resulting in people avoiding leaving their homes and therefore Dischem's online platform should be booming now more than ever. The research wanted to understand the online customer experience, how it was affected through this global pandemic and what Dischem could do to make the online shopping experience easier. | Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Malhotra (2005)<br><br>Winer (2001)<br><br>Yoo and Donthu (2001)                                 | Theme 1: Retail Shopping<br><br>Theme 2: E-Commerce<br><br>Theme 3: Service Quality<br><br>Theme 4: Customer Relationship | Interpretivism will be applied throughout this research. Interpretivists want to understand human behaviour by gaining an in-depth, empathetic understanding of people by seeing the world through the eyes of those they are studying.<br><br>An online consumer experience is solely based on humans and how their interaction with the online world is like. The interpretivist paradigm is relevant to this study as it is focussed on understanding lived experiences through different contexts, and multiple interpretations of the same experience, with the end goal of gaining a deeper understanding | Qualitative Research<br><br>Population<br><br>Population Parameters<br><br>Online Dischem consumers from Durban, aged 30 and above                                | Interpretivism will be applied throughout this research. Interpretivists want to understand human behaviour by gaining an in-depth, empathetic understanding of people by seeing the world through the eyes of those they are studying.<br><br>An online consumer experience is solely based on humans and how their interaction with the online world is like. The interpretivist paradigm is relevant to this study as it is focussed on understanding lived experiences through different contexts, and multiple interpretations of the same experience, with the end goal of gaining a deeper understanding | <i>What type of ethical challenges did you face in conducting the research? How did you address these?</i> | The findings were depicted in visual and written formats. The key findings highlighted that overall, customers were happy with the study should be applied. Studies they've had with Dischem online. A few concerns and issues were stated here and there; however, customers trust the brand and would probably not choose competing stores. Due to the nature of this study, these findings cannot be generalized to a larger population. Suggestions for further research aligning with the findings of this qualitative study would be of great value to them to be made as to how future acquisitions can be made more effective and beneficial to reviewing the brand Dischem, image and brand perceptions of customers. This would assist Dischem and allow them to be number one amongs competing stores. | It is suggested that in order to create a more accurate representation of the key findings, customers were happy with the study should be applied. Studies they've had with Dischem online. A few concerns and issues were stated here and there; however, customers trust the brand and would probably not choose competing stores. Due to the nature of this study, these findings cannot be generalized to a larger population. Suggestions for further research aligning with the findings of this qualitative study would be of great value to them to be made as to how future acquisitions can be made more effective and beneficial to reviewing the brand Dischem, image and brand perceptions of customers. This would assist Dischem and allow them to be number one amongs competing stores. |
| Research Problem                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Secondary Questions / Hypotheses                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Key Concepts                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Key Theories                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Sampling                                                                                                                                                          | Data Analysis Method(s)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Limitations                                                                                                | Key Contribution                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Retail shopping has been facing a threat of a gradual move by consumers to online purchasing. The onset of Covid-19 lockdown resulted in more consumers choosing to buy online. The perceived problem is whether or not the Dischem online trading process is consumer friendly and easy to use because if site navigation is difficult, consumers could opt to shop online at competing outlets such as Sparksport and Clicks. | To determine whether consumers have increasingly used online platforms and particularly the Dischem one, since the Covid-19 lockdown has been in force.<br><br>To ascertain the extent to which consumers like/dislike the Dischem online experience. | The model of service quality<br><br>Customer satisfaction<br><br>Efficiency<br><br>Reliability                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | E-service quality measurements<br><br>Customer Relationship Management Framework<br><br>Engel-Kollat-Blackwell (EKB) Model |                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Probability or non-probability sampling<br><br>Non-probability sampling<br><br>Sampling method Convenience and snowball sampling<br><br>Size Fourteen respondents | Unit of Analysis Online Dischem consumers from Durban, aged 30 and above<br><br>Data Analysis Method(s)<br><br>Conversational analysis<br><br>Content analysis                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Generalization constraint<br><br>Bias<br><br>Participant                                                   | <i>What is the key contribution you think your study will make to the body of knowledge?</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

## APPENDIX C – PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM



### CONSENT FORM TEMPLATE TO CONDUCT QUESTIONNAIRES USING EMAIL

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
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| <b>Explanatory information sheet and consent form for participants</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>My name is <b>Talia Sardha</b> and I am a student at <b>Vega School Durban</b>. I am currently conducting research under the supervision of <b>Alec Bozas</b> about <b>Durban Consumer Perceptions of the Dischem Online Shopping Experience</b>. I hope that this research will enhance our understanding to <b>ascertain the extent to which customers like/dislike the Dischem online experience which then determines whether consumers have increasingly used the Dischem online platform since the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown has been in force. With that, it can be determined which online platforms consumers prefer and why as well as to discover whether consumers intend on migrating to more online purchasing post the Covid-19 lockdown being lifted than they did prior to it.</b></p> <p>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.</p> |
| <b>What will I be doing if I participate in your study?</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <p>I would like to invite you to participate in this research because <b>you qualify as a participant for my research</b>. If you decide to participate in this research, I would like to email you my questionnaire on Microsoft word. If you could please fill that questionnaire out and then email it back to me.</p> <p>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 questions on the questionnaire.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Are there any risks/ or discomforts involved in participating in this study?</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <p>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 questions, you may withdraw or refrain from participating.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Do I have to participate in the study?</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Your inclusion in this study is completely voluntary</li><li>• If you do not wish to participate in this study, you have every right not to do so</li><li>• Even if you agree to participate in this study, you may withdraw at any time without having to provide an explanation for your decision.</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Will my identity be protected?</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <p>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 <b>Vega School Durban</b>, will have access to your questionnaire. 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.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>What will happen to the information that participants provide?</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

Once I have finished all questionnaires, I will write summaries to be included in my research report, which is a requirement to complete my **Honours in BA Strategic Brand Communication**. 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:

**Talia Sardha**

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

The contact details of my supervisor are as follows:

**Alec Bozas**

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

**By completing the questionnaire**, I agree to participate in the research conducted by **Talia Sardha** about **Durban Consumer Perceptions of the Dischem Online Shopping Experience**. This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that:

- My anonymity 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 in the questionnaire
- I may be quoted directly when the research is published, but my identity will be protected.

**Name and Surname:**

**Signature:**

**Date:**

## APPENDIX D – PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

### Durban Consumer Perceptions of the Dischem Online Shopping Experience

Name:

Surname:

Location (example, Glen Anil, Durban):

#### Interview Schedule Questions

1. How old are you? (Type an X)

|       |       |       |       |     |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| 18-29 | 30-39 | 40-49 | 50-59 | 60+ |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|

2. Please comment on how important the following elements affects your satisfaction most during your previous shop online experience.

- Site Navigation
- Price
- Product Information
- Loyalty for this online shop
- The speed of delivery
- Complaint Resolution
- The differences between your expectation and the real products or services

3. Discuss the online platform you often purchase on and what are the aspects of those sites make them enjoyable to use?

4. Please indicate whether you have shopped more online since the Covid-19 lockdown than before? Specifically discuss this in relation to the Dischem online platform.

5. Discuss your positive and negative views of the Dischem online platform in terms of ease of navigation and explain why you have those views?

6. What are extra features/things that the online Dischem platform can provide for consumers for the experience to be more effective and efficient?

7. What are some competing online platforms that are better than Dischem? Please explain why in your response.

8. In terms of the online shopping experience, explain the extent to which that influences your buying behaviour and loyalty to the brand?

9. How confident are you that your personal and payment information is kept confidential when purchasing products online?

10. Post Covid-19, would you prefer shopping online or in-store? Please elaborate on your answer.