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#### THE IMPORTANCE OF FEEDBACK IN AN OMNI CHANNEL ENVIRONMENT

ΒY

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A dissertation submitted in fulfilment for the degree

Master's of Commerce

## UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG Information Technology Management

at the

College of Business and Economics

#### UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG

SUPERVISOR: DR R. BRINK

2017

## DECLARATION

I certify that the minor dissertation/dissertation/thesis submitted by me for the degree Master's of Commerce (Information Technology Management) at the University of Johannesburg is my independent work and has not been submitted by me for a degree at another university.

K. N. Naidoo

5 December 2017



## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother and sister

#### **EVE NAIDOO**

Mom, thank you for all the sacrifices that you have made to ensure that I always have the best education. You have always supported Nicole and I in every venture in our lives. We would not be where we are today if it was not for you. We appreciate you.

#### NICOLE NAIDOO

Thank you being the best older sister and listening to me talk about my research every day. I appreciate all the help and guidance that you have provided me throughout my studying career.

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#### ABSTRACT

Online shopping has become popular in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Consumers often face extremely busy schedules. Some do not even have the time to stop at a physical retail store to purchase essentials. Many consumers prefer to purchase items online and have them delivered to them at their homes or at their places of work. Online shopping is a convenient, and sometimes more accessible method of purchasing goods. Consumers expect the same level of experience in both an online store and a physical retail store. It is important for online shoppers to have the same variety of options online as they would in a physical retail store.

Therefore, the use of consumer feedback will assist an organisation to ensure that consumers are satisfied with the service they receive. It is important to ensure that consumers have an excellent experience while shopping online so that they can return to the online store and purchase more products. This will also allow the organisation to gain a competitive advantage in an Omni Channel environment. Most often, organisations have a primary focus which is to outclass their competitors by gaining more consumers. Attracting new consumers means that an organisation has the competitive edge which makes them unique and sets them apart from their competitors. In order to ensure that an organisation improves their consumer experience, it is recommended that they gather feedback from consumers on an annual basis. However, gathering consumer feedback has been a challenge for numerous organisations. In this study, the researcher investigates how an organisation can obtain consumer feedback to gain a competitive advantage; how an organisation can determine what consumer feedback will assist them in obtaining a competitive advantage; what the major factors are that affect a consumer's experience while shopping online; and to determine if consumer feedback is necessary to improve the consumer's experience. A mixed method approach will be used to obtain the necessary data. The researcher will make use of a qualitative approach by conducting semi-structured focus groups interviews at organisations who already gather data from their consumers. The quantitative approach will be conducted through structured questionnaires which will be distributed to consumers. Consumers who are part of this study support the organisations who were interviewed in the semi-structured focus groups. The data collected from both

research methods will be compared to determine the value of consumer feedback for organisations. By engaging consumers, organisations will be able build relationships with their consumers and provide products and services that meet their needs. The findings from this study will assist organisations to determine what is the most appropriate tool to use to obtain consumer feedback, how to manage consumer feedback and most importantly how an organisation will be able to use the consumer feedback to enhance their products and services to obtain a competitive advantage in an Omni Channel environment.

Keywords: Consumer feedback, Omni Channel, competitive advantage



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## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY**

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Chopra (2015:140) states that online shopping is the preferred method of shopping as it is quick, convenient and much easier to do. Consumers are able to purchase products and have them delivered to their home. Chopra (2015:141) adds that it is important to ensure that consumers have an excellent experience no matter what channel they are shopping from. Omni Channels refer to the different channels an organisation utilises to market, communicate and sell products and services to consumers (Kositpipat, 2017:46). Consumers can purchase products through different channels such as:

- A mobile application installed on a cellular device or mobile tablet,
- A computer that connects to the internet which will allow the consumer to purchase from an online store,
- Social media,
- Kiosk,
- Calling an organisation's call centre to purchase a product, and
- The traditional method of purchasing products from a physical retail store.

An organisation is required to ensure that consumers have the same level of experience on all channels available to them. In order to ascertain that consumers are satisfied with their shopping experience, consumer feedback will need to be obtained.

Lee and Barnes (2016:34) state that obtaining consumer feedback is a complicated and difficult task. Some consumers would not provide feedback to an organisation unless they encounter problems or are not satisfied with the product or service that they have received. Organisations have to encourage consumers to provide feedback without harming their shopping experience. There are several techniques that can be used to obtain consumer feedback, such as an after service phone call, emails, comments on social media or even face to face communication.

Obtaining consumer feedback is a very important activity for any organisation, but managing, analysing and utilising the feedback in an organisation's long term goals are just as important. In this study, the researcher investigates how organisations gather, analyse and integrates consumer feedback into their strategic long term goals and how consumer feedback can assist an organisation to obtain a competitive advantage in the environment they are situated in.

According to Rintamaki and Kirves (2016:160) identifying, understanding and managing consumer value propositions is a vital activity for an organisation. This will help organisations obtain and maintain a competitive advantage in an Omni Channel world. As can be seen in Figure 1.1, there are four steps to the model:

**Step 1: Identify customer value propositions:** Organisations must first identify what their consumer's value propositions are. This can be done by classifying consumers according to age, gender, or even race.

**Step 2: Customer perceiving value**: Now that consumers have been identified, the organisation will need to understand each category and how to approach them. It is highly important to understand what a consumer's value proposition is as this is valuable for an organisation.

**Step 3: Modelling customer value perceptions**: The information gathered from step 2 is analysed further to understand how it can be used to enhance a consumer's experience.

**Step 4: Company proposing value**: The results from Step 3 are then analysed and integrated into the organisations strategic goals to assist them to become competitive in the environment that they are situated in.

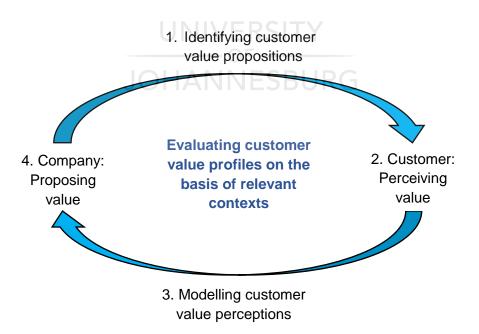


Figure 1.1: Customer Value Propositions model (adapted from Rintamaki and Kirves, 2016:160).

The researcher will be using this model as a platform when conducting research. Rintamaki and Kirves (2016:159) argue that organisations will need to identify and choose "their value" and integrate it to their strategic long-term goals, but this is not a simple task as consumer's opinions change on a daily basis. The researcher will investigate how the value of consumer feedback fits into the theory and if consumer feedback will assist an organisation to obtain and maintain a competitive advantage in an Omni Channel environment. From the results that will be obtained from this study, the researcher will create a proposed conceptual framework that organisations will be able to use as a basis to assist them to obtain competitive advantage using consumer feedback.

#### 1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM

There are various factors that can affect a consumer's shopping experience. Factors such as complicated security features and advertisements can cause consumers to terminate their purchase (Wrigley, 2016:282). Duncan; Rawson and Jones, (2013:59) state that it is quite complicated to get data from consumers about their shopping experience. Reasons vary from the data gathering technique that organisations are using to the attitude of the consumer at the time data is gathered (Bernon; Cullen and Gorst, 2016:592). Once an organisation has obtained the necessary data, they are required to analyse it and extract information that can be used in their strategic long term goals. Consumer feedback is one of the most important pieces of data that an organisation can collect to ensure that consumers are satisfied with their products and service.

#### 1.3 RESEARCH QUESTION

How can consumer feedback assist an organisation to obtain a competitive advantage in an Omni Channel world?

- 1.3.1 Sub questions
  - How can an organisation obtain consumer feedback?

- How can an organisation determine what consumer feedback will assist them in obtaining a competitive advantage?
- What are the major factors that affect a consumer's experience while shopping online?
- Is the consumer feedback necessary to improve consumer experience?

#### 1.4 AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The main aim of this study is to identify how consumer feedback can be used by organisations to obtain and maintain a competitive advantage.

The objectives of this study are as follows:

- Identify how consumers feel about providing feedback to organisations
- Evaluate how gathering consumer feedback has evolved over the years
- Identify how organisations can use consumer feedback to obtain and maintain their competitive advantage in an Omni Channel world and to
- Identify the major factors that affect a consumer's experience online.

#### 1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

The researcher will be using a mixed method approach. According to Creswell (2014:43), mixed methods consist of both the qualitative and quantitative methods. The qualitative method is used when a researcher would like to gain an understanding and create an opinion on a particular topic, whereas the quantitative method is used to measure or test a theory (Hammersley, 2013:8).

Qualitative research methods have evolved over the years. There are various techniques that can be used in order for data to be collected. Qualitative data can be collected with the use of individual interviews, semi-structured focus groups, observations and even video conferences with experts from various countries (Crossman, 2017). The researcher will be conducting two semi-structured focus group interviews to gather the necessary qualitative data. According to Blumberg (2011:137) a semi-structured focus group consists of two or more people coming together to discuss a particular topic. The semi-structured focus group interviews will assist the researcher in understanding how an organisation can gain a competitive

advantage in an Omni Channel environment and how consumer feedback will assist them to obtain, and maintain their competitive advantage.

The two semi-structured focus group interviews will consist of professional experts who have the knowledge of how an organisation can use consumer feedback to obtain a competitive advantage. The semi-structured focus group interviews will assist the researcher to investigate how organisations obtain and utilize consumer feedback. The researcher will start the semi-structured focus group interviews using predetermined questions to encourage participants to participate in the semistructured focus group interviews. Semi-structured focus group interviews allow the researcher to ask participants questions based on their responses on the questions asked. The researcher will facilitate the semi-structured focus group interviews and will guide the semi-structured focus group interviews in the correct direction. The researcher will not ask questions that will manipulate the validity and outcome of the results from the semi-structured focus group interviews. The researcher will remain objective at all times and listen to the discussion that is taking place. Additional questions will be asked based on the responses that the participants provide. This will assist the researcher obtain more data from the semi-structured focus group interviews if needed. The semi-structured focus group interviews will be recorded on an audio device and transcripts will be created based on the recordings. Content analysis will be performed to identify the relevant themes. The semi-structured focus group interviews will take place at two different organisations that are situated in the telecommunications and software development industry respectively. These organisations have been chosen as they have ventured into the Omni Channel direction and they will be able to answer any questions the researcher has.

A quantitative approach allows for data to be produced in a descriptive and statistical format. Such an approach is used in studies by researchers where problems that have been identified can be quantified. Once the data is in this form, the results can be generalized (Creswell, 2014:155). Quantitative research methods are used to ensure that results from the data gathering tool remain as objective as possible. Data gathering tools in a quantitative study include the use of a structured questionnaire and experiments (Creswell, 2014:160). A structured questionnaire will be used by the researcher to obtain data from consumers. The structured questionnaire will be

distributed to consumers who purchase products from the organisations who participated in the semi-structured focus group interviews. The questionnaire will test consumer's feedback preference, consumer's attitude towards providing feedback and factors that affect consumer's experience. A factor analysis will be done to identify the valid variables. The themes identified from the qualitative semi-structured focus group interviews and the variables identified from the quantitative structured questionnaire will be compared to determine the final outcome of this study. A detailed literature review will be conducted to support the researchers finding. The results from the semi-structured focus group interviews and the structured questionnaire will be analysed to identify the necessary factors and themes. These results will then be used to create the proposed conceptual framework that can be used by organisations to obtain a competitive advantage in the environment they are situated in.

#### 1.6 CREATING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Figure 1.2 shows the stages that the researcher will use when designing the questionnaire that will be used in this study. The following model was created by Dr Thomas Burgees from The University of Leeds. This model is based on five vital steps.

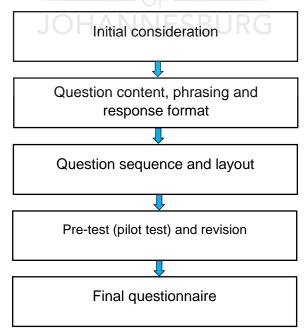


Figure 1.2: Creation of the questionnaire (Burgess, 2001:13).

#### Table 1.1Explanation of the steps to create the questionnaire.

Stage 1: Initial considerations	In this stage, the information the researcher needs to collect is identified, and how the questionnaire will be answered by the participants.
<b>Stage 2:</b> Question content, phrasing and response format	Once the researcher has determined what information is required from participants, the questions are rephrased in a way that will help the participant understand what the research is asking.
Stage 3: Question layout	The researcher needs to ensure that the way the questions are laid out will not confuse the participant. It should be in a simple to read format.
Stage 4: Pre-testing	The researcher takes a rough copy of the questionnaire and asks an expert on their opinion of the questionnaire. Restructuring of questions may occur. This is also known as Pilot testing (Blumberg, 2011:138).
Stage 5: Final questionnaire	The researcher makes final alterations to the questionnaire and hands out the final copy to all participants involved in the study.

In order to create the questions for the structured questionnaire, the researcher will identify and read literature that is based on consumer feedback and experience. Information gathered from the literature available will assist the researcher create the questions for the structured questionnaire.

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#### 1.7 DATA ANALYSIS AND COLLECTION

A concurrent parallel design will be used in this study. According to Creswell (2014:5), a convergent parallel design is used when collecting qualitative data parallel to collecting quantitative data. The researcher will be conducting the semi-structured focus group interviews and concurrently will be distributing the questionnaire to participants. This means that the researcher will not wait for the semi-structured focus group interviews to be conducted before distributing the questionnaire to consumers.

The qualitative semi-structured focus group interviews that will be conducted will be recorded on a portable recording device, downloaded onto a computer and stored onto a cloud drive for safe keeping. The researcher will then use the recordings and create transcripts. The researcher will then perform content analysis on the transcripts. This will allow the researcher to identify and allocate themes based on the discussion in the semi-structured focus group. Blumberg, Cooper and Schindler (2011:296), state that one of the main objectives of content analysis is to organise large amounts of useful information into smaller more manageable sections. The process of identifying the themes from the semi-structured focus group is done with the use of coding. Blair (2015:16) states that content analysis relies on codes that can be identified and assigned to data. This will assist in categorising the data into "meaningful categories" or themes which will be analysed and evaluated. Coding allows the researcher to first identify temporary constructs before finalising the constructs into themes. The coding process is discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

In order to analyse the data gathered from the structured questionnaire, the researcher of this study will be working with Statcon from the University of Johannesburg. Statcon is a department at the University that assists researchers with the analysis of quantitative data. Statcon makes use of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, Version 22.0 (V.22.0), to analyse quantitative data. SPSS V.22.0 utilises different tests to evaluate the reliability of the results. The Cronbach's Alpha measurement method will be used to measure and test the internal reliability of variables. A factor analysis will be performed to group variables together. According to Blumberg, *et al.*, (2011;534), factor analysis is a technique used to identify similar variables that can be joined to create one variable. The data analysis is discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

#### 1.8 ETHICS

Not only is ethics about how a researcher conducts their research, it is also about the approach the researcher takes regarding their research. Most importantly, it is about the respect the researcher should have towards the participants that will participate in their research (Thomas, 2013:38). Driscoll (2012), states that ethical clearance protects the participants from being exploited and provides the researcher with permission to use the information that they have gathered to formulate their research.

The researcher applied for ethical clearance through the department of Applied Information Systems ethics committee. The ethics committee granted the researcher ethical clearance and provided the researcher with an ethical clearance number of thirty three. The Research Ethics Clearance form can be seen in Appendix E.

The researcher of this study will be conducting two semi-structured focus group interviews at two different organisations. The semi-structured focus group interviews will consist of three participant's. Each participant will be required to sign a consent form which can be seen in Appendix C and D. A representative will also sign on behalf of the organisation which can be seen in Appendix A and B. The consent form will protect participants from being exploited who will remain anonymous at all times. The semi-structured focus group interviews will be recorded on a portable device and downloaded onto a computer. These devices will be locked up in a secure environment to ensure that no unauthorised individual will have access to it. The identity of the organisations and participants be changed to ensure confidentiality. A pseudonym such as Jane or Max will be allocated to all participants that participate in the semi-structured focus group interviews.

Participants who completed the questionnaire will be required to complete and sign a declaration at the end of the questionnaire. The declaration states that they are allowing the researcher to use the data from the completed questionnaire. Participants who complete the questionnaire online will be required to tick the declaration box. This serves as a digital signature. Only once the declarations are signed, can the completed questionnaire be used in this study. Participants who complete the questionnaire be used in this study. Participants who complete the questionnaire are not required to provide any personal information such as their name and contact number. This allows all participants to be anonymous throughout this study. The organisations who participated in the semi-structured focus group interviews will distribute the questionnaire to their consumers. The organisation will not provide any consumer information to the researcher as according to The Protection of Personal Information (POPI) Act, Act Four of 2013, an organisation cannot provide personal information to a third party without the consent from the consumer (Gazette, 2013:5).

The declaration as well as the consent form states that participants may withdraw from this study at any time. This provides autonomy to all participants as they are not pressured into remaining in the study. Beneficence is also dismissed as the consent form also states that the researcher will not make any negative comments that could harm the participant's reputation or harm the organisations reputation. All participants will be allocated a pseudonym to protect their identities. By signing this consent form, participants are protected from any act of dishonesty during the research process and the results of the research. Participants are allowed to view the progress of the research by contacting the researcher directly. Once the researcher has completed this, participants will have access to the final results.

#### 1.9 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

#### CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION INTO THE STUDY

The researcher introduces the research problem and explains how the research will be conducted. Data analysis, research methods and ethical consideration is discussed in this chapter.

# CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, an in-depth analysis on what consumer feedback is, evolution of consumer feedback, factors contributing to consumer experience, organisations benefiting from social media and how consumer feedback can be used to obtain a competitive advantage will be discussed.

#### **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

A quantitative design with a mixed method will be used in this study. The researcher will make use of an evaluation research design. Primary and secondary data will also be used to gather the necessary information to answer the research questions that have been identified. This chapter explains the research design and methodology in detail.

#### **CHAPTER 4: QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH FINDINGS**

In this chapter, the researcher will discuss the data that was gathered through the semi-structured focus group interviews and the structured questionnaire.

# CHAPTER 5: COMPARING QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH FINDINGS

The researcher will compare the results that have been obtained from the quantitative and qualitative data against each other. The comparison will be discussed in detail in this chapter.

#### **CHAPTER 6: OVERVIEW AND CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, the researcher will discuss the important findings and the limitations of this study. The proposed conceptual framework will also be discussed.

#### 1.10 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 1

Spenner and Freeman (2012:4) state that organisations should "keep it simple" when it comes to ensuring that consumers have an excellent shopping experience. They further state that it is important to obtain consumer feedback as it assists in building a relationship with consumers. This chapter introduced the topic that is being investigated in this study. An introduction to the research problem, the research questions, the aims and objectives, data collection methods and analysis is explained. A literature review will be discussed in the next chapter. Literature that is based on consumer feedback will be discussed.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

According to Ridley (2012:5), a literature review discusses and evaluates published information in a particular research area. A literature review is an overview of research produced by other researchers in an academic environment. It is important for the researcher to conduct a literature review. It will assist by providing extra knowledge on the chosen topic. It also guides the researcher to answer the research questions. Brynard and Hanekom (2006:38-39) state that the success of research depends on the review and analysis of available literature. This literature review will assist the researcher to identify, organise and evaluate literature to determine if consumer feedback can assist an organisation obtain a competitive advantage.

#### 2.2 ONLINE SHOPPING

Online shopping has become a popular method for consumers to purchase goods and services. Consumers can purchase products from different channels available to them such as a smartphone, a computer or even during a phone call. In 2015, Price Water House Coopers (PwC) conducted a study to determine how consumers prefer to shop in South Africa. The results can be seen in Figure 2.1. Thirty-four percent of consumers have stated that they purchase products in store. This means that the consumer goes into the retail store to purchase their products. Forty-seven percent of participants have stated that they would purchase products online, either through the use of a computer or a mobile phone. This shows that South Africa is moving towards the e-commerce option, as it is more convenient.

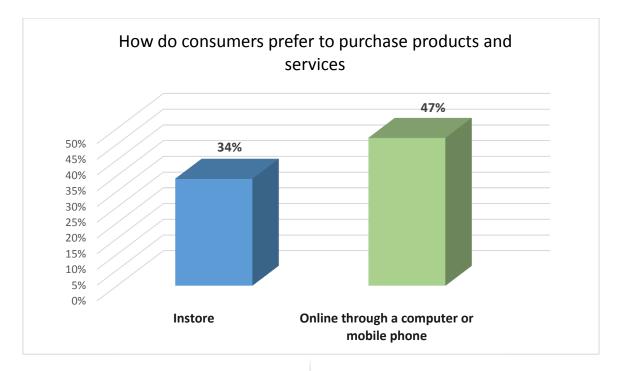


Figure 2.1 How consumers in South Africa prefer to purchase products (adapted from Maxwell, 2015:3).

In 2016, Fenecn, *et al.*, (2016:1) wrote a report which stated that consumers these days prefer to do shopping online as it is very efficient. Figure 2.2, shows how consumers in the United Kingdom prefer to shop online or in a physical retail store. Forty five percent of consumers prefer to purchase products in-store, and fifty eight percent prefer to purchase products through an online store as it is more convenient for them to have the products delivered to their home.

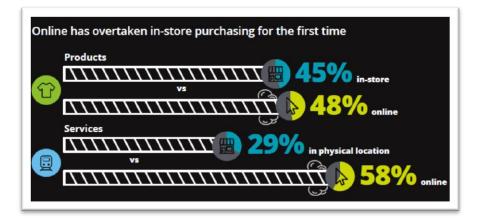


Figure 2.2: How consumers in the United Kingdom prefer to purchase products. (Fenecn, *et al.*, 2016:4).

Fenecn, *et al.*, (2016:5) adds that consumer experience is extremely important. Organisations should focus on ensuring that their consumers have a positive experience when shopping online or on any other channel available (Fenecn, *et al.*, 2016:6). An organisation should ensure that their consumers obtain the best experience during their daily or monthly shopping. This will make the consumer loyal to the organisation and the consumer will continue to support them.

To ensure that consumers are satisfied with their experience and products, organisations will be required to obtain consumer feedback. Obtaining consumer feedback is a difficult task as not many consumers will provide feedback. Consumer feedback is not only beneficial to organisations, but is useful to other consumers who want to purchase a product online but are unsure if they should proceed with the transaction.

Mudambi and Schuff (2010:186) state that online reviews that are created by other customers help potential consumers in the process of making a purchasing decision. Positive reviews about a product an organisation has will have a postivie effect on the sales of that product. This means that the organisation should be able to benefit financially from positive reviews. Mudambi and Schuff (2010:187) add that online reviews are also defined as "peer generated product evaluations" that are posted either on the organisation's website or on a third party website that is also selling the product on behalf of the organisation. Consumers that can see that there are comments and reviews about an online store will be able to determine if this is a safe organisation to purchase from. If an organisation's online store looks unused and dormant, consumers will not be attracted to purchasing products from them.

Lelis and Howes (2011:2285) state that consumers research products they wish to buy on the Internet before purchasing. They state that consumers follow the process identified in Figure 2.3 before making a purchase.

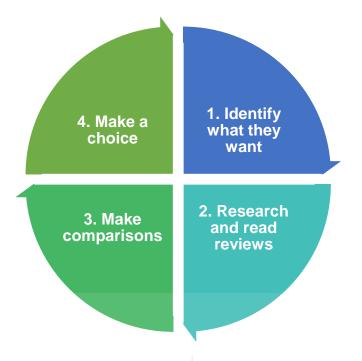


Figure 2.3: The process a consumer follows before making a purchase (adapted from Lelis and Howes, 2011:2285).

- 1. Consumers first need to identify what they need to purchase to add value to their daily activities.
- Once they have identified what they would like to purchase, they then will go onto the Internet and research a product that they would like to purchase. They will read comments that other consumers have published and will also identify which organisations offer similar products.
- 3. They will then compare the products with each other.
- 4. A final decision will be made as to where a product will be bought.

Figure 2.3 displays four steps that a consumer follows before purchasing products. Step 2 is the most important step in the decision process defined in Figure 2.3 as it involves new consumers researching consumer feedback. New consumers will look at reviews from previous consumers that have purchased a product. The reviews will be a mixture of both positive and negative comments. These comments will assist the consumer to make a decision should they want to purchase products The comments will not only state how other consumers feel about that product, but also contain comments on the experience other consumers experienced purchasing from that organisation. Not only will consumers be able to view these comments and reviews, organisations that created the products will also be able to view the comments and reviews. These comments will assist an organisation in determining if

consumers are satisfied with their products. Most importantly the comments and reviews will assist an organisation to improve their products by adding new features that consumers have stated they would like. As a result, an organisation will experience a consumer increase and obtain a competitive advantage in the environment they are situated in.

#### 2.3 WHAT IS CONSUMER FEEDBACK?

Consumer feedback is defined as the information that comes directly from consumers based on their experience with a certain product or service that an organisation provides (Osti, 2016:2). Consumer feedback is vital in any organisation as it can assist an organisation to identify what they can do to improve their consumer's experience and to also enhance their organisation's brand performance. Organisations can use a variety of techniques to obtain consumer feedback. Labrecque, *et al.*, (2013:257) state that since the introduction of the Internet, consumers are able to access large amounts of information which will influence their purchasing decision.

According to Khriyenko (2015:518), in order to ensure the success of an organisation and their products, they will need to listen to their consumers. Khriyenko (2015:35) states that consumer feedback will assist an organisation enhance their products, services and their consumers overall experience. Consumers feel that an organisation cares about their opinion when they are asked to provide feedback. Consumers feel that once an organisation is aware of the problems that they are facing, organisations will create a plan of action to ensure the problems are eliminated and that their experience is enhanced. Listening to a consumer allows for a relationship to be built between the organisation and the consumer (Schultz and Peltier, 2013:87). When such a relationship is formed, consumers will then become loyal to that organisation and will return to purchase their products and services. Schultz and Peltier (2013:87) further stated that consumers are more likely to provide feedback when they have encountered a major problem or if there is an error with their order. There are different tools and techniques an organisation can use to obtain consumer feedback:

- <u>Surveys</u>: A survey is a cost-effective technique that can be used to obtain consumer feedback (Begum, 2011:1). A survey is used to measure and evaluate participants opinions on a topic identified by the researcher. Open ended and closed ended questions can be used on a survey. A survey is a simple technique for organisations to use to obtain feedback from a large number of consumers.
- <u>Email</u>: Many consumers have a busy lifestyle and are unable to provide feedback straight away. Some consumers prefer to provide feedback to an organisation by email (Begum, 2011:2). Organisations can simply email the link to their consumers so they can complete it on a mobile device or on a computer when they have the opportunity.
- <u>After service calls</u>: This involves the organisations calling their consumers a few days after they have purchased a product to ensure that they are satisfied with it and that they are able to use it. This is also called after sales service. Sometimes consumers do not have the time to complete a survey or do not have social media accounts but will answer a few questions over the phone (Schultz and Peltier, 2013:87).
- <u>Social media</u>: Organisations can collect and gather information from a variety of social media platforms that consumers in an Omni Channel world use. Examples of social media include Facebook<sup>®</sup>, Twitter<sup>®</sup> and even Instagram<sup>®</sup>. Schultz and Peltier (2013:87) state that the Internet and social media has created a new communication channel for consumers and organisations to communicate with each other and with organisations.
- <u>Comment box on the organisation's website</u>: Consumers who shop online can provide their comments about different products and services they have purchased in a comment box located on an organisation's website. The organisation and other consumers will be able to view these comments and act accordingly. According to Lackermair, Kailer, and Kanmaz (2013:1-2), consumers look at product ratings and reviews before they purchase any products from an online store.
- <u>Focus groups</u>: A focus group consist of two or more participants coming together to discuss a particular topic (Blumberg, *et al.*, 2011:333). Organisations can create a semi-structured focus group with consumer's to discuss a new product they are designing. Consumers can discuss this product and provide feedback to the organisation on what features they would want on this product or if they would use it.

<u>Face to face communication</u>: This occurs when an organisation obtains consumer feedback as soon as a consumer has purchased their product or has experienced their service Labrecque, *et al.*, (2013: 256). Face to face communication is seen as one of the best tools to obtain consumer feedback as the organisation can obtain the feedback immediately.

All of these tools are successfully used by different organisations all over the world to obtain consumer feedback. Labrecque, *et al.*, (2013: 257) state that it is important for organisations to use different tools and techniques to obtain consumr feedback as organisations have different types of consumers. Some consumers may prefer to provide feedback inperson and some may prefer to provide feedback online. Obtaining feedback has evolved over the years and organisations are required to stay updated with how consumers prefer to provide feedback. The evolution of consumer feedback techniques and tools is discussed in the next section of the literature review.

#### 2.4 EVOLUTION OF OBTAINING CONSUMER FEEDBACK

Khriyenko (2015:518) states that there are various older and more traditional methods that an organisation can use to obtain consumer feedback. Examples include quartely business report and paper-based surverys. These techniques were effective before more modern and digital techniques were created to obtain consumer feedback. Paper based surveys are quite simple to distribute and collect. However, this method requires a lot of paper to be used which make the organisation incure additional costs. Not only will it be expensive to produce, but analysing each and every survey manually takes a lot of time and effort (Khriyenko, 2015:519). Wright and Ogbuehi (2014:41) state that the use of traditional methods to obtain consumer feedback is becoming obsolete and the use of digital and innovative methods are becoming more popular and the preferred option by various researchers.

Obtaining consumer feedback has evolved over the past five years. New, more advanced techniques are used to obtain consumer feedback. Social media has had a major impact in terms of how consumers prefer to provide feedback. These days, consumers are able to access social media easily through their smart phones or even on their computer/s. Since 2001, there have been new and innovative social media networks that have entered the market. Figure 2.4 displays the different social media networks that have been used since 2012. The researcher is able to see that Facebook was a constant social media network that was used to obtain consumer feedback. Organisations and consumers will be able to view different comments as these comments are made public on Facebook. Consumer feedback has evolved since 2012 till 2016. Online questionnaires, emails and interviews are currently the preferred method to obtain consumer feedback.

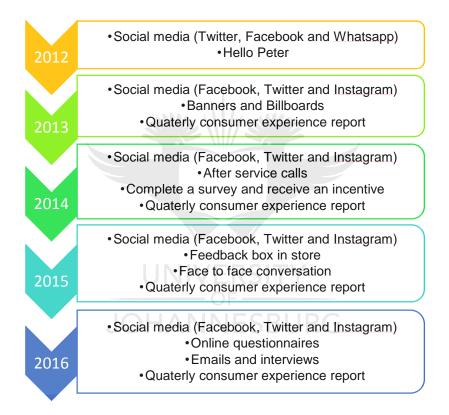


Figure 2.4: Gathering feedback over the years has changed (adapted from Beard, 2013:1).

In 2015, a well-known South African telecommunications company received bad publicity after it had failed to assist a consumer with a problem. The consumer had tried every channel available to have the problem fixed with no success. Eventually the disgruntled consumer spent ZAR4000 for a banner which was placed in a densely populated area (News24Wire, 2015). The banner stated that they had received continued terrible service. All passers-by were able to see this banner,

which was directed at the telecommunications company. This attempt, by the consumer, shows the importance of listening to your consumers and treating them with the respect they deserve. Once the telecommunications company was made aware of the situation, they offered to pay for the banner that the consumer had made and began identifying solutions to solve the consumer's original complaint. This article demonstrates the importance of having a good relationship with your consumers. Without consumers supporting an organisation, they will not become successful.

## 2.5 HOW DOES AN ORGANISATION USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO THEIR BENEFIT TO OBTAIN CONSUMER FEEDBACK?

These days, consumers have access to the Internet. Now that it is easier to get access to the Internet, individuals are able to create various social media accounts such as Twitter<sup>©</sup>, Facebook<sup>©</sup> and even Instagram<sup>©</sup>. According to Bajic and Lyons (2011:1), social media has had a huge impact in organisations as it is now used by orgnisations to market, sell and obtain consumer feedback about their products and services.

Bajic and Lyons (2011:2) state that traditional methods such as focus groups, questionnaires or surveys can be used to collect consumer feedback, but these methods can become quite costly. Rao (2017:25) states that consumers may not be motivated to participate in traditional methods as they are becoming obsolete. Social media is quick, efficient and a low cost technique for organisations to obtain consumer feedback and communicate with their consumers.

Social media plays a vital role in terms of providing feedback to an organisation. Hajli (2013:387) conducted research to determine how an organisation can use social media to improve the products and services that they provide to consumers. Hajli argues that organisations can use social media to not only collect consumer feedback but to also communicate and build a positive relationship with consumers. Building a positive relationship with consumers has been proven to improve consumer experience and increase the number of consumers that purchase from that specific store. Organisations are more likely to respond to consumers through

social media as they want to ensure that their reputation is maintained at all times as anyone who has access to social media will be able to see the negative and positive comments.

Organisations need to be aware of various legislation in terms of social media. South Africa has the following act that organisations will need to adhere to. Act 4 of 2013, Protection of Personal Information (POPI) states that an organisation may only use, collect or share information once consumers have given their consent. They may not in any way use consumer information for anything that they are not authorised to use it for or share it with anyone without consent first (Gazette, 2013:53).

According to Facebook's Data privacy information, users are required to set up their privacy settings accordingly. The user will state who will be able to view the information they share online. Facebook<sup>©</sup> states in its terms and conditions that:

When you (the user) publish content or information using the Public setting, it means that you are allowing everyone, including people off of Facebook, to access and use that information, and to associate it with you (i.e., your name and profile picture) (Facebook, 2015).

Therefore, it is important that an organisation follows the correct procedures when obtaining consumer feedback through social media. Not only is it the organisations responsibility to ensure they follow the correct procedures when collecting information but consumers should be aware of what they post on social media such as Facebook. Stern (2010:2-4) states that social media can affect consumer's experience in both a positive and negative manner. One of the positive effects of social media is that a large number of online stores allow a consumer to authenticate themselves using existing social media accounts. This means that consumers do not have to create a brand new account and remember new login credentials. Social media can also affect consumers in a negative way as some online stores would only allow a consumer to authenticate themselves using their existing social media account if that online store can publish and stated that this consumer just used this method to authenticate themselves. Factors that contribute to consumer sexperience are discussed in the next section of the literature review.

## 2.6 WHAT ARE THE FACTORS THAT AFFECT CONSUMERS EXPERIENCE ONLINE?

There are various factors that influence or affect consumer's online shopping experience. According to Bauboniene and Gulevičiūtė (2015:74-79), the main factors that can influence how a consumer shops online are:

- <u>Usability</u>: According to Calisir, *et al.*, (2010:429), usability can be defined as ensuring that the overall layout of an online store is simple enough for a consumer to navigate through. Consumers who find it difficult to navigate through a website will less likely purchase from that organisation.
- <u>Security</u>: Security is one of the most important factors that any online store has to take into consideration. Ismailova and Muhametjanova (2016:35), assert that security has become one of the most important reasons that cause consumers to hesitate or fear using e-purchases and it has played a dominant role in influencing their attitude towards online shopping.
- <u>Privacy</u>: When one thinks of privacy on an online store, the first point that comes to mind is personal information. Online privacy concerns often arise through a website operator's collection and spreading of personal information about an individual consumer who has visited a particular website (Guo Jun, 2011:124). Consumers will not visit an online store that is not able to keep their information safe and is always prone to information attacks.
- <u>After sales service</u>: This entails the organisation contacting the consumer after they have purchased a product to find out if they are satisfied with what they have purchased. After sales service allows consumers to ask any questions they may have about the product they have purchased (Guo Jun, 2011:126).
- <u>The reputation of an online store</u>: Research has shown that an online stores reputation plays a vital role in an Omni Channel world. Consumers are less likely to purchase from an online store which is known for bad consumer service and assistance, difficult to navigate on the website and most importantly having a reputation for not ensuring that consumer's information is kept safe (Guo Jun, 2011:127).

These five factors play a vital role in ensuring that consumers have a positive experience while shopping online. These factors not only play an important role towards the consumer experience, but also affect a consumer's attitude towards purchasing products and services in an Omni Channel environment. It is very important to obtain consumer feedback as it will help organisations ensure that

consumers are satisfied with their products and services. The importance of collecting consumer feedback is discussed in detail in the next section of the literature review.

#### 2.7 THE IMPORTANCE OF COLLECTING CONSUMER FEEBACK

Obtaining consumer feedback is an important activity that organisations need to perform. There are various reasons as to why obtaining consumer feedback is important. Balaji, Leslie and Sheri (2014:1915-1918) state the following reasons as to why it is important to obtain consumer feedback:

- It helps an organisation to improve products and services. Organisations are able to identify what changes and upgrades are required to ensure that their consumers are satisfied with their products and services.
- It assists an organisation determine whether or not consumers are satisfied with their products and services. If consumers are not satisfied with the product and service, feedback will allow the organisation to identify the problem and find out why it is a problem.
- Consumer feedback can assist an organisation ensure that consumer experience is maintained. Some organisations have branches all over the world. Consumer feedback will assist an organisation ensure that third party stores are keeping up to the high standard that is being set by the main organisation.
- It assists in maintaining existing consumers and ensuring that they remain loyal to the organisation. The feedback will also assist an organisation to create new products that can attract a new target group of consumers. Gaining new customers means that the organisation is growing and achieving their long-term goals.
- The information gathered will assist managers in an organisation make better informed business decisions. Organisations who make well informed decisions will allow the organisation to grow and achieve their strategic goals.
- Most importantly, it will assist an organisation to obtain a competitive advantage in the environment they are situated in.

Having a competitive advantage allows an organisation to have more consumers and increased profits. An organisation can obtain a competitive advantage using different techniques. Different techniques will be discussed in the next section of the literature review.

#### 2.8 WHAT IS COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE?

There are different techniques that can be used to obtain a competitive advantage. There are two techniques that are favoured by organisations from different environments. The two techniques are Michael Porters model to obtain a competitive advantage and the Ansoff Matrix. These two techniques will be discussed in this section.

The Ansoff Matrix can be used by an organisation to obtain a competitive advantage. The model consists of four growth strategies that an organisation can adopt to obtain a competitive advantage (Pleshko and Heiens, 2008:109). These four strategies can be seen in Table 2.1.

New products	2. Market development	3. Product development
Existing products	1. Market penetration	4. Diversification

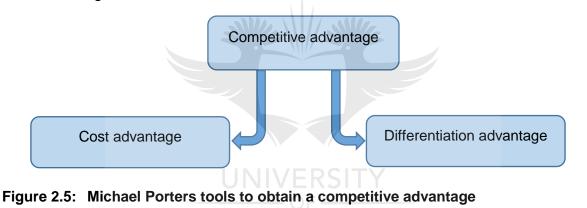
Simister(2011:2) explains each of the strategies as follows:

- 1. **Market penetration**: The organisation pursues to obtain growth with existing products that they currently have in its market.
- 2. **Market development**: The organisation uses existing products to target new types of consumers in different consumer groups.
- 3. **Product development**: The organisation created new products to target their current consumer group.
- 4. **Diversification**: The organisation expands by creating new products and services that can be offered to a new group of consumers. This will increase their consumers that they already have.

These four strategies have been used successfully by different organisations in different environments. The strategies are quite similar to the techniques explained in Michael Porters competitive advantage model. However Michael Porters model to obtain a competitive advantage is a more preferred choice by many organisations.

Porter defines competitive advantage as when consumers prefer to purchase products and services from one organisation over any other organisation. When consumers prefer to purchase from one specific organisation, this means that they have the competitive advantage compared to their competitors (Pearlson and Saunders, 2013:19).

Porter states that there are two tools which an organisation can use to obtain a competitive advantage in the environment they are situated in. These two tools can be seen in Figure 2.5.



JOHANNESBURG (adapted from Porter, 2008:28).

Figure 2.5 Porter recommends that an organisation use these two methods to obtain a competitive advantage.

- <u>Cost advantage</u>: This is when an organisation provides the same product and service as their competitor but at a different rate. Usually this rate is lower than other organisations in the same industry (Pearlson and Saunders, 2013:25).
- **Differentiation advantage**: This is a technique that organisations use to be unique in the environment they are situated in (Pearlson and Saunders, 2013:25). Organisations work to be different by providing better and improved products to their consumers.

Consumer feedback can assist an organisation adopt the differentiation technique, which can assist the organisation identify what strategy or idea their competitors are working from to attract consumers. Organisations can then use the idea, enhance it according to their strategic goals and implement it into the market. The differentiation technique will assist the organisation to attract new consumers from a different target audience. This will increase the organisation's support from different consumers which will increase their competitive advantage in the environment they are situated in.

In order to use the techniques from Michael Porter's model and Ansoff Matrix, organisations will need to communicate with their consumers and obtain consumer feedback.

According to Lackermair, Kailer and Kanmaz (2013:2), consumer feedback allows an organisation to take note of how consumers feel about the products and services they have experienced. Reaching out to a consumer to find out if they are satisfied with their products is the first step an organisation can take to building a relationship with a consumer.

Not only will consumer feedback assist an organisation obtain a competitive advantage, but it also assists an organisation measure consumer satisfaction. Various tools can be used to determine if consumers are satisfied with the products and services they receive (Anonymous, 2012:3). A rating scale of a product is a good tool of how organisations can test if consumers are satisfied with the product.

On Android's Google Play store, users are able to see what ratings other consumers have given that specific application/service/item before they download it. Not only will consumers and organisations see what ratings their mobile applications are receiving but they will also be able to read reviews from consumers. Consumers who provide such information have agreed to the terms and conditions of the Play Store (Google, 2017). This means that organisations can use the data they have collected from that application store. The data will be analysed into information and can be used by the organisation to make improvements where necessary.

Consumer feedback is very important to managers of an organisation as it assists them to make important decisions. Nasr, Burton and Kitshoff (2011:535) state that consumer feedback generated during a value creation process can have a positive outcome in terms of future services and products an organisation can provide. Organisations can obtain feedback from different channels. This can cause the organisation to have large amounts of data. Some of the data may not even be of use to an organisation. Therefore it is important to manage consumer feedback. Managing consumer feedback will be discussed in the next section of the literature review.

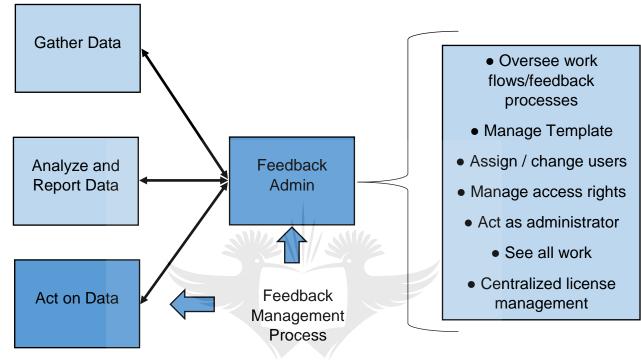
#### 2.9 MANAGEMENT OF CONSUMER FEEDBACK

Organisations can obtain consumer feedback from different channels using different collection techniques. This can cause an organisation to obtain large amounts of raw data. In order for the organisation to make sense of consumer feedback, they will need to manage it in an appropriate manner. LaMalfa (2010:2) states that "The secret to understanding customers' needs, wants and concerns is making the most of customer feedback. That means not only collecting feedback, but managing and acting upon that feedback to improve your products and services".

Nash (2011:3) states that obtaining consumer feedback is very important, however managing consumer feedback is just as important. Nash defines Consumer Feedback Management (CFM) as the process where relevant consumer feedback is integrated into various organisation's strategic and operational processes (Nash, 2011:5). Consumer feedback can be integrated into various processes such as sales, product creation, customer service and even relationship management. Having feedback integrated into an organisation's business process can allow them to become more efficient, effective and customer orientated. Nash created a consumer feedback management process that can be seen in Figure 2.6.

Figure 2.6 displays how an organisation can manage consumer feedback in order to obtain the best value from the feedback. In Figure 2.6, one main actor named The Feedback Admin is the member responsible for the overall management of consumer feedback. This team will gather, analyse and process all feedback that an organisation obtains. From this feedback, they create document based on their findings. This document will then be given to the organisations higher management

team so they are aware of the results. The management team will then identify what problem is common from all the consumers, how did they provide the feedback and what can be done to fix the problem. This document will also assist management to make strategic long-term decisions to ensure that consumers are satisfied with their products and services.





### JOHANNESBURG

Not only is it important to manage consumer feedback, but it is also very important for an organisation to manage their reputation through the feedback that they obtain from consumers. Proserpio and Zervas (2016:5) state that there are different ways for an organisation to effectively manage the negative reviews they recive online. Methods such as threatening legal action and ensuring that there are certain clauses in a consumer's contract that will prevent them from any public comments can be used. Proserpio and Zervas (2016:5) state that these are harsh methods that an organisation can use to manage their online reputation. In fact, these methods can do more harm than actually protect ones reputation.

Proserpio and Zervas (2016:6) states that the best way for an organisation to manage their online reputation is to reply to online reviews that were posted about

the organisation. The organisation should not remove the review, but should add a comment to the next line and apologise to the consumer and assist him accordingly. This will display that the organisation is not hiding anything and is helping consumers to ensure that their problems are fixed. Organisations are then able to take this review and it is classified as feedback and add it to their system and identify solutions that can be created to solve the problem that the consumer is experiencing.

#### 2.10 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 2

In this chapter, the researcher focused on the literature related to the research problem of this study. Due to the limited literature on how consumer feedback can be used to obtain a competitive advantage in an Omni Channel world, the researcher decided to break the problem down into smaller sections and research each section separately. The researcher researched and evaluated what consumer feedback is, how it has evolved, how it is managed and why it is so important. The researcher also researched Porters techniques on how an organisation can obtain a competitive advantage. The researcher then integrated the literature obtained about consumer feedback with the literature on how to obtain a competitive advantage to determine if there is a link between these two variables.

Breaking down the research problem and understanding each section allowed the researcher to have a wide understanding of how consumer feedback is important in an organisation and how it can be used to obtain a competitive advantage in an Omni Channel world. Chapter 3 will discuss the research design and methodology that will be used to investigate the research problem and answer the research question.

### **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to explain in depth the research design, methodology and data gathering that will be conducted in this study. The researcher will be using a mixed method which consists of a quantitative and qualitative approach. A concurrent design will be used when collecting data. A structured questionnaire will be used to collect the quantitative data and two semi-structured focus group interviews will be conducted to collect the qualitative data.

#### 3.2 THE MIXED METHOD RESEARCH DESIGN FOR THIS STUDY

Creswell and Tashakkori (2007:107-110) states that a mixed method is when a researcher obtains, evaluates and combines quantitative and qualitative data to assist the researcher to answer the research question. In this study, a concurrent parallel design will be used. This means that the researcher will be collecting both quantitative data and qualitative data at the same time.

Figure 3.1 shows how the concurrent parallel design will be used in this study. In a concurrent parallel design, the quantitative data will be collected by using a structured questionnaire. Once this data has been collected, it will be analysed using SPSS V.22.0. A factor analysis will be done to identify the relevant variables. The qualitative data will be collected by conducting two semi-structured focus group interviews. Content analysis will be performed and themes will be allocated. The variables from the questionnaire will be compared to the themes from the focus group interviews to determine if there are correlations. Once the results have been integrated together, it assists the researcher to determine the answer to the research problem and question.

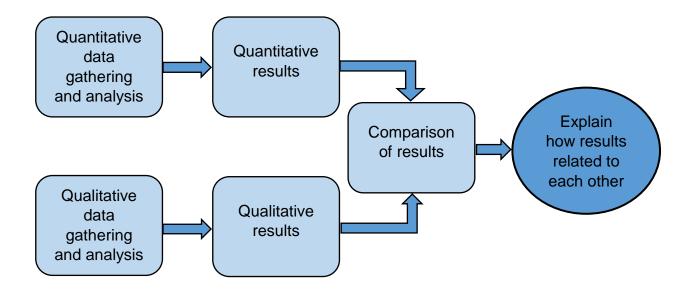


Figure 3.1: A convergent parallel design (adapted from Creswell, 2013:40).

#### 3.2.1 Quantitative research

Quantitative research can further be explained as research that is used to collect numerical data to investigate and explore various aspects of a phenomenon (Jew, 2014:56-57). A structured questionnaire will be used to gather the necessary quantitative data. The questionnaire will be used to determine and evaluate a consumer's attitude in terms of providing feedback, how consumers prefer to provide feedback and what are the factors that affect a consumer's online experience. The questionnaire will be distributed to consumers who are part of an Omni Channel world. Questionnaires are an easy tool to use to gather data from numerous participants (Thomas, 2013: 207). There is no limit to how many participants can complete the questionnaire for this study.

#### 3.2.2 Qualitative research

Hyett, Kenny and Dickson-Swift (2014:1752) state that a qualitative research method involves studying and evaluating things that are situated in their natural real world environment. The researcher has no intention of manipulating, but to rather evaluate the current "*phenomenon of interest*" (Choy, 2014:100) which is the importance of consumer feedback and how an organisation can use the feedback to obtain a

comeptitve advantage. The data obtained from this section of the sudy will be based on the organisation's preference and attitude to consumer feedback. A qualitative approach is the best method to be used to obtain such data from the organisations as it will be gathered in their natural settings to avoid data from becoming invalid.

#### 3.3 THE ORGANISATIONS PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY

According to Traynor (2014:44), focus group interviews consist of two or more experts that come together to discuss or debate about a particular topic. The objective of the semi-structured focus group interviews are to encourage and build a discussion amoung the participants to gather data about a particular topic. In this study, two semi-structured focus group interviews will be conducted. One at a telecommunications company and another at a software development company. Both organisations have agreed for the researcher to come to their organisation's offices to conduct the semi-structured focus group interviews. More details about the participants will be explained further on.

#### 3.3.1 Participants from the telecommunications organisation

This telecommunications organisation has been situated in South Africa for over 20 years. This organisation provides services such as instant messaging, purchasing of mobile data, mobile voice and financial services to a variety of consumers in South Africa. In the last ten years, this organisation has created and implemented a successful Omni Channel solution. As a result, they have seen an increase in consumer's as their products and services are now more accessible to many. This organisation's Omni Channel solution has numerous channels that include an online store that can be accessed by a computer or from a mobile device, a physical retail store, call centres and even mobile applications that can be installed on a mobile device such as a cellphone. This organisation has been chosen to be part of this study as they have seen success with implementing an Omni Channel solution and they are successfully maintaining it. They will be able to provide valuable data on how they have considered consumer feedback when creating each channel.

#### 3.3.2 Participants from the Software development organisation

This organisation is a well-known international software development company. This organisation creates Omni Channel solutions for organisations who provide different purchasing channels for consumers. This organisation does not have ordinary consumers who purchase products or services from a normal retail store. Their clients are large organisations situated all over the world. The Omni Channel solutions that they create are based on their consumer's preferences and how they would like the system to work. This organisation has been chosen to participate in this study as they will be able to provide information on how they use consumer feedback when creating customised Omni Channel solutions.

The second phase of this research project will consist of a structured questionnaire. The organisations who participated in the semi-structured focus group interviews will send the questionnaire to their consumers to complete. The organisation will not reveal any private information about their consumers to the researcher as consumers are protected by the Protection of Personal Information Act Four of 2013.

#### 3.4 METHODS OF HOW DATA WILL BE COLLECTED

Blumberg, *et al.*, (2011:510-512) states that data can be obtained from different environments using different tools. Thomas (2013:192-213) further argues that if one is aware and understands what data they want to gather, they will know what tool to use to gather the data. This study is being conducted using the concurrent parallel approach. This means that the researcher will be gathering both quantitative and qualitative data concurrently.

#### 3.4.1 Data gathering for the quantitative research section

According to Bacon-Shone (2017:23), quantitative research methods usually consist of numerical measurements that are based on a specific phenomenon. Quantitative data can be generalised to a population as it is already in numeric form. The sample group for quantitative studies is usually bigger than a qualitative sample group. The reason for this is because of the data gathering method that is used. It is easier to distribute and complete a questionnaire than it is to conduct numerous amounts of interviews.

The researcher created a structured questionnaire to be distributed to consumers. Questionnaires are a preferred method to collect large amounts of data from a large sample group. Using the questionnaire will assist the researcher to understand a consumer's perspective towards providing feedback.

The questionnaire that will be used in this study consists of four sections. The first section of the questionnaire entails demographic questions such as age, ethnicity, education and gender. These questions are used to obtain background information of the consumer. The responses to the demographic questions will assist the researcher to understand the differences between which age group completed the questionnaire the most or a comparison on how many males provide feedback versus females. According to Hartmann (2009:13), examples of demographic questions are race, gender and age.

The second section of the questionnaire will be based on how consumers prefer to provide feedback. This section will assist the researcher to investigate and understand what is the most popular method used by consumers and when do consumers prefer to provide feedback. The questions in this section consist of closed ended questions and multiple-choice questions. Thomas (2013:192) states that closed-ended questions give the participant the answers where they need to choose the best one. It can either be a yes or a no. With a multiple choice question, participants are allowed to provide more than one answer to that question. This sections will also consist of a filter question. A filter question is used to determine if a consumer qualifies to answer section C. The filter question will require consumers to answer either "yes" or "no". If a participant answers "yes" they will be asked to

complete certain questions. If a consumer says "no", they will be asked to skip a section and complete other questions. This question will determine what sections in the questionnaire a consumer can complete.

The third section of the questionnaire will be based on factors that affect consumers experience in an Omni Channel environment. Bauboniene and Gulevičiūtė (2015:74-79) state that there are various factors that effect a consumers experience online. They have identified five main factors which are quality of products, appearance, security and consumer service. The researcher will be using these factors to determine if they do affect a consumer's experience online. Likert scales will be used to test the factors. Thomas (2013:213) states that a Likert scale is used when a researcher wants to test the attidude and opinion of a subject to a particular statement.

The fourth section of the questionnaire will be used to test the consumers attitude. This section will consist of five questions where consumers are asked to supply their level of agreement according to the Likert scales. This section will assist the researcher to determine the attitude consumers have in terms of providing feedback to an organsiation.

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#### 3.4.2 Data gathering for the qualitative research section

Sutton and Zubin (2015:226) state that qualitative research methods allow a researcher to access the "thoughts and feelings of research participants". Two semistructured focus groups will be conducted at two different organisations. The researcher decided that using a semi structured approach was best for the qualitative section as the researcher will not be limited in what questions to ask. The researcher can ask more questions to clarify what participants are saying.

The semi-structured focus group interview at the telecommunication organisation will be conducted first. This semi-structured focus group interview will consist of three participants. Each participant has a variety of experience in the Omni Channel environment. The first participant is currently in charge of Omni Development and implementation. His role in the telecommunications organisation is to ensure that the organisation's mobile application is created and maintained so that consumers can have an excellent shopping experience. The second participant is part of the technical integration team. They are in charge of ensuring that the mobile application and online store can be accessed from different electronic devices. The third participant is involved with public relations. This participant works closely with consumers.

The semi-structured focus group interview at the software development organisation will also consist of three participants. The first participant is involved with marketing. This participant ensures that the overall image and reputation of the organisation is always up to standard. The second participant is in charge of operations and development. This participants ensures that all systems are developed according to the client's specifications and should there be a problem the client is not happy with, this participant will fix it. The third participant is currently the CEO of this software development company. He brings a vast amount of knowledge to the semi-structured focus group such as management, operational support, client relations and even risk management. These participants were chosen to be part of this semi-structured focus group interview as each participant comes from a different division and will be able to contribute to the semi-structured focus group interviews. According to Creswell (2014:55), allowing participants to remain in their natural environment will allow them to feel more composed and they will be more willing to provide more information to the researcher to assist to answer the research problem.

Dilshad and Latif (2013:191) state that a facilitator is a very important characteristic to consider when conducting a semi-structured focus group discussion. The facilitator is there to ensure that the topic that is discussed in the semi-structured focus group interviews are relevant to the research problem and that the discussion stays on the right direction. The researcher will be the facilitator during the semi-structured focus group interviews. The researcher will guide the semi-structured focus group in the correct direction so that the best data will be obtained.

The researcher will be using the research sub questions as a starting point to encourage the conversation in the semi-structured focus group interviews. The semistructured focus group interviews are semi structured which means that the researcher is not limited to the four sub questions that are defined in this study. The researcher will pay attention to how participants respond to the questions and based on their answers, more questions will be asked to ensure that the best data is collected. The researcher will also prepare supporting questions to be asked in case the semi-structured focus group goes in a direction that is not relevant to the topic, or if the researcher can see that the conversation is not flowing and requires another trigger.

#### 3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

Flick (2013:5) states that data analysis is the process that involves a researcher to gather the necessary data to answer a research question. Techniques such as coding a transcript or using statistical software such as SPSS V.22.0, are used to analyse data. Once data is analysed, key items such as themes from qualitative data and variables from quantitative data will be identified to assist the researcher answer the research questions. Theron (2015:2) further states that data analysis is the examination and intrepretation of data. Data analysis is done to eliminate unnecessary data and only use data that is relevant in providing an answer to a research problem.

## 3.5.1 Data analysis in the qualitative section RG

Semi-structured focus group interviews will be conducted with the two different organisations. These semi-structured focus groups will be recorded on a portable audio recorder. The recordings will then be downloaded from the recorder onto a computer and transferred to an online cloud drive to be stored for safe keeping. The cloud storage is protected by a username and password which only the researcher will know. To ensure the safety of the recordings, third party confirmation will be used. This means that every time the researcher logs onto the cloud storage, they will be required to enter their username and password and enter a One Time Pin (OTP) that has been sent to their mobile device. This will ensure that no unauthorised individual obtains access to the recordings. The semi-structured focus group interviews will then be transcribed verbatim onto a Microsoft Word document.

The researcher will read all the transcripts to become familiar with the content and to begin the coding process. The researcher will be using a constant comparative method to analyse the transcripts. Thomas (2013:235) states that a comparative method involves a researcher to read their data multiple times. This will allow researchers to become familiar with the content which will allow the researcher to allocate themes and summarise the data collected through the semi-structured focus groups. Figure 3.2 displays how the qualitative data will be characterised as.

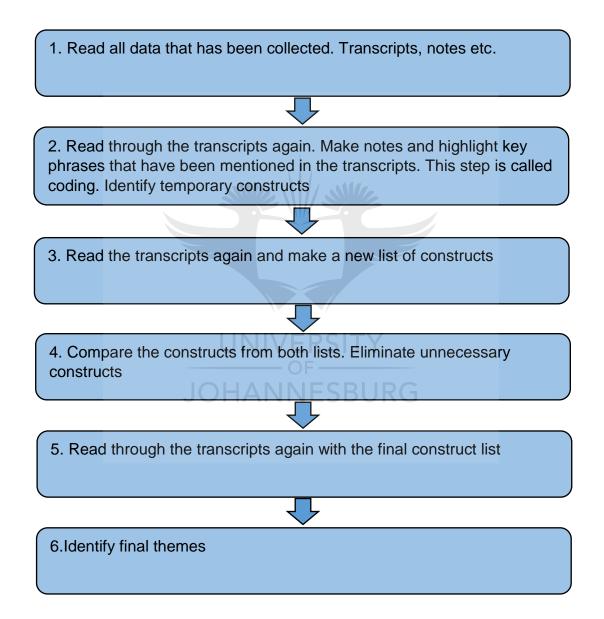


Figure 3.2 The constant comparative method (adapted from Thomas, 2013:236)

A detailed explanation of Figure 3.2 will be discussed in Chapter 4.

#### 3.5.2 Data analysis in the quantitative section

Peersman (2014:5) states that quantitative analysis is conducted by analysing data and producing the results in a statistical or numerical form. A structured questionnaire will be used to collect the quantitative data. Statcon, the University's Statistical Department will assist in the analysis of the quantitative data. Statcon uses the SPSS V.22.0 to analyse the data. An exploratory factor analysis will be performed on the quantitative data obtained. Factor analysis is the process of grouping various variables together to reduce the amount of variables a researcher will work with (Young & Pearce, 2013:80). Variables identified once the factor analysis is complete will be given a new name. Izquierdol, Olea and Abad (2014:396) state that exploratory factor analysis is done by comparing the correlation between two or more different variables and grouping the variables to allow the researcher to work with relevant variables. Reducing the amount of variables in a quantitative study will allow the researcher to understand each individual variable and will be able to manage it better. A Cronbach's alpha will be used to determine the reliability of the scale that is used. According to (Blumberg, et al., 2011:372) Cronbach's alpha is a common reliability test that is used by researchers in various industries. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient will be used to test to ensure that the scales that will be used in this study will be testing the same construct. The reliability of the scale used in a research will vary depending on the sample size that is used (Bonett & Wright, 2015:5). Cho and Kim (2014:210) state that in order for a scale to be reliable, the Cronbach's alpha should be of a value of .7 or more.

#### 3.6 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 3

This chapter discussed the research design and methodology that will be used in this study. This study will follow a mixed method approach with a concurrent parallel design. Semi-structured focus groups and structured questionnaires will be used to gather the necessary data from all participants to determine if consumer feedback is important for an organisation to gather. Two semi-structured focus group interviews will be conducted at two different organisations and structured questionnaires will be distributed to consumers. With this research method, the researcher will be able to

obtain the valid data to answer the research question and to create the proposed conceptual framework that organisations can use to obtain a competitive advantage using consumer feedback.

Chapter 4 will discuss the results from the focus group interviews and the structured questionnaires.



### CHAPTER 4: QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH FINDINGS

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this study, the researcher explores how an organisation can use consumer feedback to obtain a competitive advantage in an Omni Channel environment. In order to collect the necessary qualitative data for this study, two semi-structured focus group interviews were conducted. The organisations that participated in the semi-structured focus group interviews are situated in the telecommunications and software development industry. The researcher served as the facilitator for both semi-structured focus group interviews. In order to obtain the necessary quantitative data, a structured questionnaire was used. The structured questionnaire consisted of four sections with a mixture of close ended questions and Likert scale questions. The quantitative data was analysed using SPSS V.22.0. This chapter explains the qualitative and quantitative research findings individually.

## 4.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH FINDINGS

The qualitative data was collected by conducting two semi-structured focus group interviews. The semi-structured focus group interviews were recorded on a portable audio recording device. The final recordings were downloaded onto a computer. From those recordings, transcripts were created. The researcher used the constant comparative method to analyse the transcripts. This method is discussed in the next section.

#### 4.3 EXPLANATION OF THE CONSTANT COMPARATIVE METHOD

The researcher used the comparative method to analyse the qualitative data. Kold (2012:83) states that the comparative method is used when a researcher wants to categorize large amounts of qualitative data into different categories. The categories

that are identified will assist the researcher to answer the research question. The constant comparative method involves the researcher to read the transcripts a number of times make notes and highlight important phrases and words. This will allow the researcher to identify what is important when identifying the temporary constructs. The six steps of the constant comparative method can be seen in Figure 3.2. Each step will be discussed in detail.

<u>Step one: Read through the data that has been collected</u>: This entails the researcher to read the transcripts that were created from the audio device. Reading the transcripts will allow the researcher to become familiar with the responses that the participants from the semi-structured focus group interviews discussed. This will assist the researcher to remember key phrases and words when the researcher begins the coding process in step two.

Step two: Read through the transcripts again, make notes and highlight key phrases: In this step, the researcher is required to read the transcript again. While the researcher is reading the transcripts, key phrases and words will be noted and highlighted. This will assist the researcher in identifying what information can be grouped together. This process is called coding. Once the researcher has completed the coding process, the researcher must identify the temporary constructs. The researcher must write down the temporary constructs. It is important for the researcher to be able to see what temporary constructs were identified. Writing them down will allow the researcher to keep them in mind when reading the transcripts again.

<u>Step three: Read the transcripts again, identify new constructs:</u> Reading the transcripts again will allow the researcher to identify more temporary constructs that are relevant to the study. The researcher will make another list of the temporary constructs.

The first three steps can be conducted as many times as the researcher would like.

Step four: Compare the constructs from both lists: The researcher must now compare the constructs from both lists. The researcher must identify which constructs are relevant to the study and which ones are not relevant. The constructs that are not relevant to the study will be eliminated. Eliminating constructs will assist the researcher to finalise the temporary constructs list.

<u>Step five: Read through the transcripts again with the list of temporary</u> <u>constructs:</u> Once the researcher has created the temporary construct list, the researcher must read the transcripts again and refer back to the temporary constructs list. The researcher must add or eliminate constructs that are part of the list. This will ensure that the temporary constructs that were created are relevant to the study and will assist in the creation of the final themes that will be used in this study.

Step six: Identify final themes: Once the researcher is satisfied with the final list of temporary constructs, the researcher must group the constructs that are related to each other together. Grouping these constructs together will allow the researcher to identify the final themes that will be used. Once the researcher has identified the final themes, the researcher must then read the transcripts again and refer back to the final themes to ensure that the themes that have been created are relevant and will assist the researcher.

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#### 4.4 TEMPORARY CONSTRUCTS IDENTIFIED IN THIS STUDY

The researcher followed the process in Figure 3.2 to analyse the qualitative data. The temporary constructs lists were compared and the researcher identified the following temporary constructs. The following are the twenty two constructs that were identified

- The impact of social media,
- The use of face to face communication and email to provide feedback,
- Consumers do not want to provide feedback with a survey,
- Convenience, security, design of channel, consumer service and availability of products affect a consumer's experience,
- Root cause analysis to see what the problem is,
- Mobile application reviews that consumers leave,

- Use the information on more than one project,
- False advertising,
- The use of incentives do not always provide the organisation with true feedback,
- Too much information is obtained where half is not relevant,
- Organisational road map,
- It is important to have good consumer service,
- Bad service can cause an organisation to lose consumers,
- If consumers provide feedback, the problems they experience can be fixed,
- An organisations reputation and design of their channels is important,
- Constant communication with consumers is important,
- Ticket management system,
- A happy customer means a loyal customer,
- Product availability and delivery time,
- The best feedback is at the design phase,
- The more feedback from consumers, the better the products and service will be, and
- Consumer feedback management teams.

The constructs were further analysed by the researcher to determine the final themes that will be used in this study. Five main themes were identified for this study and will be discussed in detail in the next section.

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### 4.5 DISCUSSION OF THE THEMES

The researcher evaluated the final constructs to determine which constructs can be grouped together to form themes. It is important to identify themes that are relevant to the topic and will assist to determine if consumer feedback is necessary to obtain a competitive advantage in an Omni Channel environment. In this section, the researcher will discuss each theme in detail and identify which constructs were grouped together to create the theme. The constructs were manually grouped together and the final themes were created.

#### 4.5.1 Theme one: How to obtain feedback from consumers

The following constructs were grouped together to create this theme:

- The impact of social media,
- The use of face to face communication and email to provide feedback,
- Consumers do not want to provide feedback with a survey, and
- Mobile application reviews that consumers leave.

These constructs were grouped together as they all relate to how consumers can provide feedback. It also displays what techniques the organisations that participated in the semi-structured focus group interviews utilise to obtain consumer feedback. Participants from the focus group interviews have stated that they use different tools and techniques to obtain consumer feedback. Techniques such as ... "email, WhatsApp, Skype and social media"... is used to obtain data. However a participant from the semi-structured focus group interviews have stated that ... "engaging with the customer directly" ... allows them to obtain the best consumer feedback. This relates back to what was mentioned and discussed in Chapter 2. Social media has been mentioned as an excellent technique to be used to obtain consumer feedback. A participant from the focus group interviews has stated ... "Social media is very effective."... Social media is effective as the comments and posts are made public which allows all potential consumers to see how good or bad the products are. This relates to the findings that were identified in the literature review in Chapter 2 by Bajic and Lyons (2011:1). Another participant stated that ... "Big corporations and big wholesale stores and stuff, they are very aware of you know social media, they leave a footprint, so if there are complaints they tend to respond to it' ... This shows that organisations have to always ensure that there are good comments on social media about them and that they handle the negative comments in an appropriate manner.

A majority of consumers these days purchase products from mobile applications. They often leave reviews behind about the service they have experienced using the mobile application. A participant from the focus group interviews stated that ..."*If it's online, you get an online prompt to rate the service that you just got*" .... This shows that organisations use this data to determine if there are any improvements that can be made to enhance the mobile application which will also increase a consumers overall experience.

Other techniques that are used by organisations to obtain consumer feedback but are not as popular are Interactive Voice Response (IVR) which allows a computer to

communicate with consumers with an automated voice, Short Message Service (SMS) and surveys. A participant from the focus group interviews stated that .... "*The guys are not going to complete a survey every time although it is just a couple of questions*" .... Another participant stated that ...."*sometimes we have to give our clients something in order for them to provide feedback*..." This shows that organisations do not receive much feedback using a survey. This relates to what was mentioned in Chapter 2 section 2.3 by Begum (2011:1) who states that a survey can be used to obtain large amounts of data. However the use of a survey is not as popular anymore as there are more advanced methods to obtain consumer feedback, however organisations have to encourage and motivate their consumers to provide feedback. How to encourage consumers to provide feedback is discussed in the next theme.

#### 4.5.2 Theme two: How to encourage consumers to provide feedback

The following constructs were grouped together to create this theme:

- The use of incentives do not always provide the organisation with true feedback,
- A happy customer means a loyal customer,
- The more feedback from consumers, the better the products and services will be, and
- The best feedback is at the design phase.

These constructs were grouped together as they relate to how organisations can encourage consumers to provide feedback. The constructs display that the use of incentives is not always a good technique to use to encourage consumers to provide feedback. A participant from the focus group interviews stated that ... "you do get those people who will answer just to get that incentive" .... As a result the feedback may not necessarily be valid or useful to the organisation. There are certain situations where an organisation is not allowed to provide incentives to their consumers. A good example of this would be Google's Play store where consumers are able to download mobile applications. A participant from the focus group interviews stated that .... "you are not allowed to give incentives to people to download or change comments about your mobile application on the Google Play

*Store*" .... One of the main reasons why organisations are not allowed to provide incentives to consumers to change or add comments on Google Play Store is because it will create the impression that the store is buying their reviews rather than ensuring the comments are based or true activities. Organisations that participated in the semi-structured focus group interviews have therefore mentioned that they do not provide incentives to their consumers when they are downloading from the Google Play Store. They prefer to review the negative comments and respond to the comments to determine what the problem is and what they can do to fix it. This shows that organisations are adhering to the rules and regulations that Google Play Store Play Store have created.

A participant from the focus group interviews stated that ... "the best customer feedback is at the design stage" .... Organisations find it helpful as they are able to create their products and services based on consumer preference. This related back to what was mentioned in the literature review, section 2.7 by Balaji et al., (2014:1915-1918). Balaji et al., stated that consumer feedback will assist in maintaining existing consumers and ensuring that they remain loyal to the organisation. Consumer feedback allows organisations to create different products that will attract new consumers. This relates to the technique mentioned in Chapter 2, section 2.8 by Michael Porter called Differentiation. This technique allows organisations to increase their target market and become more competitive in the environment they are situated in. In order to ensure that an organisation can become competitive in the environment they are situated in, they will have to ensure that their consumers have an excellent experience. This can be done by determining what are the different factors that can affect their consumers online experience and how it can be fixed. Factors that contribute to a consumer's overall experience will be discussed in the next theme.

# 4.5.3 Theme three: What are the factors contributing to consumer experience?

The following constructs were grouped together to create this theme:

- Convenience, security, design of channel, consumer service and availability of products affect a consumer's experience,
- False advertising,
- It is important to have good consumer service,
- Bad service can cause an organisation to lose consumers, and
- Product availability and delivery time.

These constructs were grouped together as they all relate to the different factors that contribute to consumer's experience. The participants that participated in the semi-structured focus group interviews stated that security, convenience, design of a channel, product availability and consumer service are the major factors that contribute to a consumers experience. This relates back to what was mentioned by Bauboniene and Gulevičiūte, (2015:74-79) which was discussed in Chapter 2 section 2.6. Consumers are always concerned about security when it comes to online shopping. There are many different threats that are online and organisations should ensure that they protect their consumers at all time.

It is very important to have excellent consumer service as bad service can cause consumers to stop supporting anorganisation and start supporting their competitiors. A participant from the focus group interviews stated that ... *"if you not providing the good customer service then over a period of time, they will swap you out"* ... This statement relates to the cycle that was discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.2 by Lelis and Howes (2011:2285).

Consumer feedback allows an organisation ensure to that consumers are satisfied with their service. If organisations do not provide excellent service at all time, not only will they loose consumers, but they will also suffer financially. Participants from the semi-structured focus group interviews stated that ... *"false advertising and poor customer service"*... can impact a consumer's experience. False advertising is when an organisation promises a consumer a certain product or service but they do not receive it. This can ruin an organisations relationship with its consumers and will also create a bad reputation for the organisation. Consumers will be very upset with the organisation and they will write comments about the service they received and the false advertising that the organisation has made public. This will allow for potential consumers to see the reviews and they may not even want to support that organisation. A participant from the semi-structured focus group interviews stated that organisations should ... *"rather tell me then I can work with it and prepare for the* 

*bad news coming but yes they must be open and honest"* .... This relates to the cycle that Lelis and Howes (2011:2285) created based on what consumers do before they make a purchase from an organisation. The cycle can be found in section 2.2 of chapter 2

Product availability, design and delivery time also have an influence on a consumers online experience. Sometimes what consumers want, they are unable to get online. This is confirmed by a participant who participated in the semi-structured focus group interviews. The participant stated that ... "the downside of shopping online is that sometimes the things you want are not there. So sometimes when you shop online speciffically for groceries, you have to sacrifice the brands that you normally use"... Another participant stated that ..." the design of a online store or product is *important...* The delivery time is also important as another participant stated that ... "the delivery time is very important" .... This shows that even though consumers have busy daily schedules, they expect to obtain their items as soon as possible from the online store expecially if they required the products immediately. Organisations should also consider their target audience as that can also affect consumer experience. Consumer feedback is not only necessary to ensure that factors that affect a consumers' experience is good, but it is also used to determine what new products and services can be created based on consumers' needs and wants, therefore it is important to obtian consumer feedback. The next theme will discuss the importance of consumer feedback. RURG

#### 4.5.4 Theme four: The importance of consumer feedback

The following constructs were grouped together to create this theme:

- Organisational road map,
- If consumers provide feedback, the problems they experience can be fixed,
- An organisation's reputation and design of their channels is important,
- Constant communication with consumers is important, and
- Use the information on more than one project.

These constructs were grouped together as they all relate to the importance of consumer feedback and how it can be used to improve an organisations' products

and services. A participant from the semi-structured focus group interviews stated that ... "communication at the end of the day is very important" .... If a consumer is experiencing a problem, the organisation should contact that consumer and acknowledge the problem. This way the consumer will know that his problem is being handled and a resolution will soon be provided. Communication with consumers also creates a positive reputation for an organisation. It shows that organisations do care for their consumers and wants them to have the best experience no matter what channel they are working from. This refers back to what was mentioned in Chapter 2 section 2.4 when a telecommunications company received bad publicity for not assisting a consumer with his complaint. The organisation did not listen to their consumer and there was no proper communication between the two. This also harmed the organisations' reputation.

Should any harm come to an organisations reputation, they will be at risk of losing consumers as consumer's attitude towards that organisation will become negative. Losing consumers means that the organisation will be affected financially. This is confirmed in the semi-structured focus group interviews as a participant stated that ... "If one of our clients decides to leave us and partner up with another vendor because they were not happy with our service, it will be difficult for us to get new clients as rumours spread. It would slowly start to ruin our name and reputation".

Participants from the focus group interviews stated that they use a ticket management system to manage feedback. The ticket is created when a consumer has a complaint or query. The ticket will contain the consumers details, the problem encountered, a time stamp and who will be responsible for identifying a solution to the problem. All activities that are performed to fix the problem will be recorded on the ticket. This allows the different personnel who view the ticket to know what was done. This is also seen as communication within an organisation as it ensures that all problems that consumers encounter are resolved as soon as possible. This is confirmed as a participant from the semi-structured focus group interviews stated that ... *"if the engineer is investigating something on the ticket, it's updated and that is communicated back to the customer so that there is constant communication"*.

The information an organisation gathers from consumer feedback can be used on more than one project. It can also be used for future projects. This is confirmed from the semi-structured focus interviews as a participant stated that ... "we also use this information in other projects we work on for other clients. It allows us to limit mistakes that we have made in the past" .... This statement not only confirms that consumer feedback can assist on different projects but can also be used to plan for the future. A participant from the semi-structured focus group interviews stated that ... "it becomes part of our road map, so we have a road map of where we want our product to go and with our customer requests that come in; they feed to our road map too" .... This shows that consumer feedback is very important for an organisation to collect so that they can plan for the future. In order for an organisation to plan for the future, they will need to manage their consumer feedback in an appropriate manner. The management of consumer feedback will be discussed in the next theme.

#### 4.5.5 Theme five: Management of consumer feedback

The following constructs were grouped together to create this theme:

- Root cause analysis to see what the problem is,
- Use the information on more than one project,
- Too much information is obtained where half is not relevant,
- Ticket management system, and S
- Consumer feedback management teams.

These constructs were grouped together as they relate to the importance of managing consumer feedback. The participants that were part of the semi-structured focus group interviews stated that they often receive large amounts of information from consumers and almost half of the information is not relevant. Therefore it is important for an organisation to ensure that consumer feedback is managed properly. The discussions in the semi-structured focus group interviews have revealed different types of techniques an organisation utilises to manage the feedback they obtain from consumers. A participant from the semi-structured focus group interviews have stated that ... *"we do a root-cause analysis on all critical issues that come into our space. Each has its own priority"* .... This means that this organisation obtains consumer feedback from all possible channels, evaluates the feedback and identifies the problems. The problems are then given a different priority ranging from high to low. A root cause analysis is only done on problems that have a

high priority. The root cause analysis will allow the organisation to determine what was causing the problem and what can be done to prevent it from occurring in the future. Problems that do not have a high priority are dealt with as normal and no root cause analysis is done. For all problems that have been found, the organisation will identify a preventative method and what can be done to ensure such problems are identified before a consumer experiences it and reports it. All activities that are done are stored on a ticket and stored away for future use. The ticket management system has also been explained in theme four but it also relates to this theme as the tickets manage the feedback that an organisation obtains.

Another method that organisations utilise to manage feedback is the use of consumer feedback management teams. These teams are responsible for contacting the consumer, reviewing social media and also using different techniques to manage the feedback that an organisation obtains. These teams will be responsible for filtering out irrelevant information. Once they have the appropriate information, they will generate reports required by management. This process is confirmed by a participant from the semi-structured focus group interviews who mentioned that ... "we have teams to gather the feedback and make sense of it" .... Nash (2011:3) stated a similar process which is discussed in Chapter 2 section 2.9. This theme displays that it is not only important to obtain consumer feedback but it is vital for an organisation to manage the feedback for the future. Proper management of consumer feedback will assist an organisation to obtain a competitive advantage in the environment they are situated in.

#### 4.6 QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

In total 246 questionnaires were completed by participants. 148 were completed online, and 98 on hard copy. The researcher provided participants with these two options to complete the questionnaire as some participants preferred to complete the questionnaire online and some preferred to complete a hard copy. The first section of the questionnaire consisted of biographical questions. These questions assisted the researcher to group participants into different sample groups. The sample can be

split into 132 males and 114 females. Participants were asked to provide their age as different age groups prefer different feedback methods. Participants were not obliged to provide their age, as some participants feel that this is private information.

A total of 236 participants provided their age, 10 participants did not provide their age. In order to determine the average age of the participants, a mean was identified. The mean was used to determine the average age of participants who completed the questionnaire. The mean age was 28.44 with a standard deviation of 9.092. The standard deviation is always reported with the mean as the standard deviation is a measurement of variability. In order to determine the age group who answered the questionnaire the most, the standard deviation is added and subtracted from the mean as follows:

x = Standard deviation - mean	x = Standard deviation + mean
x = 9.092 - 28.44	x = 9.092 + 28.44
x = 19.348	x = 37.532
<i>x</i> ≈ 19	$x \approx 38$
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The average age group that completed this questionnaire was aged from 19-38. The youngest participant was 14 and the oldest was 56. For the purpose of this study, the researcher identified three age groups. The first age group consists of participants aged from 34 to 50, this will be Generation X. The second age group will consist of participants aged 23 to 33, this will be Generation Y. The last age group will consist of participants aged from 22 or younger, this will be Generation Z. A fourth age group was identified called Baby Boomers II but will not be part of this study as the sample group consisted of 6 participants which is too small. The researcher identified the different types of age groups as it would provide useful information as to how consumers according to their age group prefer to provide feedback. A more detail analysis and explanation of the age groups will be discussed in Chapter 5 when the comparisons of the qualitative and quantitative findings are discussed.

This study will make used of three ethnic groups that have been identified in Table 4.1.

Ethnic group	Frequency
Black	81
White	47
Indian or Asian	92
Total	220

#### Table 4.1: Ethnic groups used in this study

A forth ethnic group was identified but will not be used in this study as the sample group is too small. This sample group is called Coloured. The sample group was only 26 which was significantly less and therefore the researcher decided to exclude it from this study. The responses from the participants who are in this ethnic group have not been included in the total questionnaires obtained in this study.

Consumers who completed the questionnaire were asked to provide their educational level. From the 246 questionnaires that were received, 243 provided their educational level. The educational levels that will be used in this study can be seen on Table 4.2.

#### Table 4.2:Educational levels used in this study.

Education level		Frequency
Up to Grade 12		53
Post-Matric Diploma certificate	or	55
Baccalaureate degree		91
Post graduate degree		44
TOTAL		243

This would assist the researcher to classify and compare results according to their educational level. The results from Table 4.2 display that consumers who have completed the questionnaire do have a good education or are currently working towards one. The educational levels will be discussed in Chapter 5 and will form part of the comparisons that will be conducted.

Consumers were asked if it is necessary for an organisation to obtain consumer feedback. From the 246 questionnaires that the researcher has received, 242 completed this question. Ninety three percent of consumers feel that it is very important for organisations to collect consumer feedback. Seven percent stated that it is not important for organisations to obtain consumer feedback. The seven percent of consumers who stated that it is not important for an organisation to obtain consumer feedback are possible happy with the service they receive or have not provided feedback to an organisation before. The questionnaire also tested what are the different factors that a consumer experiences while shopping online.

Four theoretical factors were tested in Section C of the questionnaire that was distributed to consumers. These factors were identified by Baubonienė and Gulevičiūtė and discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.6. The four factors that were tested are: appearance, quality of products, consumer service, and security. Likert scale questions based on the factors were created by the researcher and answered by the consumers. The responses allowed the researcher to critically evaluate each factor.

In order to ensure that all questions are related to each other and asked in the correct manner, a test called Reverse Scoring is conducted. Bruce (2015:92) states that when a researcher conducts this test using SPSS V.22.0, the first column of the table should only have positive values. This will show that there are no weak factors that should be revised. The results of the reverse scoring for this study can be seen in Table 4.3.

	Component					
	1	2	3	4		
C11.1	0.505	0.312	0.359	0.479		
C11.2	0.287	0.275	0.520	0.540		
C11.3	0.767	0.379	-0.042	-0.115		
C11.4	0.655	0.468	-0.098	-0.034		
C11.5	0.605	0.432	-0.007	-0.091		
C12.1	0.753	0.265	-0.081	-0.034		
C12.2	0.727	0.205	-0.211	-0.129		
C12.3	0.735	0.166	-0.159	-0.174		
C12.4	0.730	0.257	-0.149	-0.261		
C13.1	0.739	-0.244	-0.252	0.341		
C13.2	0.759	-0.308	-0.306	0.222		
C13.3	0.730	-0.321	-0.290	0.348		
C13.4	0.738	-0.370	-0.281	0.095		
C14.1	0.780	-0.177	0.313	-0.057		
C14.2	0.723	-0.330	0.320	-0.190		
C14.3	0.714	-0.296	0.382	-0.218		
C14.4	0.724	-0.337	0.412	-0.277		

#### Table 4.3 Reverse Scoring results for section C of the questionnaire.

As can be seen from column 1 from Table 4.3, all the results are positive which means that all the questions that were asked in the questionnaire relate to each other. No weak factors were identified. In order to conduct this test, it was required for the researcher to extract the relevant data. The Principal Component Analysis technique was used to extract the data. Principal Component Analysis analyses a table that contains data that has been collected by a researcher. The data contains dependent variables which are inter-related. This analysis extracts the vital information from the table and to highlight the importance of the information gathered and new variables are created (Abdi and Williams, 2010:433). It is important to explore the data and to use the data and change it into useful information.

An exploratory factor analysis was conducted to further explore the data that were obtained from the Questionnaire. A correlation matrix was created to determine if there were any correlations between the questions and if these correlations are acceptable. Correlations are between one and three, the closer it is to one, the higher the correlation is (Bruce, 2015:103). Most of the correlations are above 0.3, which means the factors are acceptable.

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test was conducted to determine if the researcher's factors were suitable for a factor analysis (Young and Pearce, 2013:80). In order for the factors to be suitable, the results will need to be larger than 0.6. In this study, it was 0.882, which is acceptable. The Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was conducted. This test is used to determine if samples are from populations with equal variances (Young and Pearce, 2013:88). It is also used for non-normality. For the Bartlett test to be valid, the results cannot be higher than 0.5. In this study, the result was 0.00 which makes the factors valid. The measures of sampling adequacy (MSA) for the anti-image correlations are all above 0.6, thus no items will be needed to be excluded. The communalities were extracted using the principal Axis Factoring method. In order for a communality to be valid, the result will need to be above 0.3. The highest communality was 0.905 and the lowest 0.241. The reason why 0.241 was kept is because the MSA value was high which means that this communality will be accepted.

Table 4.4 displays the total variance. A factor analysis was conducted to determine the total variance from the four theoretical factors. This test will also assist in determining if these factors are valid. For these results to be valid, the factor value in the total column in Table 4.4 needs to be above one, in order for it to be extracted and considered a factor. The researcher is able to see that all results are above one and are valid. The extraction method used was the principal axis factoring. This extraction method is used to identify and understand correlations among variables (Winter and Dodou, 2011:700).

Factor	I	nitial Eigenv	alues	Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	8.253	48.548	48.548	3.821	22.479	22.479
2	1.665	9.792	58.340	3.048	17.929	40.408
3	1.345	7.914	66.254	2.872	16.892	57.300
4	1.119	6.585	72.839	1.301	7.652	64.952
5	0.714	4.198	77.037			
6	0.710	4.175	81.212			
7	0.521	3.064	84.276			
8	0.453	2.664	86.940			
9	0.382	2.247	89.187			
10	0.357	2.103	91.290			

#### Table 4.4: Total Variance for section C of questionnaire.

The rotated factor matrix was created based on a first order factor analysis. This represents how the factors are grouped together and the correlation between each factor. The extraction method used was the principal axis factoring with a rotation method. The Rotated Factor Matrix in Table 4.5 was conducted to determine what questions group together to identify the empirical factors from Section C of the questionnaire. Four empirical factors were identified from this section.

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	Factor				
	1	2	3	4	
C11.3	0.758				
C12.4	0.712		0.260		
C11.4	0.686			0.254	
C12.3	0.651	0.305	0.264		
C12.2	0.649	0.318			
C12.1	0.633	0.290			
C11.5	0.600				
C13.3		0.820			
C13.2	0.297	0.771	0.261		
C13.1	0.281	0.733			
C13.4	0.298	0.712	0.340		
C14.4			0.893		
C14.3	0.251		0.739		
C14.2	0.257	0.306	0.716		
C14.1	0.323	0.323	0.628	0.289	
C11.1				0.808	
C11.2				0.461	

#### Table 4.5: Rotated Factor Matrix for section C of questionnaire

Section D of the questionnaire, only had one factor that was identified. Reverse scoring was not needed as all the results in column one were positive. The KMO test was conducted with a result of .785 and the Bartlett test with a result of 0.000 which means that the factor is valid. Table 4.6 displays that the factor extracted from section D are valid as the total column on Table 4.6 is required to be 1 or higher.

#### Table 4.6:Total variance for section D.

Factor	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.691	67.281	67.281	2.329	58.237	58.237
2	0.710	17.762	85.043			
3	0.302	7.550	92.593			
4	0.296	7.407	100.000			

The Cronbach's Alpha test was conducted to test the internal validity and reliability of the factors identified. In order to the validity to be acceptable, the Cronbach's Alpha has to be larger than 0.7. The results of the Cronbach Alpha can be seen in Table 4.7.

Factor name	Cronbachs Alpha result	Inter item correlation mean
1. Convenience and quality	.899	
2. Consumer service	.903	
3. Security	.901	
4. Design	.574	4.16 *
5. Consumer attitude	.835	

## Table 4.7: Cronbach's Alpha results for the empirical factors.

\*Should the Cronbach's Alpha be lower than 0.7, the inter item correlation mean will assist to determine the reliability. The result of the inter item correlation mean will need to be above .2. This means that Factor Four which is design is reliable.

The results from the Rotated Factor Matrix, total variance identified and the Cronbachs Alpha assisted the researcher to identify the empirical factors for this study. A total of five empirical factors were identified and have been assigned the following names:

- 1. Convenience and quality. NESBURG
- 2. Consumer service.
- 3. Security.
- 4. Design.
- 5. Consumer attitude.

The naming of the factors were based on the questions that were grouped together in the Rotated Factor Matrix. These five quantitative empirical factors will be compared against the qualitative themes identified from the semi-structured focus groups.

## 4.7 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 4

This chapter explained the data that was gathered through the semi-structured focus group interviews and the structured questionnaire. The Constant Comparative Method was used to analyse the transcripts that were created from the semi-structured focus group interviews. Using this method, the researcher was able to identify five themes which are:

- 1. How to obtain feedback from consumers.
- 2. How to encourage consumers to provide feedback.
- 3. What are the factors contributing to consumer experience.
- 4. The importance of consumer feedback.
- 5. Management of consumer feedback.

The researcher used SPSS V.22.0 to analyse the data that was obtained through the use of the structured questionnaire. Tests such as the Rotated Factor Matrix, Cronbachs Alpha test and Total Variance tests were conducted to test internal reliability and to identify the empirical factors that are used in this study. A total of five factors were identified and assigned the following names:

- 1. Convenience and quality
- 2. Consumer service
- 3. Security
- 4. Design
- 5. Consumer attitude UNIVERSITY

The themes identified from the qualitative section will be compared to the empirical factors identified in the quantitative section. A detailed discussion of the comparison will be explained in Chapter 5

# **CHAPTER 5: COMPARISON OF RESEARCH FINDINGS**

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

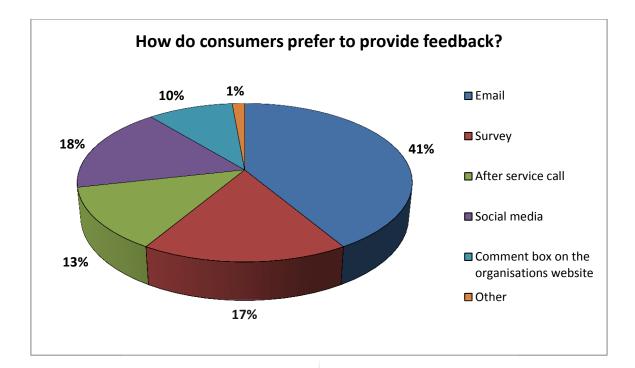
In this chapter, the research findings from the quantitative section will be compared to the research findings from the qualitative section. This chapter will also explain correlations and contrasts that have been identified from the results. The researcher will relate the research findings to the literature that has been explained in Chapter 2. This will ensure that the results from this study can assist an organisation obtain a competitive advantage in the environment they are situated in.

# 5.2 COMPARING THE QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE RESULTS AGAINST EACH OTHER

The themes that have been identified in the qualitative phase and the factors identified in the quantitative phase are now analysed together to determine if there are any relationships. The results from the quantitative phase were analysed in depth and the relevant information has been extracted and explained in conjunction with the five qualitative themes. The researcher quotes key phrases that were mentioned in the semi-structured focus group interviews by the participants from the organisations to support the finding from the quantitative analysis.

## 5.2.1 How to obtain feedback from consumers?

Obtaining consumer feedback is a complicated task. There are a variety of tools that can be used to obtain consumer feedback. Consumers were asked to state how they prefer to provide feedback; the results can be seen in Figure 5.1.



#### Figure 5.1: How consumers prefer to provide feedback.

As can be seen in Figure 5.1, forty one percent of consumers prefer to provide feedback via email. Email is a convenient tool that can be used to communicate with consumers from all over the world. Consumers feel that email is most appropriate as this will allow them to respond in their spare time. From the semi-structured focus group interviews, a participant mentioned that email was an appropriate tool to use: ... "an email to say are you still happy?" .... This allows the consumer and organisation to have proof that feedback was given and an organisation can always refer to it when working or projects to improve consumer's experience.

Eighteen percent of consumers feel that social media was an appropriate feedback tool as they feel it is an effective way for organisations to respond should they have something negative to say about their product or service received. A participant in the focus group interviews confirmed this by stating that .... "Social media is very effective" .... Social media is also a more accessible tool to communicate with consumers. This relates to what was discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.5 by Haji (2013:387) who states that an organisation can use social media to improve their products and services and to also build a positive relationship with their consumers. A participant from the semi-structured focus group interviews stated that .... "Sometimes I would get a WhatsApp, or a Skype call. We use Skype a lot as our clients are located in Africa."

Organisations have mentioned that it is very difficult to get a consumer to complete a survey. This is confirmed in the semi-structured focus group interviews as a participant stated that .... "The guys are not going to complete a survey every time, although it's just a couple of questions" .... This statement is a slight contradiction to what consumers have answered in the questionnaire, as seventeen percent stated that they prefer the use of surveys. However, consumers can complete a survey in a unique and modern way instead. A participant from the focus group interviews states that .... "In a retail store, they usually have those self-service pins at the entrance or when you are paying ...". This is seen as a unique way to have consumers complete a questionnaire. Having consumers complete a survey on a self-service terminal or even on a mobile device such as an iPad<sup>©</sup> will excite and draw them to complete the questionnaire by pressing buttons on a device. Approaching a consumer with a mobile device with the questionnaire preloaded will also invite them to try the new piece of technology available on the market, while they complete the survey. Organisations mentioned that they look at reviews that have been left on their mobile applications found on online application stores. This gives them feedback to determine if consumers are satisfied with what the mobile application has to offer and what errors they are experiencing. This relates to the process a consumer follows before making a purchase that Lelis and Howes (2011:2285) stated. This process is explained in Chapter 2, section 2.2 and can be seen in Figure 2.3. This process has four steps that a consumer follows before making a purchase. Step two of this process entails consumers looking at comments and reviews about a product and service. These comments are not only useful to potential consumers, but to organisations as well.

As can be seen from Figure 5.1, a comment box on the organisations' website is not seen as a popular option, as only ten percent of respondents selected that option. This shows that not many people return to the website to add a comment on a product or service that they have purchased. One percent of participants stated 'other' and stated that face-to-face communication and SMSs are the tools they prefer to use. Organisations have found that face to face communication is the best type of feedback to obtain, as a participant from the semi-structured focus group interviews stated that .... "I think we get more feedback by engaging with the customer directly." Having organisations engage directly with the consumer allows

for consumer feedback to be obtained immediately. This was confirmed during the semi-structured focus group interviews as a participant stated that ... "After getting a service whether it's online or whether it telephonically, you need to obtain that feedback immediately" .... This relates to what was said by Labrecque, et al., (2013:256) in Chapter 2, that face-to-face communication is one of the best tools to obtain consumer feedback. Thirteen percent of consumers who completed the questionnaire stated that they prefer after service calls. Organisations like after-service calls as it is quick and easy to obtain the feedback which they can store straight away ... "So we prefer phone calls ...".

A more in depth analysis was done to determine how consumers from different age groups prefer to provide feedback. The results can be seen in Table 5.1.

Age Group		Email	Survey	After service call	Social media	Comment box on website	Other
0-22 Generation Z		37	15	9	15	7	1
	% of total	16%	7%	4% ERSIT	7%	3%	0.4%
23-33 Generation Y		88 JO	34 HANI	NESBU	38 JRG	19	3
	% of total	39%	15%	8%	17%	8%	1%
34-50 Generation X		38	18	120	14	10	2
	% of total	17%	8%	9%	6%	4%	0.9%

 Table 5.1:
 How consumers prefer to provide feedback according to generations.

A participant in the semi-structured focus group interviews mentioned that an organisation should ..." *consider their target audience*." As can be seen from Table 5.1, email was selected most often by all participants from all age groups. Seventeen percent of Generation Y stated that they prefer to provide feedback through social media. We can see that this generation is more active on social media than the other generations identified in this study. Consumers use social media to provide feedback

as they will get a response from organisations faster if they are having a problem with the product or service they have received. A participant from the semi-structured focus group interviews states that .... "Bad news travels much faster than good news" ... This relates to what was discussed in Chapter 2, Haji (2013:387) states that organisations will respond faster to negative publicity through social media. However, the overall method that is preferred by all consumers according to their age is email. The least preferred option was a comment box on a website. This shows that not many consumers will return back to a website once they have received their product to provide feedback. Should a consumer have a bad experience, it is more likely that they would post their comments on social media as this way the organisation and the public will hear about their experience much faster.

An analysis was conducted to determine how consumers prefer to provide feedback according to their education levels. The results can be seen in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2:	How consumers prefer to provide feedback according to their education
level.	

Education level		Email	Survey	After service call	Social media	Comment box on website	Other
Up to Grade 12		36	14	5 /FRSI	16	5	1
	% of total	15%	6%	2%	7%	2%	0.4%
Post-Matric Diploma or certificate		36 JC	20 A	10 ESE	313 RG	10	2
	% of total	15%	8%	4%	5%	4%	0.8%
Baccalaure ate degree		67	27	30	34	19	2
	% of total	28%	11%	13%	14%	8%	0.8%
Post graduate degree		31	10	9	10	6	1
	% of total	13%	4%	4%	4%	3%	0.4%

Table 5.2 shows that according to consumer's educational level; consumers prefer to provide feedback using email. Twenty eight percent of participants from the Baccalaureate sample group selected email as an option which was the highest

result for this section. Thirteen percent of participants from the post graduate degree sample group stated that they prefer email as an appropriate tool to provide feedback which was the lowest result for this section. According to the results from Table 5.2, the use of social media was the second preferred method to provide feedback to an organisation. Consumers who fell into the Baccalaureate sample group once again had the highest score. Fourteen percent of the participants stated that they would use social media to provide feedback. Post graduate degree group once again had the lowest score of four percent which means that participants who fall into the post graduate degree sample group do not turn to social media first to provide feedback. Eleven percent of participants from the Baccalaureate sample group stated that they prefer to provide feedback using a survey. This conflicts what was mentioned in the semi-structured focus group interviews with the organisations as a participant from the semi-structured focus group interviews stated that ... "the guys are not going to complete a survey every time, although it's just a couple of questions" .... This quote conflicts the results from this table which shows that completing a survey was the third highest option that consumers use to provide feedback. After-service call was the fourth highest method to use to obtain consumer feedback according to consumers education levels. Thirteen percent of the consumers who are part of the Baccalaureate degree sample group stated that they would also provide feedback through the use of an after-service call. This sample group once again obtained the highest result where as consumers who were part of the sample group up to Grade 12 had the lowest result, at two percent. This sample group consists of participants who are still in school and may not be able to talk during the day therefore this was not the preferred option.

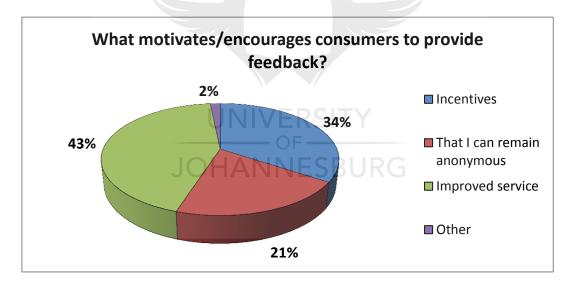
Participants were given the choice to select all the options that they prefer to use to provide feedback to organisations. The researcher investigated how consumers prefer to provide feedback according to their age group, educational level and a general overview of all participants. The results display that email is the preferred method to be used to provide feedback as consumers can provide feedback in a time and place convenient for them. This relates to what was discussed in Chapter 2 by Begum (2011:2), who states that email is a simple way to obtain feedback from consumers who have busy lifestyles. Email was the preferred choice by consumers according to their educational level and age group. This shows that in the 21<sup>st</sup>

century, consumers prefer this method. The second preferred option to provide feedback was social media. Participants from the semi-structured focus group interviews stated that the social media has a major impact on organisations as anyone is able to see the comments and reviews that are posted online. Organisations are also able to obtain this information easily from social media as long as they follow the correct procedures. This relates to what was discussed in Chapter 2 of this study where organisations should follow social media's rules and regulations when obtaining consumer feedback. It also explains how the consumer should also be cautious about their social media settings and what they post online as if they have settings that allow all their posts to be public, the organisation will not require extra permission from the consumer itself, they can just collect in information as it is. The researcher identified that the majority of consumers stated that they would use a survey to provide feedback. The use of a survey was the third option preferred by consumers to provide feedback. The researcher believes that organisations would have to target their correct target audience, such as participants from Generation Y and participants who are still in secondary school as these two groups selected the highest percentages when it came to providing feedback through a survey. An after-service call and comments on an online website were the two lowest options selected by all participants. This displays that these two methods are not as favoured as the rest. The researcher has identified and explained the different methods an organisation can use to obtain consumer feedback, however they will still need to encourage and motivate their consumers to provide feedback so they know they are providing excellent service. How to encourage consumer feedback is discussed in the next theme and will be compared to the quantitative factors.

#### 5.2.2 How to encourage consumers to provide feedback

Organisations may have a variety of tools that they can use to obtain feedback from consumers but encouraging and motivating their consumers to provide feedback is a challenge. A participant from the semi-structured focus group interviews mentioned that ... *"some people you might have to say here is a bundle if you respond"* .... This shows that organisations at times refer to the use of incentives to motivate their

consumers to provide feedback to them. Organisations have mentioned that they are very careful when it comes to providing incentives to consumers. A participant from the semi-structured focus group mentions .... "There are very strict rules on the app store, you cannot give incentives to people to download or change their reviews of your application. It is as if you are buying your review" .... This related to the rules of the Google Play Store that is discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.8. Organisations are required to follow these rules and regulations and if they do not, Google Play Store may remove the organisations mobile application from the store and fine them. Having their mobile application removed from the store can cause an organisation to lose a whole target group of consumers. Another participant in the semi-structured focus group discussions further stated that .... "you do get those people who will answer to just get that bundle of data" .... This shows that organisations have to effectively manage how they motivate consumers to provide feedback. Consumers were asked what can be done to motivate them to provide feedback; the results can be seen in Figure 5.2.



#### Figure 5.2: What motivates/encourages consumers to provide feedback.

Forty-three percent of consumers stated that knowing that their experience will be improved encourages and motivated them to provide feedback. This relates to Factor Four of the quantitative research findings, consumer service. This is also discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.7 where Balaji *et al.*, (2014:1915-1918) stated that consumer feedback will be able to assist an organisation to ensure that consumers are satisfied with their service. This shows that consumers prefer to have excellent

experience more than incentives as thirty four percent of consumers stated that incentives motivate them to provide feedback and forty three percent stated they prefer the improved service. This contradicts what was mentioned in the semistructured focus group interviews where organisations have stated that incentives have to be provided in order to obtain feedback. Twenty-one percent of participants stated that remaining anonymous is a reason why they would want to provide feedback to an organisation.

An in-depth analysis was conducted to identify what motivates and encourages consumers to provide feedback according to their age group. The results can be seen in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3:	What motivates consumers to provide feedback according to their
generations.	

Age Group		Incentives	That I can provide feedback and remain anonymous	Knowing my feedback will improve the service I receive	Other
0-22 Generation Z		18	18	40	0
	% of total	8%	8%	18%	0%
23-33 Generation Y		64	40 ERSITY	86	4
	% of total	28%	18%	38%	2%
34-50 Generation X	J	38-ANN	16SBURC	27	0
	% of total	17%	7%	12%	0%

From Table 5.3, the researcher is able to see that Generation Y and Generation X provide feedback knowing that the experience they receive will improve. However, Generation X would prefer incentives, rather than better service. This quantitative research finding related to what was mentioned in the semi-structured focus group interviews that organisations should ... *"consider your audience"* .... Eighteen percent from Generation Y stated that they would provide feedback knowing that they would remain anonymous. This is the only group that had above ten percent in this category. This shows that consumers aged between 23 and 33 would rather

remain anonymous. They do not want their identities revealed when they provide their feedback to organisations.

Another analysis was conducted to determine what motivates and encourages consumers to provide feedback according to their ethnicity. The results can be seen on Table 5.4.

Ethnic group		Incentives	That I can provide feedback and remain anonymous	Knowing my feedback will improve the service I receive	Other
Black		37	26	56	2
	% of total	17%	12%	25%	3%
White		29	21	25	2
	% of total	13%	10%	12%	1%
Indian or Asian		45	21	64	1
	% of total	21%	10%	30%	0.5%

Table 5.4:How consumers are motivated to provide feedback according to their<br/>ethnicity.

If the racial groups compared to each other, it can be seen that the Indian or Asian group have the highest percentage in terms of providing feedback to obtain incentives. However, thirty percent of participants that fall into the Indian or Asian group stated that they provide feedback to ensure that the service they receive is improved. This shows that the Indian or Asian group provide feedback to obtain incentives and to ensure that their service is improved. Seventeen percent of participants from the ethnic group 'Black' have stated that they provide feedback to obtain an incentive. Twenty-five percent of participants from the Black ethnic group stated that they would provide feedback to improve the service they receive. These figures are quite close to each other, but it can be seen that improved service encourages participants from the Black ethnic group prefer incentives over improved services. Thirteen percent of participants from this group have stated that they would provide feedback if they obtain incentives and twelve percent stated that they would provide feedback to improve their service.

The results from Table 5.4 show that twelve percent of Blacks, ten percent of Whites and Indian or Asian have stated that knowing they will remain anonymous encourages them to provide feedback. These figures are not as high as the other methods an organisation utilises to encourage consumers to provide feedback.

Another analysis was done to determine how consumers prefer to provide feedback according to their educational levels. The results can be seen in Table 5.5.

Education level		Incentives	That I can provide feedback and remain anonymous	Knowing my feedback will improve the service I receive	Other
Up to Gr 12		19	16	39	0
	% of total	8%	7%	16%	0%
Post Matric Diploma or certificate		28	24	37	0
	% of total	12%	10%	16%	0%
Baccalaure ate Degree		57	25	53	4
	% of total	24%	11%	22%	2%
Post graduate Degree		24 UNIV	11 ERSITY	32	2
	% of total	10%	5%	13%	1%

Table 5.5:How consumers are motivated to provide feedback according to their<br/>education level.

From Table 5.5, the researcher is able to deduce that majority of consumers provide feedback to organisations to ensure that the service they receive will be improved. However, twenty four percent of participants who are from the Baccalaureate sample group have stated that they will provide feedback knowing that they will receive incentives. From all the educational groups identified, the Baccalaureate had the highest results in terms of using incentives to provide feedback. This shows that participants in this group prefer to provide feedback for the incentives and for the improved service as twenty two percent of participants stated that they would provide feedback knowing that their service will be improved. The researcher found it interesting that participants who fall in the Up to Grade 12 group have stated they would provide. Participants in this group are still quite young and would normally want the free

incentives. This displays that consumers of all ages want good service and provide feedback mostly to have their service improved or maintained. Consumer feedback can provide useful information to an organisation such as what new products and services they can create based on consumers wants and needs, determine if consumers are satisfied with their current products and services and to determine what the problem is if they are not satisfied at all. The factors that contribute to a consumer's experience will be discussed in the next theme.

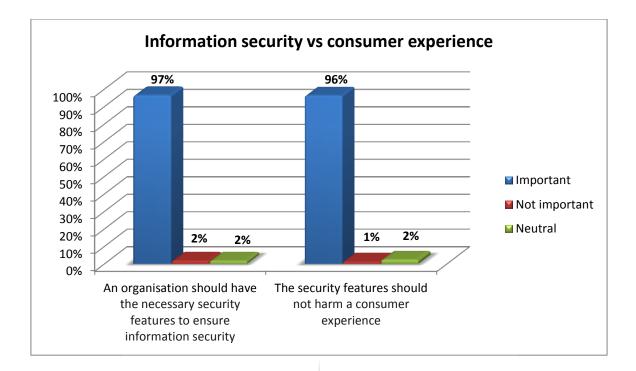
#### 5.2.3 What are the factors contributing to consumer experience?

During the semi-structured focus group interviews, participants mentioned factors that contribute to consumers experience that relate to the empirical factors identified in the factor analysis. One participant mentioned that ... "it is very easy to sell a product, okay maybe it's not that easy but to support and keep the customer happy is not easy, and they have perceptions that they are the only one and they don't care how many people you have here supporting them but you have to keep them happy" .... This refers to consumer service which organisations will need to ensure is up to standards at all times. This relates to what was discussed in the literature review where Guo Jun (2011:127) stated that consumers are less likely to purchase from an online store which is known for having bad consumer service and assistance. Consumers were asked if organisations should have a clear and simple return policy, ninety-two percent stated that this is very important to have. If a consumer is not satisfied with the product that they have purchased, they should be allowed to return the product or exchange it for a different product. Organisations should ensure that they do not complicate this process as consumers will feel that the organisation is only concerned about taking their money, and not about their consumer's experience. Ninety-six percent of consumers stated that they expect to be treated with respect by the employees of an organisation. This relates to what was discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.6 in which Guo Jun (2011:126) states that aftersale service is very important. After-sale service is not only to ensure that consumers are satisfied with the product or service they have obtained, but to also assist consumers in exchanges or questions they may have. After-service sales is very

important for an organisation to have as it will show that the organisation respects the consumer even after they have purchased something from them.

Participants in the semi-structured focus group have mentioned that ... "customers also look for convenience".... Some consumers purchase through an online store as they find it more convenient, as one may not have the time to go to the store to purchase essentials. Since most consumers look for convenience, they will more likely purchase products and services from a store that does not have any complicated features that can harm their overall experience. This relates to what was mentioned in the literature review by Calisir *et al.*, (2010:429) who states that the overall layout needs to be simple which will allow a consumer to navigate through the store easily. A participant from the semi-structured focus group interviews stated that ... "sometimes when you shop online, specifically for groceries, you have to sacrifice the brands that you normally use and use other brands" .... This relates to Factor One from the quantitative research findings, convenience and quality, as some customers would prefer a specific brand that is not available online. They would either have to go to the store themselves and purchase the item or settle for the item that is of a lower quality.

Consumers who completed the questionnaire were asked to rate the importance of an organisation having the necessary security features in place to ensure information security but to also ensure that the security features do not harm consumers shopping experience. Results can be found in Figure 5.3.

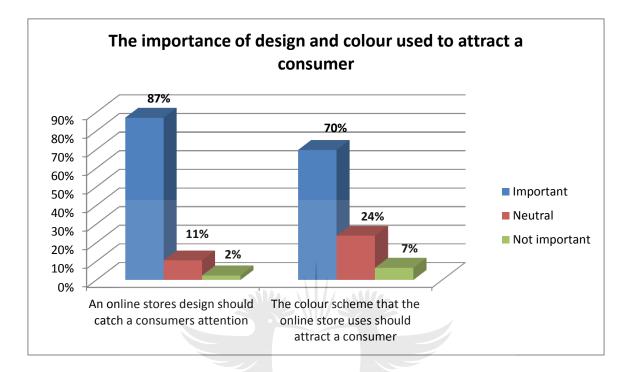


#### Figure 5.3: Comparison of security features affecting consumer experience.

Figure 5.3 shows that ninety seven percent of consumers stated that it is important to have good security features to protect consumers' private information. Information such as credit card details should be kept secure at all times. This relates to what was mentioned in the literature review by Ismailova and Muhametjanova (2016:35) who sates that security is one of the main reasons that cause consumers to hesitate when making an online payment of a digital channel available to them. Ninety-six percent of participants stated that even though it is important to have the necessary security features for protection, it should not affect consumers overall experience. A participant from the semi-structured focus group mentioned *that .... "The checkout procedure and payment process is very important to consider" ....* This shows how both the organisation and consumers feel about having good security features that are integrated in an appropriate manner so that consumer experience is not affected in any way. This relates to the last empirical factor which is Security.

The design and layout of a channel that a consumer is purchasing from is very important to consider. The design can either be inviting and attract consumers or it can turn consumers away. A participant from the semi-structured focus group interviews stated that ... "the design and reputation of their organisation is always considered" .... This shows that the finer details are what attract consumers.

Consumers who completed the questionnaire were asked if an online store's design should catch their attention and if the use of colour should be used to draw them to the store. The results can be seen in Figure 5.4.



#### Figure 5.4: Comparison of how the design and colour attracts a consumer.

Eighty-seven percent of consumers have stated that it is important for an online store's design to attract their attention. This shows that consumers first consider the design before accessing the online store. Only seventy percent of consumers feel that the colour scheme on an online store is important and twenty-four percent have stated neutral which means they are unsure or they are not concerned about the colour found on an online store. The twenty-four percent contradicts what was discussed in the semi-structured focus group as one participant mentioned that ... "consider your target audience, but it is a cost in navigating even the colours can make a huge difference because certain people are not going to like purple ...". This relates to Factor Four from the quantitative research findings, which is the design.

The researcher also tested the consumers on the quality of product they expect when they shop online. Consumers were asked if it is important for an online store to balance their good quality products with excellent consumer service. The results can be seen Figure 5.5.

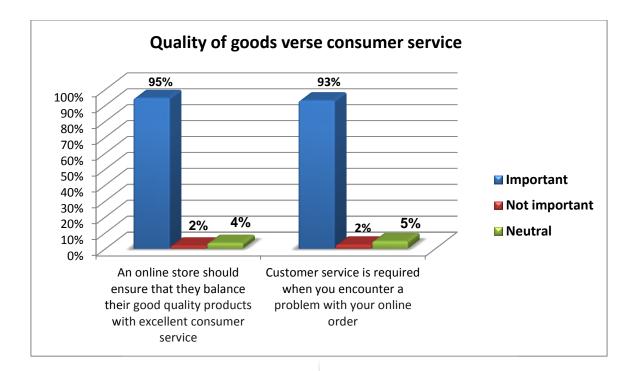


Figure 5.5: The importance of quality of goods and consumer service.

From Figure 5.5, ninety-five percent of consumers stated that it is very important to ensure that quality of products are balanced easily with consumer service as should consumers have a problem with their order, they will contact that organisation and seek assistance. A participant in the semi-structured focus group interviews mentioned that .... "it's all about quality too" ... ninety-three percent of consumers stated that it is very important to have customer service when there is problem with their order. Consumer service is not just when the consumers are purchasing products and services, but also after they have bought the product. Should a consumer have a bad experience and the organisation did not follow up to ensure the problem was fixed, that consumer will no longer support that organisation and that organisation may obtain a bad reputation as a result of their bad after sale service. The reputation of an online store has been identified as a factor that can affect a consumer's online experience. Guo Jun (2011:127) states that consumers are less likely to purchase from an online store who is known for difficult consumer service and for not having a good reputation. This relates to what was mentioned in the semi-structured focus group interviews as a participant mentioned that ... "false advertising and poor customer service" ... are factors that will affect your consumers' experience and cause them to move to a competitor. Therefore it is important that organisations are prepared to assist consumers before they purchase a product, while they and busy shopping and once their order has been delivered to them. There are variety of factors an organisation has to be aware of in order to ensure that consumers are satisfied with their products and services. It is therefore important for organisations to obtain consumer feedback. The importance of consumer feedback is discussed in the next theme.

## 5.2.4 The importance of consumer feedback

Obtaining consumer feedback is deemed a very important activity in any organisation. Feedback allows an organisation to find out from their consumers if they are happy with their products and services. This relates to what (Balaji, *et al.*, 2014:1915-1918) states how consumer feedback can assist an organisation which is discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.7. Their explanation on the importance of consumer feedback is discussed in the literature review. It is important for an organisation to use the most appropriate tool to gather feedback from the target audience. However, it is also important for an organisation to know when is the best time to obtain consumer feedback. Consumers were asked when they prefer to provide feedback and how often they provide feedback. The results can be seen below in Figure 5.6. Thirty six percent state that they rarely provide feedback and forty two percent stated that they sometimes provide feedback. Consumers were further asked when they prefer to provide feedback.

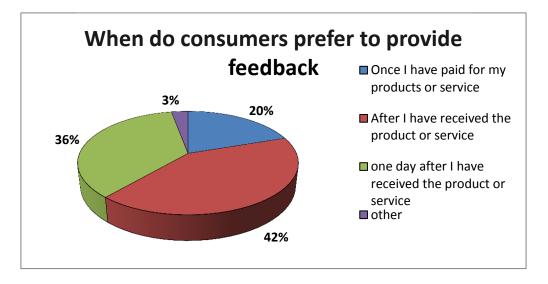


Figure 5.6: When do consumers prefer to provide feedback.

Forty-two percent of consumers stated that they prefer to provide feedback after they have received a product or service and thirty-six percent stated they prefer to provide feedback one day after they have purchased the product or service. The reason for this is because some consumers would like to experience the products before providing feedback. According to a participant from the semi-structured focus group interviews, he states that ... "In that fit of rage, the consumer will provide the best feedback that states how bad they are being treated" .... This relates to what was explained in the literature review by Schalts and Peltier (2013:87) who state that consumers will provide the best feedback when they encounter a big problem. Twenty percent stated that once they have paid for their product or service, they will provide feedback. This feedback would be about their experience in terms of purchasing the product and not the actual product itself as they have not yet received the product. Organisations are able to use this feedback, make the necessary changes and can plan for the future. Consumer feedback is very important for an organisation to obtain as it can assist them to create strategic decisions that will benefit their organisation in the long term. A participant from the semi-structured focus group interviews stated that ... "we also use this information in other projects we work on for other clients. It allows us to limit mistakes that we have made in the past" .... This relates to Factor One, convenience and quality and to Factor Two which is consumer service. Consumer feedback also assists an organisation to improve the current products and services they currently have. Not only will it assist in improving current products and services, it will also assist an organisation to create new and unique products and services that can attract a new target audience. This relates to the different techniques that were discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.8 on how an organisation can obtain a competitive advantage.

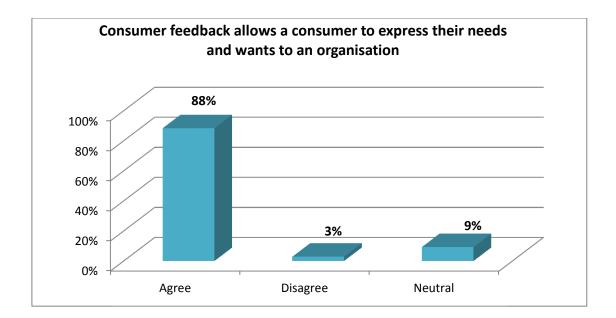
The researcher did an analysis to determine when the best time to obtain consumer feedback from males and females is. The results can be seen in Table 5.6.

Gender		Once I have paid for my product or service	After I have received the product or service	One (1) day after I have received and used the product or service	Other	Total
Male		27	51	49	4	131
	% of total	11%	21%	20%	3%	54%
Female		21	50	38	3	111
	% of total	9%	21%	16%	1%	46%
TOTAL						100%

#### Table 5.6: When to obtain consumer feedback according to gender.

The results from Table 5.6 shows that both males and females prefer to provide feedback once they have received the product and service. This shows that the best time to obtain feedback from a consumer about the service they receive is after they have purchased the product. This links back to what was said in the semi-structured focus group interviews ... *"the best time to obtain consumer feedback is right after they have bought the product"* .... The best time to obtain feedback about a product that a consumer has purchased is one day after they have received the product. This will give them the time to use the product and determine if they are happy with it or not.

Obtaining feedback from consumers is difficult as some consumers will only provide feedback to organisations should they encounter a problem. Organisations will need to build relationships with their consumers in order to ensure that they become loyal. To do this, they will need to listen to the needs and wants of a consumer. A participant in the semi-structured focus group interviews stated that ... *"if you are not providing the good customer service then over a period of time, they will swop you out with another vendor, then it's this bigger impact financially on the business as we are now losing clients. It is very important to have a good relationship with your client. It makes them loyal" .... This relates to what was discussed in the literature review where Schults and Peltier (2013:87) states that having a good relationship with your consumers can make them become loyal to that organisation and they will always support them. Consumers were asked to agree or disagree with the following statement; Consumer feedback allows a consumer to express their needs and wants to an organisation. The results can be seen in Figure 5.7.* 



# Figure 5.7: The results to determine if consumer feedback is about the consumer's wants and needs.

As can be seen in Figure 5.7, eighty-eight percent of consumers agree that consumer feedback allows them to express their needs and wants to an organisation. The majority of consumers that agree with this statement as having they feel that their needs and wants are expressed through consumer feedback. This is confirmed in the semi-structured focus group interviews as a participant stated that ... "So, regular customer engagement or monitoring is very important" .... Consumer feedback will also assist organisations to make improvements in current products they have in the market. A participant in the semi-structured focus group mentions that ... "If we do a product development, we put it into Mozambigue, and then we do a general upgrade to our master software, so we then upgrade all other customers so that they can have the same functionality" .... This statement shows how organisations use the feedback, analyse it and create it into a plan that organisations can implement to enhance all consumers' experience. However, another participant mentioned that ... "what we design for one customer, it might not work for another customer so you may not apply the design to another" .... This shows that even though consumer feedback is used by an organisation to improve their overall consumer's experience, there is a Catch 22 situation that they encounter in terms of satisfying all consumers. This explanation related to Factor Five from the quantitative research finding which is consumer's attitude. Organisations can obtain consumer feedback from different channels such as surveys, emails, face-to-face, or even

social media. These data collection techniques allow an organisation to obtain large amounts of data from consumers. Therefore, it is important for an organisation to manage the feedback they obtain in an appropriate manner. The management of consumer feedback will be discussed in the next theme.

#### 5.2.5 Management of consumer feedback

A participant from the semi-structured focus group interviews stated that ... "I don't know what word to use but it is also too much information and not all of the information is relevant". Once an organisation obtains this feedback, it is very important for the organisation to manage this feedback appropriately. Organisations have different methods of managing data that they have gathered. One of the participants mentioned that they perform a root cause analysis ... "We do a rootcause analysis on all the critical issues, so every issue that comes into our space has got a different priority from the tickets" .... The participant further explains that the ticket is auto generated and contains all the information that is required to solve the problem that the consumer has encountered. The ticket is then passed to the relevant employees to have it resolved .... "When we close a ticket, we have to give them a solution, what did we do to fix it? So that they can also have a clear idea of what was the issue" .... This relates to Factor Two from the quantitative research findings which is consumer service and Factor Five which is consumer attitude. It is related to consumer attitude because consumers want to know what the problem is and they are interested to understand how the organisation has resolved it. Organisations can also classify consumer feedback according to consumers by allocating each consumer with a unique identifier. A participant in the semi-structured focus group stated that ... "you do not have the user's details. Our apps are identified using phone numbers. So what our team does is that they look at reviews about the app, for the serious comments, they actually follow up with the customer and politely ask the customer permission to have their phone number then using their phone number, we will be able to trace that consumers experience" .... This allows organisations to work personally with customers, listen to their problems, obtain data and plan for the future. Participants from the semi-structured focus group interviews have stated that they also utilise teams that is responsible for observing

and managing consumer feedback. This team will obtain consumer feedback, analyse the feedback to determine what the problem is, propose solutions, identify what is the common factor review that consumers have stated and create a report on it. This report will then be given to the organisations management who will then use this information to make strategic long term goals. The feedback will help the organisation plan for the future. A participant mentioned that ... "it becomes part of our road map, so we have a road map of where we want our product to go with our consumer's request".

## 5.3 SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 5

The findings in this study are based on the objectives and research questions specified in Chapter 1. The quantitative analysis identified five main factors namely convenience and quality, consumer service, security, design and consumer attitude. The themes identified from the qualitative analysis were how to obtain consumer feedback, how to encourage consumers to provide feedback, factors contributing to consumer experience, the importance of consumer feedback and last, the management of consumer feedback.

The qualitative themes were compared against the quantitative factors. This was conducted to identify any correlations and contrasts that emerge during the comparison. This chapter also discussed the results as to how an organisation can obtain consumer feedback according to a consumer's ethnicity, age and gender, when would be the best time to obtain feedback and how to manage feedback to be used in an appropriate manner so that it can be used to assist an organisation obtain a competitive advantages. In Chapter 6, the researcher will discuss the important findings, limitations of this study and will conclude by recommending a proposed conceptual framework.

## **CHAPTER 6: OVERVIEW AND CONCLUSION**

#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

This study focuses on determining how organisations can use consumer feedback to obtain a competitive advantage in an Omni Channel environment. The researcher identified a theoretical framework that is used to determine if consumer feedback is important for an organisation to obtain. The model consists of four important steps namely: identify customer value propositions, customer perceiving value, modelling customer value perceptions and company proposing value.

Two semi-structured focus group interviews were conducted at two different organisations. The two semi-structured focus group interviews allowed the researcher to collect the necessary data on how organisations obtain, utilises and manages consumer feedback. A structured questionnaire was distributed to consumers to investigate how consumers prefer to provide feedback, their attitude towards feedback and factors that affect consumer's experience. This chapter will discuss the important findings and the limitations of the study. The researcher will explain how these important findings assisted in the development of the proposed conceptual frame work of this study.

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#### 6.2 BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THIS STUDY

This study consists of six chapters. Chapter 1 explains the research problem that the researcher has identified and the theoretical model that has been identified for this study. The theoretical model that is being investigated is called the value proposition model. This model consists of four steps that an organisation should follow to obtain a competitive advantage. This model can be seen in Figure 1.1. It emphasises the importance of consumer feedback and how an organisation can benefit from obtaining consumer feedback. This chapter also explains the aims and objectives of this study that will be achieved.

Chapter 2 consists of an in depth literature review that was conducted to support the research findings that will be identified in Chapter 2. In this chapter, the researcher investigated how organisations have obtained consumer feedback, how to manage consumer feedback and how they use it to obtain a competitive advantage in the environment they are situated it. The researcher also discussed Michael Porters (2008:28) techniques that can be used to obtain a competitive advantage. This study allowed the researcher to identify the impact of social media and how organisations can use consumer feedback to gather consumer feedback.

Chapter 3 is a detailed discussion on the research design and methodology that were used in this study. A mixed method approach was used to collect the necessary information. Two semi-structured focus group interviews were conducted at two different organisations. This allowed the researcher to understand how an organisation obtains, utilise and process consumer feedback into their organisation to obtain a competitive advantage. The semi-structured focus group interviews allowed the researcher to gather the necessary qualitative data for this study. Structured questionnaires were distributed to consumers to understand their attitude to providing consumer feedback and how consumers prefer to provide feedback. A concurrent parallel design was used which means that qualitative and quantitative data were obtained simultaneously. This chapter also explained how the researcher analysed the data.

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Chapter 4 discussed the results that were obtained when analysing the qualitative data. The semi-structured focus group interviews were recorded on an audio device and transcripts were created from the recordings. The researcher made use of the constant comparative method. This method allowed the researcher to identify five main themes that were used in this study.

Chapter 5 of this study explained the results that were obtained from the quantitative phase. SPSS V.22.0 was used in analysing the data. This chapter also consists of the explanation of the comparison of the quantitative and qualitative data.

Chapter 6 will discuss the important findings and the limitations of the study. In this chapter, a proposed conceptual framework will be presented on how an organisation can obtain a competitive advantage through the use of consumer feedback.

#### 6.3 IMPORTANT FINDINGS

The researcher conducted an in-depth analysis of the information obtained to create the proposed conceptual framework. From this analysis, the researcher was able to identify important concepts that must be considered should an organisation decide to use the proposed conceptual framework to obtain a competitive advantage. A detailed explanation of each concept is explained in this section.

#### 6.3.1 Know your audience

Organisations need to know who their target audience is and how to approach them to obtain feedback. From table 5.1, the researcher was able to identify, according to consumers ages, how they prefer to provide feedback. All generations selected email as the best option. This is a simple way for both a consumer to provide feedback and for an organisation to obtain feedback. Generation Y had a high result in the social media category. This shows that this generation is very active on social media and will not only provide feedback through an email but also through social media. Therefore, it is important for organisations to understand what technique is best used according to the generations consumers are situated in. This is confirmed in the semi-structured focus group interviews where a participant stated that an organisation should ... "know your audience" .... Organisations are more likely to obtain the best feedback if they use a tool that consumers prefer to provide feedback and when consumers are asked to provide feedback at an appropriate time. This is confirmed in the semi-structured focus group interviews when the participants stated that consumers all have different preferences in terms of providing feedback to an organisation.

#### 6.3.2 Encouraging consumers to provide feedback

The results from the study show that the majority of consumers prefer to provide feedback so that the service that they obtain can be improved. Incentives are a good tool that organisations can use to encourage consumers to provide feedback, but that feedback is not guaranteed to be valid. This is confirmed from the qualitative findings as a participant from the semi-structured focus group interview stated that ... "however you do get those people who will answer just to get that incentive" .... Some consumers provide feedback just so that they will be able to obtain the advertised incentive. Incentives may also cause an organisation to look like they are bribing their consumers to provide positive feedback about their product or service. Organisations need to ensure that they do not bribe their consumers as this can cause them to encounter legal problems in the future. For example, organisations that have a mobile application available for download through the Google Play Store<sup>®</sup> will have to follow the rules and regulations of that store. Should any rules be broken, such as bribing consumers, that organisation will not be allowed to have their mobile application on that store. This can cause the organisation to suffer a loss as they could lose the support of their consumer. Therefore it is important for organisations to ensure that incentives are provided at the appropriate time to consumers.

#### 6.3.3 Information security versus consumer experience

Information security is a very important component that all organisations need to consider. Information security not only involves a consumer's name and contact details but also their banking details. Organisations can have different security features in place to ensure that fraud is prevented when consumers are purchasing products through one of their channels. Organisations can create a partnership with other organisations that specialise in transaction security, such a PayPal<sup>®</sup>. A participant from the semi-structured focus group interviews, confirmed the importance of security ensuring that it does not affect a consumer's experience, stating that ... "ease of payment and security" ... is important to consider. It is important to have excellent security, but it is also important to ensure that the organisation security features do not harm their consumers overall experience. If consumers feel that the security features are now compromising their overall experience, they may just leave the online store and purchase from a competitor.

#### 6.3.4 Consumer feedback in the design phase

A lot of thought and effort goes into the design phase of a new product or service. Consumer feedback can assist an organisation when they are designing the new product or service. Before an organisation releases a product to the public, they can have a test group come in and have a look at this new product and service. This test group will consist of consumers from different generations. They will be able to view the product, listen to what it does or even have the opportunity to use the product to tests its functionalities. They then will provide feedback to the organisation based on their personal experience. Organisations will be able to use this information to determine what changes can be made, what functionalities can be added or even removed. This assists an organisation to have the best design of their product before releasing it to the market. This will help them obtain a competitive advantage compared to their competitors.

#### 6.3.5 Consumer relationship

It is important to have a good relationship with your consumers as they are the reason why you are successful. Having a good relationship with your consumers shows that you do care for them and you want them to have the best experience. When an organisation obtains feedback from consumers, that makes the consumers feel that their needs and wants are important to the organisation. Creating a positive relationship with a consumer also creates a form of trust and loyalty. This means that the consumer will remain loyal to a specific brand if they continue to receive excellent service. In the semi-structured focus group interviews, participants were stating that even if a consumer is no longer supporting your organisation, it is important to still contact them and find out if they are happy with the services they are receiving from the new organisation they are supporting. This will show the consumer that even though they are no longer supporting your organisation and brand, you still and want them to have a good experience.

#### 6.3.6 The importance of managing consumer feedback

Management of consumer feedback is important as this is what organisations will use to improve their products and services. The organisations in the semi-structured focus group interviews discussed various techniques that they use to manage and use the feedback for the benefit of the organisation. One organisation stated that they use a ticket system. A ticket is created when a consumer has experience a problem. The problem is attached to the ticket and sent to the individual who will assist in providing a solution.

The individual will them solve the problem and add the solution to the ticket. The consumer will be notified that the problem has been solved and that this was the solution. Sometimes organisations provide the solution to consumers as they would like to know what happened and what was done to solve the problem. The information from the ticket is then stored onto a database as it is important to keep track of all the resolutions. The resolutions can assist an organisation in the future or on different projects. This will allow the organisation to always refer to this information and improve their services in the future if needed.

The important findings that have been discussed assisted the researcher in developing a proposed conceptual framework for an organisation to adopt in order to obtain a competitive advantage using consumer feedback. In the next section, the researcher explains the development of the proposed conceptual framework.

#### 6.4 DEVELOPING THE PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Jain, *et al.*, (2011:1429) state that a conceptual framework allows a researcher to identify key entities and the relationship between each entity. Jain, *et al.*, (2011:1430) add that a conceptual framework can serve as a starting point when developing and implementing a new system or process into an organisation. The proposed conceptual framework identified in Figure 6.1 displays how the quantitative factors relate to the qualitative themes discussed in section 6.3 which then answered the research question.

There is a limited amount of literature available on how an organisation can use consumer feedback to obtain a competitive advantage. Therefore, an organisation can use this proposed conceptual framework as a basis when trying to increase their competitive advantage in an Omni Channel environment.

The proposed conceptual framework identified in Figure 6.1 consists of different components that all relate to how an organisation can benefit from using consumer feedback. The researcher is able to see how the qualitative themes (labelled A1-A5) are related to the appropriate quantitative factor (labelled B1-B5).

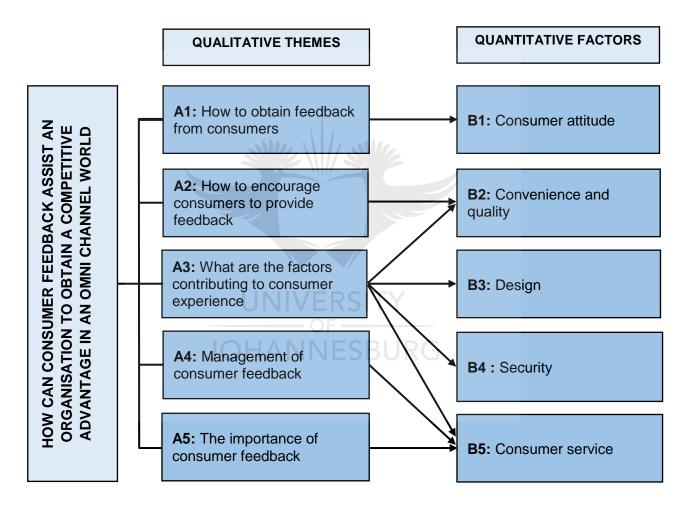


Figure 6.1: Proposed conceptual framework on how an organisation can obtain a competitive advantage using consumer feedback (Own Source).

## 6.4.1 A1: how to obtain feedback from consumers

The quantitative factor that was linked to this theme was B1, Consumer Attitude. An organisation must be cautious of a consumer's attitude when they approach

consumers to obtain feedback. Some consumers will not provide feedback to an organisation unless they have encountered a problem. The feedback that a consumer provides about the problem they have encountered will be the best feedback an organisation can obtain as it will be very detailed. Therefore, it is vital for an organisation to have different channels available to communicate with their consumers. It is important to have different channels available as some consumers would prefer to provide feedback with social media where as some may prefer to provide feedback using an email. It is also important for an organisation to identify their target audience as they then will know what will be the best technique to use to obtain the data according to the target group. Identifying target groups will also allow an organisation to evaluate their consumer's attitude towards providing feedback. Identifying target groups relates back to what was discussed in section 6.3 where the researcher discussed the importance of knowing your audience. Once an organisation has identified their target audience, they will be able to determine what type of attitude they have and if they will be able to obtain the necessary feedback from them that will be helpful.

#### 6.4.2 A2: how to encourage consumers to provide feedback

The quantitative factor that was linked to this theme was B2, Convenience and Quality. In this study, the researcher identified various techniques that an organisation can use to encourage consumers to provide feedback. Techniques such as incentives and ensuring that consumer's products and services are improved can motivate consumers to provide feedback. However, organisations will need to ensure that they provide incentives to their consumers at an appropriate time as sometimes consumers may only provide feedback for the sake of the incentive. As a result the consumer may not provide feedback that will assist an organisation improve their products and services. This study revealed that consumers are more likely to provide feedback knowing that their products and services will be improved. This has been highlighted as an important factor to consider which was discussed in section 6.3. Now that organisations know that consumers prefer better services than incentives, they will be able to reach out to their consumers and promise them better service should they respond to their mail or call. Having better products and services

will increase the organisations' profits and attract more consumers. As a result that organisation will obtain a competitive advantage.

## 6.4.3 A3: what are the factors contributing to consumer experience?

The quantitative factors that relate to this theme are Design, Security, Consumer Service, Convenience and Quality. Each of these factors will be discussed in detail to explain how it related to the qualitative theme.

- <u>B2: Convenience and quality</u>: This factor relates to two themes in the proposed conceptual framework identified in Figure 6.1. In this study, the researcher found that consumers turn to online shopping as it is more convenient for some. Consumers therefore look at organisations that provide them with the most convenient manner in which they can obtain their products and services. Not only is it important to ensure that consumers can purchase products in a way that is convenient for them, but to also ensure that they can return products they are not satisfied with in a simple manner without complications. Consumers who return products may not be satisfied with its functionality or the quality. The reasons why a consumer returns a product can assist an organisation to understand what they can do to improve the product to ensure that it can be sold to potentially new consumers from different environments.
- <u>B3: Design</u>: Organisations should be cautious of the design of their product or service. The design is very important to consider as it can either attract a consumer or it can cause a consumer to not return to that organisation. Even the colour of a website can affect a consumer's experience. Therefore, an organisation should first identify who their target market is and research and determine what would be the best when design their products and services. Feedback in the design phase also plays an important role as organisations will be able to create products based on how consumers would like them to be. This relates to what was mentioned in section 6.3 in important findings.
- <u>B4: Security</u>: This is an important factor that all organisations should take note of. With the increase of cybercrime in the world, organisations have to ensure that they have the necessary security mechanisms in place to ensure that their consumer's information is safe at all times. Consumers are less likely to purchase from an organisation that suffer regular data breaches. Having a data breach can cause an organisation serious reputational damage which can cause them to lose consumers. From this study, consumers have stated that it is important for an organisation to have the necessary security features implemented but to also ensure that the security features do not harm their overall experience. This has been highlighted as an important finding which is

discussed in 6.3. Complicated security features can cause a consumer to abandon their purchase as they may become frustrated with the checkout process which will cause the consumer to question if all these security features are even necessary.

• <u>B5: Consumer service</u>: This is another important factor that an organisation will need to consider. If an organisation does not provide excellent consumer service to their consumers, not only will they lose their consumers but they will also lose their competitive edge in the environment they are situated in. Organisations should also ensure that they have a good relationship with their consumers which also contributes to consumer service. This is highlighted in section 6.3 in the important findings section. Therefore, organisations should obtain consumer feedback to ensure that consumers are satisfied with the products and services they are receiving.

## 6.4.4 A4: management of consumer feedback

The quantitative factor that related to this theme is B5, Consumer Service. Managing consumer feedback is very important as it can assist an organisation to use consumer feedback to its fullest potential and can be useful for the future. Organisations can obtain large amounts of feedback which can provide them with large amounts of data. Much of the data may not even be relevant. Therefore, it is important for an organisation to ensure that they have the appropriate tools or team in place to filter and manage the feedback. This way the organisation will be able to identify the relevant information that will be able to assist them to improve the products and services they provide to consumers which will then improve their consumer's experience. This is discussed in section 6.3 under the important findings section.

## 6.4.5 A5: the importance of consumer feedback

The quantitative factor that related to this theme is B5 Consumer Service. Consumer feedback is a very important tool for an organisation to utilise. It allows an organisation to communicate with their consumers to determine if they are satisfied with the products and services that they are receiving. If consumers are not satisfied with the products and services, the feedback will assist an organisation to make the necessary improvements and provide it back to their consumers. By doing this,

organisations are improving their consumers experience with better quality products and they will also be able to attract new consumers which can improve their competitive advantage.

Comparing the qualitative and quantitative results together allowed the researcher to evaluate how each concept relates to each other. Now that the researcher was able to understand their relationship, the researcher was able to create the proposed conceptual framework that an organisation can adopt to obtain a competitive advantage in an Omni Channel environment using consumer feedback.

## 6.5 OUTCOMES OF RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the objective of this study was to identify how consumer feedback can assist an organisation to obtain a competitive advantage in an Omni Channel Environment. This objective has been achieved as the researcher was able to create a proposed conceptual framework in Figure 6.1. This framework can be adopted by an organisation to being the processes of integrating consumer feedback into their daily operations and into their long term strategic goals. This model also explains the different factors that affect a consumers online experience, how to obtain feedback from consumers according to their age, gender and even their attitude and how to ensure that consumers are satisfied with the products and service they have received. Therefore, this study not only achieved its main objective but also the sub – objectives mentioned in Chapter 1, section 1.4.

#### 6.6 LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

There were various limitations that the researcher encountered throughout the study. The first was getting ethical clearance from the organisations to go to their organisation to conduct the semi-structured focus group interviews. Organisations were reluctant to provide the researcher with permission as they felt that the researcher was going to harm their reputation. The organisations agreed to participate in this study only if they remained anonymous which the researcher agreed to. Once the organisations agreed to participate in the study, the researcher had to have meetings with managers from different departments to discuss the distribution of the questionnaire. The questionnaire that was used in this study was distributed to the consumers who purchase products and services from the organisations that participated in the semi-structured focus group discussions. The organisations could not provide the researcher with details of their consumers and therefore agreed to send the questionnaire link out to their consumers.

During the semi-structured focus group interview with the telecommunications organisation, the third participant decided at the last minute not to join the semi-structured focus group interview. The participant was not comfortable being recorded on a portable recording device and refused to sign the consent forms. The researcher decided that due to the experience that the other participants had, the semi-structured focus group would continue with the two remaining participants.

This is seen as a limitation, even though the participants had experience in consumer service, answers could not be explained in detail. The researcher who was the facilitator for the semi-structured focus group interviews had to ask additional questions to encourage the discussion in the semi-structured focus group to continue. Another limitation of this study was that this is the first time the researcher conducted semi-structured focus group interviews. The researcher did struggle to keep the interviews in the correct path but was able to stay on track and obtain the necessary data to answer the research question.

#### 6.7 CONTRIBUTION OF THIS STUDY

Organisations provide different products and services to consumers on different channels. In order to ensure that consumers are satisfied with the products they have purchased and the service they have received, organisations will be required to obtain consumer feedback. This study was conducted to determine how organisations can use consumer feedback to obtain a competitive advantage in an Omni Channel environment.

The researcher identified a theoretical model that explains the importance of consumer feedback. With this model as the basis for this study, the researcher

investigated how organisations obtain and utilise consumer feedback and how consumers prefer to provide feedback, their attitude towards providing feedback and factors that affect their overall experience. The results were then analysed, and a proposed conceptual framework was created.

This proposed conceptual framework will be able to assist an organisations to understand the importance of consumer feedback and how to communicate with their consumers. Obtaining feedback is a difficult task as consumers would not provide feedback unless they have experienced a serious problem. Organisations will be able to use the results that have has been discussed in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 to understand how they can obtain consumer feedback, what is the most appropriate technique to use to obtain feedback according to the generation consumers are classified in, factors that affect their experience and how to effectively manage the consumer feedback so that they can improve their products and services.

Most importantly the proposed conceptual framework defined in Figure 6.1 can serve as a starting point in assisting an organisation to utilize consumer feedback to obtain a competitive advantage.

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### 6.8 CONCLUSION OF THIS STUDY

For an organisation to obtain a competitive advantage in the environment they are situated in, the following needs to be considered:

Initially, organisations should identify their target group. This can be done by classifying consumers according to their age, race or gender. Once an organisation knows who their target group is, they will be able to understand how each category prefers to provide feedback. From this study, consumers from all the identified categories prefer to provide feedback through email. This type of tool allows a consumer to provide feedback when they have the time and it is a fast and simple method. Generation Y which is aged between 23 and 33 also displayed a high rating in social media. This means that consumers in this age group are active on social media and would also provide feedback through one of the social media accounts available.

In order for organisations to obtain the best feedback from a consumer, they need to obtain it immediately as the consumers experience is still fresh in their mind and as a result will provide the best and valid feedback. In order for an organisation to obtain feedback about a product or service that a consumer has purchased, they should contact the consumer at least a day after the purchase. This will give the consumers time to explore the product and understand the different features it offers. Organisations should note that quality of goods, consumer service, security and appearance all contribute to a consumer's overall experience. Should consumers have a bad experience, it can affect their attitude and cause a consumer to stop their purchase and support a different organisation.

Consumer feedback can also assist an organisation to create unique products and services that consumers currently want. This study identified different techniques that an organisation can adopt to obtain a competitive advantage. Techniques such as differentiation and cost advantage can assist an organisation to improve the products and services they currently have. Organisations can then use these new and improved products and target a new target market. This will allow them to grow as a brand and increase their profits.

Encouraging consumers to provide feedback is an important factor as well. Organisations should encourage consumers to provide feedback so that they can improve their consumers overall experience. From the research that was done, it is a risk to encourage feedback with the use of incentives as the data obtained may not be valid. Consumers may just provide the organisation with what they want to hear rather than what they need to hear. Incentives may also create the impression that consumers are buying their positive reviews. It is recommended that organisations evaluate what the negative and positive effects of using incentives before advertising it to the public.

Once an organisation has obtained consumer feedback from their target group, they will be required to analyse the data and separate it according to either the problems on design, experience, security, service or any other factor that they have identified. Once each problem has been identified, a solution needs to be created and assigned to each problem. A document should be created which clearly specifies what the problem is; the solution identified and handed to management. The information from

this document will assist management in making decisions that can affect consumers experience in the future. The information from this document can also assist in different projects that the organisation is currently conducting. Most importantly this feedback will assist an organisation to improve their products and services that they offer to the public.

Improved products and services will keep current consumers happy and will attract new consumers. As a result, an organisation will become the preferred option which will increase their competitive advantage in the environment they are situated in.



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## APPENDIX A: LETTER OF CONSENT FOR THE ORGANISATION



#### LETTER OF CONSENT: FOR THE ORGANIZATION PARTICIPATING IN THE STUDY

I am currently engaged in studies at the Department of Applied Information Systems (Faculty of Management) at the University of Johannesburg in South Africa. My study focuses on consumer feedback in an Omni Channel world.

Majority of consumers these days prefer to purchase items online and have it delivered to them in the comfort of their own home or even at work. Consumers expect the same level of experience in both an online store and retail store. Therefore the use of consumer feedback will assist an organisation to ensure that consumers are satisfied with the service they are receiving.

In order to ensure that organisations improve their consumers experience on an annual basis, they will need to gather feedback from consumers. However, gathering consumer feedback has been a challenge in numerous organisations. In this study, the researcher investigates the value of consumer feedback for an organisation to obtain a competitive edge in the market they are situated in.

I would like to invite you, with your consent, to form part of this study. With your consent, the researcher will conduct a semi-structured focus group with three (3) experts. The semi-structured focus group will be recorded on a portable recording device and will only be used for data analysis purposes. All recordings will be stored in a safe environment. The researcher will then require the organization to distribute a questionnaire to their consumers. The questionnaire has been created by the researcher. The data gathered from the semi-structured focus group and the questionnaire will allow the researcher to make a comparison between the response from the experts and consumers in an Omni Channel world.

Please note that even if you do agree to be part of this study you are at liberty to withdraw from the study at any time, without any pressure to provide reasons. I undertake to ensure that you as a participant will not be prejudiced in partaking in this study. I will allocate an alias to all participants to protect identities accordingly and guarantee that any information revealed, either personal or professional, will be regarded as confidential. Being part of this study will allow you access to the outcomes of the research.

I hereby request you to sign the attached document, in order to indicate that you are familiar with the conditions stated above, and that you have consequently given your permission to take part in this research project. This letter must be signed and dated by you, the participant, as it forms part of the requirements for ethical research as mandated by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Management at the University of Johannesburg.

Thanking you in anticipation,

Karmen Natalie	e Naidoo
Researcher	
201605175	

Date

Dr R Brink Supervisor Date

## **APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM FOR THE ORGANISATION**



#### **CONSENT FORM FOR COMPANY PARTAKING IN THE RESEARCH**

# PROPOSAL: "AN INVESTIGATION ON CONSUMER FEEDBACK IN AN OMNI CHANNEL WORLD"

I, the undersigned, (Prof/Dr/Mr/Mrs/Ms) \_\_\_\_\_\_, hereby indicate that I have read and understood the conditions for participation in the above-mentioned research as contained in this letter. I hereby give my written consent that Karmen Natalie Naidoo may conduct her research at:

- The researcher will conduct a semi-structured focus group with the necessary experts at the organization mentioned above.
- The semi-structured focus group will take a maximum of one (1) hour and will be recorded on a portable recording device. The recordings from the semi-structured focus group will locked away in a secure environment to ensure no unauthorized individual may obtain it.
- The organization mentioned above will then send the link to a questionnaire that was created by the researcher to all their consumers to complete. This will allow the researcher to compare the response from the clients and the experts from the semi-structured focus group.
- The organization will not reveal to the researcher who their consumers are. Consumers are protected by the South African Protection of Personal Information 2013 Act.
- Only questionnaires that have been completed in full and with a sign declaration stating the researcher may use the data gathered, will be used in this research project.
- Participants will at all times be fully informed about the research process and purpose.
- participants will be at liberty to withdraw from the study at any time, without any pressure to provide reasons (voluntary participation)
- all possible means will be undertaken to ensure that participants are not prejudiced in partaking in this study and a pseudonym will be allocated to all participants to protect identities and to guarantee that any information revealed, either personal or professional, will be regarded as absolutely confidential
- participants will not be exposed to any acts of deception or betrayal in the research process or its published outcomes
- faithfulness, keeping of agreements and loyalty in interpersonal relationships are central to the reputation of the researcher and individual participants

Name of company Representative	Signature of Participant	Date	
Name of Researcher	Signature of researcher	Date	
Name of supervisor	Signature of supervisor	Date	

## **APPENDIX C: LETTER OF CONSENT FOR PARTICIPANT**



#### LETTER OF CONSENT: FOR PARTICIPANTS PARTICIPATING IN THE STUDY

I am currently engaged in studies at the Department of Applied Information Systems (Faculty of Management) at the University of Johannesburg in South Africa. My study focuses on consumer feedback in an Omni Channel world.

Majority of consumers these days prefer to purchase items online and have it delivered to them in the comfort of their own home or even at work. Consumers expect the same level of experience in both an online store and retail store. Therefore the use of consumer feedback will assist an organisation to ensure that consumers are satisfied with the service they are receiving.

In order to ensure that organisations improve their consumers experience on an annual basis, they will need to gather feedback from consumers. However, gathering consumer feedback has been a challenge in numerous organisations. In this study, the researcher investigates the value of consumer feedback for an organisation to obtain a competitive edge in the market they are situated in.

I would like to invite you, with your consent, to form part of this study. With your consent, the researcher will conduct a semi-structured focus group with three (3) experts. The semi-structured focus group will be recorded on a portable recording device and will only be used for data analysis purposes. All recordings will be stored in a safe environment. The researcher will then require the organization to distribute a questionnaire to their consumers. The questionnaire has been created by the researcher. The data gathered from the semi-structured focus group and the questionnaire will allow the researcher to make a comparison between the response from the experts and consumers in an Omni Channel world.

Please note that even if you do agree to be part of this study you are at liberty to withdraw from the study at any time, without any pressure to provide reasons. I undertake to ensure that you as a participant will not be prejudiced in partaking in this study. I will allocate an alias to all participants to protect identities accordingly and guarantee that any information revealed, either personal or professional, will be regarded as confidential. Being part of this study will allow you access to the outcomes of the research.

I hereby request you to sign the attached document, in order to indicate that you are familiar with the conditions stated above, and that you have consequently given your permission to take part in this research project. This letter must be signed and dated by you, the participant, as it forms part of the requirements for ethical research as mandated by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Management at the University of Johannesburg.

Thanking you in anticipation,

Karmen Natalie Naidoo Researcher 201605175 Date

Dr R Brink Supervisor Date

## **APPENDIX D: CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANT**



#### CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS PARTICIPATING IN THE STUDY

# PROPOSAL: "AN INVESTIGATION ON CONSUMER FEEDBACK IN AN OMNI CHANNEL WORLD"

I, the undersigned, (Prof/Dr/Mr/Mrs/Ms) \_\_\_\_\_\_, hereby indicate that I have read and understood the conditions for participation in the above-mentioned research as contained in this letter. I hereby give my written consent to participate in Karmen Natalie Naidoo semistructured focus group and I agree to the terms and conditions stated below.

- The researcher will conduct a semi-structured focus group with the necessary experts at the organization mentioned above.
- The semi-structured focus group will take a maximum of one (1) hour and will be recorded on a portable recording device. The recordings from the semi-structured focus group will locked away in a secure environment to ensure no unauthorized individual may obtain it.
- The organization will not reveal to the researcher who their consumers are. Consumers are protected by the South African Protection of Personal Information 2013 Act.
- Only questionnaires that have been completed in full and with a sign declaration stating the researcher may use the data gathered, will be used in this research project.
- Participants will at all times be fully informed about the research process and purpose.
- participants will be at liberty to withdraw from the study at any time, without any pressure to provide reasons (voluntary participation).
- all possible means will be undertaken to ensure that participants are not prejudiced in partaking in this study and a pseudonym will be allocated to all participants to protect identities and to guarantee that any information revealed, either personal or professional, will be regarded as absolutely confidential.
- participants will not be exposed to any acts of deception or betrayal in the research process or its published outcomes.
- faithfulness, keeping of agreements and loyalty in interpersonal relationships are central to the reputation of the researcher and individual participants.

Name of participant	Signature of Participant	- Date
Name of Researcher	Signature of researcher	- Date
Name of supervisor	Signature of supervisor	Date

## APPENDIX E: ETHICAL CLEARANCE FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG

		EPARTMENTAL ETHICS COMMITTEE (DEC) RESEARCH ETHICS CLEARANCE FORM <sup>1</sup>
F* CHAIR NAME: Dr Jacqui PF – Proposal Forum)	Chetty	PF DATE:
RESEARCH COMPLIES WITH:	COMPLIANCE	NON-COMPLIANCE (flagged issues that need closer scrutiny)
Participants' right to privacy, confidentiality and anonymity	01	
Participants' right to equality, uslice, human dignity/life and protection against harm	01	
Participants' right to freedom of choice, expression and access to information	01	
Participants' right to be nformed, consent/letters of equest	01	
Rights of the community and he scientific community	01	
The responsibility of presenting data that is accurate, truthful and not alsified	· 01	
The responsibility of acknowledging ownership of deas, theories, contributions or concepts		ANESBURG
overall rating	01	03 04
DDE 01 - Approved DDE 03 - Suggestions with ACULTY ETHICS CODE: TUDENT NAME: Ms Karme	AIS2017- 3	
UPERVISOR NAME: Dr. Roelien Brink		SIGNATURE:
O-SUPERVISOR NAME:		SIGNATURE:
PF* CHAIR SIGNATURE: Char-		DATE: 08-05-17 DATE: 09/05/2017
IDC CHAIR:		DATE:

1. **8**0.

## **APPENDIX F: CONFIRMATION OF LANGUAGE EDITING**



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA Faculty of Humanities

Department of English

1 December 2017

#### TO WHOM IT MAT CONCERN

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled, 'The Importance of Feedback in an Omni Channel Environment, by Karmen Natalie Naidoo, Student no. 201605175, has been edited under my guidance and supervision.

Should you have any queries in this regard, please do not hesitate to contact me at prof.r.gray@gmail.com.

Yours faithfully

ful

Professor Rosemary Gray *Emeritus Professor*, University of Pretoria and Honorary Life Vice President of the English Academy of Southern Africa

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## APPENDIX G: RESULTS FROM THE FIRST SEMI-STRUCTURED FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

1	Nat	Okay so this is a consent form that states that you are agreeing to
2		participate in the focus group. Okay so this is just an explanation
3		of what's going on and then the consent form is at the back, this is
4		basically the summarised version of this. The university is very
5		strict when it comes to ethical clearance so I have to have these
6		forms to show that I have permission to do the focus group. Okay
7		let's just start with a brief introduction, I'd like to introduce myself
8		first and then you can each introduce yourself with a bit of a
9		background. So I'm Natalie Naidoo, I'm currently a masters
10		student at the University of Johannesburg, I'm doing research on
11		in Omni Channels, I also recently just accepted a job offer at
12		SARS so I just started working in the information's security
13		department.
14	Benji	I'm Benji and I look after IT for the international markets. I have
15		been in IT or ICT telecoms for about 17 years.
16	Mike	My name is Mike, my responsibility is mainly the technical
17		management of telecommunications accounts in South Africa,
18		Tanzania, DRC, Mozambique, Lesotho and other operations and
19		yeah I think I have been in the IT field for 15 years and then 12 in
20		telecommunications.
21	Nat	Wow so you both have a lot of experience.
22	Mike	Yeah it comes with the grey hair.
23	Nat	Okay so my research is all about Omni channels. I have been
24		conducting research on Omni Channels since 2016 when I was
25		completing my honours degree. This year I decided to continue
26		my studying and to look at Omni channels from a different point
27		of view, so I'm looking at consumer feedback in an Omni channel
28		world. I want to understand how an organisation obtain consumer
29		feedback, how they use it to enhance their advantage in their
30		world that they in. So the reason for this focus group is because I
31		would like to understand from an organisations point of view how

32 they manage consumer feedback and how they use it for the 33 betterment of the organisation. How they can also ensure that 34 consumers are satisfied with the services and products they 35 receive, also a very important factor is from the feedback they 36 gather, how they use it to see what factors contribute to 37 consumer experience in a negative and a positive way. 38 Nat So I have 4 main questions to start the focus group. The main 39 one is how do you, how does your organisation obtain consumer 40 feedback, I know there is a variety of platforms, social media, 41 there is face to face but in your organisation which is the best

42 way to obtain consumer feedback?

43 Benji I think the best way to answer that is you know because I 44 experience the services a lot myself including online services is 45 through you know immediate feedback after getting the service. 46 So after getting a service whether it's online or whether its 47 telephonically to the call centre or you actually go to a store, You 48 need to obtain that feedback immediately as consumers will not 49 contact you to provide feedback unless there is a big problem. In 50 a retail store, they usually have those self-service pins at the 51 entrance or when you are paying. That is also a quick method to 52 obtain feedback while it is still fresh in the consumers mind. 53 Depending on the channel the idea is to give feedback 54 immediately after experiencing the service before the customer 55 forgets, so it's either through sms or through IVR so if you call 56 the call centre through IVR after you finish calling it's like okay if 57 you would like to rate the agent that you just spoke to you then 58 select options and you rate 1 to 10. If it's online it's the same 59 thing you then get an online prompt to rate the service that you 60 just got but of course yes there are other channels like social 61 media and everything and from that kind of feedback that's 62 where we measure our customer experience against its industry 63 standard of measuring how the customers are experiencing our 64 services. We measure everything from how they experience our 65 price, our brand, our interaction, the friendliness of our staff, just

66 about everything about the service.

67 **Mike** Yeah you touched on a lot of the stuff, also I think even the after 68 journey whereby even if it's after a couple of days afterwards to 69 make sure that the device is still working if somebody has taken 70 up a new contract, if they still happy with the choice that they 71 have made and so after a couple of days is also vitally important. 72 So dealing with customers who are not happy with the service 73 they receive are the worst and the best. In that fit of rage, the 74 consumer will provide the best feedback that states how bad 75 they are being treated. I have experience someone like that. He 76 was so angry! That person eventually sat down and really cooled 77 down and also after the initial feedback they know that you as a 78 brand you do care, so a call or an sms or an email to say are you 79 still happy and also to measure between the person walking out 80 of the store or after the purchase and a couple of days later 48 81 hours later to say is it still the same? Is my customer still happy? 82 So yes, it's not only just one channel to use, you have to use 83 depending on the size of your brand, you have to use almost 84 every sizeable, whether its social media, whether it's sms, 85 whether it's a call because some people just don't have time to fill in an email survey but they will quickly chat to you. And last 86 87 but not least a survey, some people you might have to say here 88 is a bundle, if you respond, although that's another negative side 89 to it but that's beside the point, but you will get a response. 90 So basically incentives to try and encourage them to.

91 Mike Yes to reply, sometimes it works, however you do get those
92 people who will answer just to get that incentive and not really
93 care but it also depends on your organisation, can it spoof out
94 the guys who just want to answer and get an incentive, or you
95 receive everything as it is.

Benji Now that's what we can call in the online space, one of the most
 important pieces of feedback because now with the smartphones
 running on standard operating platforms you actually get actual
 ratings of the app on the Samsung or apple App Store, so that

100 we take very seriously. We actually measure ourselves on what 101 a whole app is rated, we give ourselves a target to say how the 102 customers must rate us, 4 or 5 or whatever it is that we choose 103 that time, so it's really important to actually read what the 104 customers are saving and to read when they said it because you 105 know apps there is different versions. So you will see the 106 improvements that we make, we tend to address the issues that 107 customers raised 2 cycles before or 2 versions of the app before, 108 so that's a very important channel, particularly the online space 109 to get feedback. You know because customers actually tell you, 110 they use it and they say there is a problem here and then they 111 give you a rating and they tell you why they have given you that 112 rating so that's a very important way of getting feedback. 113 Nat Okay so you say basically immediate feedback and the online 114 stores are like the main ways to obtain information. Have you 115 ever in your personal experiences now, maybe it was a few 116 years back but have you ever encountered a problem where a 117 consumer did not want to give feedback on a project for example 118 that you were working on in terms of online stores or IT in 119 general and how did you encourage that person to, when you 120 calm the person down to provide the feedback? 121 **Benji** I wouldn't pick a specific example but I would pick examples 122 where, let's say there was a problem in a version, I'm just being 123 abstract here, in version 5 of the app, right and the customer 124 says there is a big problem with XYZ and they rate you a 2 out of 125 5 for example. Then you fix that problem, getting that same 126 customer to go back when you have fixed the problem is a 127 problem. Firstly if you download the new version of the app and 128 more importantly when they download it to then change their 129 rating and change the feedback and change their comment, 130 that's difficult and what tends to happen is exactly what Mike just 131 said, the promotion, you encourage the customers. I don't think 132 you know this but there are very strict rules on app store, most of 133 the rules of the app stores you know you not really allowed to

134 give incentives to people to download your app or change the 135 comments so you have to adhere to those rules, you can pretty 136 much buy a rating on the app store, so customers need to say 137 what they want. But what you can incentivize them is to 138 download certain versions of the app, which means in app 139 notifications becomes very important not for us to get feedback 140 from the customers but for us to tell the customers what to do, to 141 say did you know that there is version XYZ available or 142 something like that. Or sending sms for example because you 143 have the version maybe I'm not able to send you that 144 notifications, so it's really important to incentivize the customer in 145 those scenarios to go back because they generally don't want to 146 go back, if they were not happy with the app, app customers are 147 generally less patient, online customers than the traditional 148 channel customers like someone who called the call centre, they 149 can hold for 10 minutes, someone who walks in the store, they 150 go and pick a number in the queue and they sit, you know maybe 151 they get popcorn and juice but someone of the app wants an 152 immediate answer and they want it to work and to work all the time. They a lot less patient. 153 Yes that true, so you have to actually encourage them to go back 154 Nat you can't tell them here is a megabyte or... 155 156 **Benji** We have tried that once but it did not really work, sometimes they 157 just ignore it. For example I have twitter, every time I log off it 158 they would ask me if I want to rate them and every time, I just say 159 maybe later but I'm never going to actually do it unless I find a 160 major problem. 161 Okay, so you mentioned that you have people who actually look Nat 162 at the online reviews and the ratings to understand how people 163 are feeling, so that's how you do it from the app side, so in terms 164 of maybe a survey or like a survey that I have distributed or face 165 to face or social media, how does an organisation know whether 166 somebody is just putting in negative comments for nothing, 167 maybe they from a competitor writing negative feedback, how do

you process the information you gather from the feedback fromthe consumer?

170 **Benji** That's the difficult part because you don't have the users, our 171 apps are identified by phone number, because we don't have the 172 users phone number it become very difficult, so what the teams 173 actually do is for the serious comments they actually follow up 174 with the customer and politely ask the customer for permission to 175 have their phone number. Then they trace the experience of that 176 customer because without the phone number there is absolutely 177 nothing you can do, so the only way is to express permission 178 from the customer, they give you their MSI's, their phone number 179 and then you phone them and then you track what happened. 180 **Mike** Also another way of tracking as well is to even track their usage 181 because the usage is still the same before or after the 182 engagement with the network, is it still the same before and after 183 and it's actually a very tricky world, in the telecommunications 184 world, well I guess every world is tricky because you have 1 185 prepaid customers who at the top of a hat will drop that sim, they 186 will get a new sim with a competitor. And then you get what we 187 call your contract customers who you will not know until he or 188 she has to renew and then what the organisation does is that you 189 are able to renew like 2 months before, its sends you on your 190 device and say hey the new iPhone 7 has just gotten for you we 191 will give it to you at this price. Usually from the uptake you can 192 say okay this customer is still happy, however as soon as it 193 comes, it draws nearer and nearer to the 24 months you kind of 194 guess okay you loosing this customer, so it's a bit of a challenge 195 but at the same time I think it could be the same thing let's say 196 with BMW that if I have a bad service with my car and I'm not 197 happy with BMW I'm going to wait until I'm comfortable and then I 198 will sell it. So getting feedback is a challenge from any 199 organisation and also getting true feedback where somebody is 200 not just messing around is also very very important to find out 201 who truly is your customer and are they actually saying how they

202 feeling.

203 **Benji** If I can add to that, customers are more likely to give you 204 feedback when they are upset than when they are happy with. 205 You so you have to be prompted to actually get that feedback as 206 well when customers are happy with you, one of the ways to deal 207 with customers, some customers just don't want to do work to 208 give you feedback so what you can do is to get permission from 209 the customer so from an diagnostics perspective you can see 210 what's going on and see what you can use to enhance your 211 consumers experience. There are many apps that do that, where 212 you get permission from the customer to say okay can we sent 213 diagnostic information so that we know that Benji's apple has 214 crashed so many times, we will know how long it's taking for his 215 pages to load so because we have analytic tools sitting behind 216 the portal in the app there is certain things that you may or may 217 not be able to track although the customer isn't physically giving 218 feedback. So you can trace the customers experience as long as 219 they give you permission without them having to do anything 220 According to the POPI act you have to listen to whatever the Nat consumer says, so one question I just thought of now, I used to 221 222 work at the iStore so from my experience with contracts for 223 Vodacom and Telkom and other competitors, I am going to make 224 everyone anonymous here so it's okay if I mention any names. 225 For example a consumer would look on our online store and they 226 would see okay you can buy this iPhone on a Vodacom contract 227 but say when they come into the iStore and they not happy with 228 the service they received but they take it out on Vodacom for example Vodacom, what approach would you take? 229 230 **Benji** I'm not sure if I'm understanding your question correctly. 231 Nat Okay so a third party is basically assisting to take out contracts 232 for you, so for example now maybe they are not receiving the 233 service that they want from iStore because they doing a Vodacom 234 contract and now they take out their frustration at Vodacom and 235 not at iStore, but meanwhile it was not Vodacom's fault, it was

the third parties fault.

237 **Benji** That is a huge challenge with any organisation where you let third 238 parties to assist you in getting your sales up and getting your 239 devices or your product out there, you know is managing the third 240 party, it would be the same thing with a Kelvinator with the fridges 241 at Game where they will end up being angry at Kevinator for 242 selling them a bad fridge while Game maybe dropped the fridge 243 while they were putting it onto the floor. So it's a challenge, there 244 is no formula as to how to solve it but the most important thing 245 always is to make sure that the customer is happy and the customer will return and also managing the relationship with the 246 247 third party, it's a catch 22, because at the same time you also 248 need a third party to generate new sales for us.

249 Nat It is a big problem so...

250 Benji I will give you an example if you look at the old mirror operators 251 they have got Franchise stores that are retaining themselves like 252 Vodacom and Mtn. But not all of the actually belongs to the 253 operators they belong to individuals so what you do in that regards 254 is that you set the standards of what the customer experience they 255 want with those partners. And you are going to put it in a contract 256 to say that you are going to train your staff and if there is a new 257 product your staff has to be trained for argument sake if you got 258 the new products. Which means that you then retain a certain level 259 of standards not just in your own company level of stores put in 260 your partners as well in order like if it is Pep stores or Game or 261 wherever. So I think it is guite important to in the agreement that 262 you have signed with these guys to distribute your product that you 263 have to get some level of guarantee on training their staff and what 264 client experience they expect for a customer. I think that is or there 265 is not much more that you can expect after that, even if the 266 customer come to you and if they have signed up with the other 267 partner you can sell to the customer himself but if they have signed 268 up with the customer themselves there may not so much to safe it. 269 Let's say it is a pay issue it may not be in our scope to.

- Nat So basically to change like for example to test that third parties are
  keeping up to their standards you can do like mystery shopping, will
  that help tests help ensure that they are maintaining their
- 273 agreement?

Benji Yes, I mean that kind of mystery shopping works. You can also get
actual complaints from customers and if you get a trend saying of a
partner you can also deal with that. There can also be aims that
you set like how long it takes to set sales, how long is the customer
line those things you can also set and measure.

279 Nat So the KPI's is important. Now for example let's look in regards to 280 the third party maybe they are experiencing a problem with a 281 product or a service that they are providing on behalf of an 282 organization and they provide you with feedback. So what you do 283 as an organization omit it and then compare that feedback from the 284 third party and the consumer and what part you actually have 285 when it all comes together? Or how do you handle feedback on the 286 third party that is what I meant?

Benji Well, since the third party is helping you out achieving your goals
you have to take their comments very, very seriously you know.
And at the same time you have to convert the contact media on the
same time on service to make sure that the third party is capable in
doing their job. Because you might find in another situation that the
third party is not capable in doing or of achieving the task. So it is a
two formed scenario but what you have to do is take part in it

294 because it is like a marriage so you have to take it seriously. 295 **Mike** I agree because we agree because if you think about it most of the 296 staff at Vodacom is outsourced so they actually get buried. So the 297 people that our customers talk to are third parties and you need to 298 have the experience to manage those third parties and you need to 299 tell them how you need to present the organization. For me that is 300 very important and if they do report an issue it must be like an 301 internal party did it initially. Because your partner remains your 302 customers partner, so from this point I will completely agree that 303 you have to take the weight on it and investigate it as if the issue

304 has come from them.

305 Nat Ok. Now that we have spoken from different consumer feedback
306 online store to the app and from third parties. Do you feel that it is

307 important for an organization to obtain consumer feedback?

308 Benji Yes.

309 Nat To enhance a bit of advantage, or why do you feel it is important to310 enhance it?

311 Benji I feel it is important but I feel that there is a step that you need to do 312 before that. I think for me in order for an organization they need to 313 have visibility of customer experience whether or not the customer 314 actually gives you feedback. And the reason why I say that even if 315 10% of our customers if you look at the customers workshop they 316 end up calling the call centre for example it is probably not even 317 20% of your customers. So what about the 80% the first thing for 318 me is design your services and your online channels in terms of 319 that you are able to track your customer experience. Yes but 320 having say that customer feedback is very important, the best 321 customer feedback is the design stage. You need to actually bring 322 customers or users to play with your products and services so that 323 you design for customer experiences and things like that. That also 324 helps so people that works in the customer service are must 325 actually give input on how you design your products and services. 326 Because at the time that the customer is phoning you and say that 327 the product is broken it is too late. So I think from me yes but not 328 without making sure that the product is good for the customer 329 experience. And secondly ones the product is live we need to have 330 an ability to know what is happening to 100% of the customers. So 331 you need to be able to monitor and to simulate the experience of 332 the customer because if you are lucky only 20% of your customers 333 will give you feedback.

Mike Yes, I agree 100% with Willington there that in our kind of
environment it is very tricky because you have two fasts of different
worlds and our customers are what we call the contract and what
we call the pre-paid. For the pre-paid it is very challenging as well

338 because today the guys I am making calls, he is buying products 339 he is recharging it is all good you are happy. Tomorrow the similar 340 is off he is in a bad coverage, is out of country where he is not 341 roaming, is he alive or is he unhappy or switched to another 342 operator. You don't know you just see out of the blue that this sim 343 has been switched off. So regular customer engagement or 344 monitoring is very important like Willington said probably 10 to 20% 345 of the customer engage and 80% of them won't even make a call 346 when something is wrong. So you need to always be aware and 347 know what is happening and also make a difference especially in this country. I speak about our country because of the rest of the 348 349 world are still in discovery but in our country we have different 350 operators. What we design for one customer, it might not work for 351 another customer so you may not apply the design to another. For 352 example in the townships data is a huge commodity using the data 353 is not favourable, moving to the suburbs with your kids is more 354 popular at now there is Wi-Fi where you can download as much as 355 you want. But in a township downloading an app is more than 356 enough you know so you are dealing with two vast worlds. And 357 then you will be wondering why you getting feedback in townships 358 but you are not getting feedback from the kids in the suburbs. So 359 those kind of things plays a very important factor into everything I 360 will mention a quick example I will prove to you again in the vehicle 361 manufacturers, one vehicle manufacturer what they do is that the 362 constantly call and when the new model is there they will call about 363 the new model. And you will say no and they will say ' but sir what 364 type of vehicle do you want, are you looking at a sport utility, sports 365 are or what so we can know what type of engagement we can do 366 with you in the future' and let's say he says he is a 4x4 fan. So 367 when the humongous car comes through they will call me and say 368 it's going for a test drive so just come in and test the car. So as 369 they don't know the car that I pitched up with that day I am driving 370 their brand. But if I am not driving their brand they will ask me sir 371 come talk to us of you want to change your car so they already

know the engagement. And for the other one the fact that I pitched
up they will know that I am still engaged with that brand. So it is
things like that and they do give feedback to an organization to
where they are with their customers.

376 Yes, so in terms of improving online services how do you look at or Nat 377 how do you look at consumers feedback to enhance your products 378 that you provide to the consumers? Do you think it is necessary to 379 identify what consumers like or what they don't like when you are 380 putting out a new product like rate a app for example so that you 381 know that consumers will come back to your app, like when you 382 mentioned consumers comes back even though they had a bad 383 experience?

384 **Benji** He can start with that he knows a lot more.

385 **Mike** I don't know it all in detail because they reveal a lot of secret. But it 386 is a cost in navigating even the colours can make a huge 387 difference because certain purple isn't really going to like purple. In 388 terms of design although I am a little shuttle lately because I have 389 got more emails so I am a bit of a sucker to that. Yes, it is 390 important in terms of consumer feedback and how we position it 391 pricing obviously all of those factors to bring feedback back into 392 how we present it, how we launch it, customer journey, how the customer sees it. 393

394 Nat So the customer is very important basically everything that they go395 through the feedback journey is vital?

396 Benji It's vital and because of that when you see that and you look 10 397 years back when you talk about videos content and 3G and 4G we 398 thought that the big time owners and big content company owners 399 that is providing content. But what is going viral today is using 4G 400 content and that just talks to the lessons over the top players is 401 that customer feedback is becoming very important. So if you want 402 to know what sports if you are studying a sport channels like sports 403 and you want to know what customers want the first thing to do is 404 to maybe ask a customer to contribute. So I think customer 405 feedback is extremely key in terms of figuring out what customers

406 want and sometimes feedback is what they say but also what they 407 do. In other words if you have an app and you find out that 80% of 408 your clicks are for end of your journeys then that is what customers 409 really go to do that is what really keeps them engaged the other 410 stuff is just there. So customers gives us feedback sometimes 411 mostly in directly of what they actually do, so I think it is very 412 important in your products and services to say hang on a moment 413 this is slowing down my customer experience by 10% but it is only 414 1% of the clicks so I need to keep it on it or do I need to improve 415 by 10% my performance and get 90 or 99% of the customers 416 happy.

Mike Just to add on to that just to keep everything generic we realise that 417 418 on one of the channels that the biggest thing that is keeping our 419 customers coming back is actually managing revenue generator. It 420 is to programs we can have a non-generating however we switched 421 of those two products today we will see a decline revenue and a 422 none revenue generator it is actually causing a loss on the network 423 however but because of our customers keeping on utilising it and 424 we can see the engagement through it these services are kept and 425 they are free to the customers.

426 Benji It is like I look at Sterkinekor what does Sterkinekor resell? I don't 427 think they sell movies but they sell popcorn and drinks you know to 428 get the customers to come in you have to have a movie that they 429 watch actually I think their most profitable business is the food. 430 Because when I look at my bill I mean that is why they are willing 431 to partner with Discovery, Edgar's every man and his dog to give away the movies almost they want food and the more food there is 432 433 the more popcorn they eat and more cool drink they drink. And that 434 is what Mike is saying ...

435 Mike just want to add on that Sterkinekor they have changed the seats
436 so that you have bigger seats to eat more popcorn in those
437 premium or deluxe whatever. Which everybody on the premium I
438 have never been to a premium the way I have seen for the first time
439 I have seen a premium and I never gone to that Prestige

- seats I never had to they are always gone because I am always
  late even if I go two days before to book them. So it goes to that
  point where they say come and sit in luxury and buy more popcorn
- 443 and actually now you can survey the popcorn during the movie.

444 They are popcorn companies.

445 Nat If you think about it then yeah. I think the last question that I have
446 this is just in general now in terms of online. From your experience
447 what are the major factors that contributes to experience in a way
448 positive and a negative way?

449 **Benji** For me if I look at all the apps that I have download and not even 450 you know and not deleted it is those app that is not iterating me 451 with adverts it is those apps that just works. So for me an app is to 452 easily use not clatter no advertising and for me it is of use and 453 speed. So if it is fast and it works all of the time the customers will 454 use it all things being equal assuming it is an app that people want. 455 You know for me there has to be some mitigation between the app 456 and the feeds of the app depending on what the user is doing. 457 When advertising interferes with use so ease of use and speed for 458 me if it works all of the time, its fast, it is reliable the customer 459 experience will be great in an app.

460 **Mike** On the survey user I agree that I also want ease of use get fast at 461 the point and efficient. Take Takealot for example I want it to be 462 convenient and things like that and if you top down to your lower, 463 your lower. I don't mind the advertising as long as they don't pay. 464 So anything that is not paying and they are not using data then 465 they are at ease you know. I think it just depends on where you are 466 at life you know and that is what makes it a challenge form a brand 467 owner as to how to address all of these enemies. You need to 468 address all categories in life but you need to make sure that all of 469 your bests are covered especially a brand like it is everybody. 470 Unlike your Mercedes Benz who is sitting on a target so it is easier 471 to keep things more compact so ja.

472 Nat So the design the overall lay out that also plays a manufacture for473 you guys not just advertising?

474 **Mike** Ja I mean maybe actually very smart point we are thinking like very 475 high users and there is also age. With the lower age groups like if I 476 think of my journey I couldn't care about advertising as long as you 477 can download the game and it is the game that he wants. You 478 know he will be frustrated if it is not working so for him it is just 479 content. So for the young ones maybe content is not what they 480 want. So if I can get the game that I want and I can get more levels 481 and freebies to so I suppose the answer is a qualified answer 482 depending on demographics and depending on the level of the 483 sophistication of the user.

484 **Benji** Going back I think the Mercedes Benz example where you can 485 narrow down I think it becomes a bit easier but the higher you go it 486 becomes more of a challenge it becomes more challenging as a 487 product owner. Because you are dealing with higher adds and 488 different demographics you know all of it. But if you are a 489 manufacturer you are going to stick to certain other kind 490 of thing would be a left or right and drive you know that is plus 491 minus where we are looking and also maybe male or female 492 obviously that. So I think the narrow way is better I think Bentley's 493 and those guys they just narrowed nicely they are in a target 494 market with targeting. As soon as Mike walks in and says how 495 much gallons is the car consumes then he knows I am not the 496 target market.

497 Nat Ok, great I think that has covered all my questions in fact even
498 more research thank you very much I really appreciate you taking
499 the time.

# APPENDIX H: RESULTS FROM THE SECOND SEMI-STRUCTURED FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW

1	Nat	Ok the consent form states what my research is about and
2		according to my university's ethical clearance board; I require
3		permission from you all as participants to partake in this focus
4		group discussion. Please sign this consent form for your participation
5		in this focus group. In short, it basically states that you are agreeing to
6		participate in the focus group and that I will use information gathered in
7		this focus group for my research. You are at liberty to withdraw from the
8		focus group at any time; I'm also going to make everyone anonymous
9		by allocating a pseudonym to 10 each participant. This means that
10		your names and any information will be changed so that no trail can
11		lead back to you or your organisation. You do not have to reveal any of
12		your consumers, private information's such as the names and contact
13		details as I will be working hand in hand with the Protection of personal
14		information Act.
15	Pam	Excellent.

Nat Okay so a brief introduction about myself. As I mentioned, my
name is Natalie Naidoo. I am currently completing my post graduate
degree at the University of Johannesburg. I am researching how
consumer feedback can be used by an organisation to obtain a
competitive advantage in an Omni Channel world. So if everyone
can just give a brief introduction about themselves.

Pam Okay so I am Pam, I have been working for 2 years at this organisation.
I am the manager for key accounts and sales. I basically work with all
the clients and assist with marketing as well.

25 **Jess** I am Jessica, I have also been with this organisation for 2 years,

- and am the operations and support manager, so I look after all the
  operations teams as well as the SLA management.
- Ben I'm Ben, I'm CEO, I have only been here for, I don't know feels like
  a year but I think it's only 4 months. Prior to becoming CEO, I
- 30 worked at various telecoms and IT companies.

31 Nat Okay so the introduction on the research that I'm doing, so from my 32 undergrad days I used to work at a retail store, it was my student job 33 and this allowed me to have interactions with consumers, so I would 34 see what they do and guide them to the right product, I would listen to 35 their problems and I would find solutions for them. So this taught 36 me that consumer feedback is very important, so I decided to focus my 37 research on the importance of consumer feedback. So I'm doing a 38 mixed method and this section of the mixed method is the 39 quantitative which I'm focusing on the organisation perspective of 40 consumer feedback. So the objective of this focus group is for me 41 as the researcher to understand how you as an organisation obtain 42 consumer feedback, how do you use it to gain a competitive 43 advantage, how do you manage it to enhance your consumer's 44 experience, whether it's online, whether it's in a traditional manner or 45 unique manner. With that being said, the first question, there are a 46 variety of platforms that can be used to obtain consumer feedback, 47 in your organisation how do you obtain consumer feedback and why 48 do you use this method?

49 Can I start? so our consumer feedback looks a little bit different, so we Pam 50 don't work with the end consumer, however our client is seen as a 51 consumer as well. So we get client feedback, so in our world if I can 52 just draw you a picture, we work with IT specialists who are all 53 nerds, they literally hide behind a computer, and they will not look up 54 in case you make eye contact. Okay they all super clever and 55 they know what they doing, so what happens is that one query would 56 come in from a client; it will either come in via, normally on a ticket 57 which are what would come through Jessica and Jessica and her 58 team would resolve it. If it is the end of the world and the moon is going 59 to fall and the sun is going to go to another planet because that's how 60 they feel, literally, exaggerated okay, then sometimes I would get a 61 telephone call, a WhatsApp, a Skype, we use Skype a lot in our 62 environment because all the clients all over Africa, all over it seems to 63 be good because you can send me a message at 3 o clock in the 64 morning and I can I read it at 6 or at 5 when I wake up and go I'm going 65 to get that answer for you, and you know I'm answering because you 66 might be in a different time zone, which is what we work with a lot. 67 So the clients would come back to us and then feedback but 68 knowing these nerds, they don't talk, so they see the problem and 69 they start resolving the problem, they possibly fix the problem and 70 then they leave it, now how do you know it's done? Suddenly your 71 system is working but you would have liked to knowhow. So what 72 happens is the problem actually goes through to Jessica. Jessica does, 73 it depends on the level of problem, if it's just the tickets resolve, the 74 ticket will be closed, logged, saved and they would note that's its 75 resolved or otherwise if it was the end of the world, she would do what 76 we call a root cause analysis and otherwise if the problem is on-going 77 and it seems to be an argument, there would be Skype groups etc. And 78 then I would try and get the information from what we call our nerds 79 and calm the client down. So I would get the information, they telling 80 me what they doing and trying to analyse it because they are super 81 technical and then I will tell the client we are busy with this, busy with 82 that, so its communication at the end of the day, whichever way you 83 use, WhatsApp works, telephone calls works and Skype, skype is very 84 important. Then at the end of everything you will do an analysis and 85 tell them this is what happened and that would go by email. 86 Jess We also use, the tool that they use to log their issues on they get 87 feedback on the tool, so any work that we do is updated on what 88 we call a ticket, so if the engineer is investigating something, its 89 updated on there and that's communicated back to the customer, 90 so there's that constant communication. When the work has been 91 completed and we put the work into a resolved state the 92 information that we send back to the customer is the details of what we 93 did to resolve it and we also include a customer survey on there, so 94 every ticket closed they have an option to complete a customer survey 95 and to provide us feedback of the experience that they received. 96 Although we encourage our customers to use this because it's a very 97 valuable tool for us, but on average I get less than 1% of the tickets that 98 are closed with a completed survey.

99 Ben If we don't close an issue in time, it will get escalated, if everything 100 happens within the agreed SLA you won't get feedback on it, it only 101 gets escalated also again to our client's top management if something 102 went wrong and then we will get feedback, but if things go according to 103 plan, we will not get. So just to sketch the situation for you, so we 104 are here, we got, say about 15 clients okay and those clients will have 105 millions of consumers, so indirectly what we doing can impact on the 106 consumer. So a consumer in Mozambique won't be able to make a call, 107 it will get escalated via call centre or however and then then our client 108 who we are working for in Mozambique will come to us and say okay 109 but there is an issue. We then go and fix the issue and like Janice 110 stated, we do provide they with a survey but they don't complete it. So 111 we prefer phone calls or even face to face communication as then we 112 obtain that feedback immediately. 113 Nat Jessica, about the surveys, you mentioned that it's difficult to get 114 your customers to actually complete the survey, so how do you 115 encourage them and motivate them to complete it? 116 **Jess** We have biweekly support meetings with each and every customer 117 and in that we ask them to please complete the survey because it's 118 a valuable tool. We give them the feedback of any surveys that have 119 been completed but it's really, I mean, they just not interested to be 120 perfectly honest, they just don't do it. I mean how many times have you 121 phoned onto an IVR and they say would you hold on for a survey and 122 you hang up, can't be bothered. I think if they really really unhappy they 123 would lodge it as an complain on an email, but you wouldn't get it 124 through the survey. 125 Nat So the survey is actually hard for your organisation to obtain 126 consumer feedback? 127 **Jess** It's very difficult and it goes with every single closure ticket and all it 128 is just a few buttons that they need to press, they don't have to put 129 comments in, they can just say I'm happy, I'm sad, they have the option 130 to put comments in but they don't. 131 Nat Has anyone experience any negative factors in terms of getting 132 feedback from your different clients, any negative experience?

133 **Jess** I have had 2 surveys come back where they were dissatisfied and then 134 we contact the customer directly to get additional feedback to know 135 what they were dissatisfied about, so it kind of prompts us to engage 136 with the client and say okay what exactly where you unhappy about, 137 how can we fix it? What did we do wrong? We also keep evidence of 138 everything that was changed, fixed etc and from there we say so the 139 consumer is having this problem lets rather do this. We also use this 140 information in other project we work on for other clients. It allows us to 141 limit mistakes that we have made in the past. 142 Ben Jessica lets draw a sketch for her. Let us take one of our customers, 143 how many tickets would there be in a month per customer? It ranges from anything, I have just done the stats for May, let's have a 144 **Jess** 145 look, our one client had just under 180 tickets. 146 **Ben** Okay so I mean that's 3 tickets per day on average, so people, they 147 not going to complete a survey for each and every one of them, it's 148 not like it's a ticket per week or a couple per month, so also on the 149 back of that, the guys are not going to, although it's just a couple of 150 questions, because there is continuous issues and changes on the 151 system and bugs have been logged and errors so it's not, I don't 152 know what word to use but it is also to much of information and not all of the information is relevant. 153 154 **Jess** I think we get more feedback by engaging with the customer 155 directly. So the meetings that I have with the operations managers, 156 we discuss issues that they experiencing, its open conversations 157 basically, we do minute it, we do follow up on actions but that where 158 we get the majority of our feedback. 159 Nat Okay so do you feel is necessary to go to these clients to get the 160 feedback so that you as an organisation can be competitive in the 161 environment that you are in? 162 **Jess** Yes I do, specifically from a support perspective, it's very easy to sell a 163 product, okay maybe it's not that easy but to support and keep the 164 customer happy is not easy, they have perceptions that they are the 165 only one and they don't care how many people you have here 166 supporting them but you have to keep them happy. So engaging with

them and following up, it's not always stuff that you can get from a
tickets, it's more their feeling, their gut feel, doing analysis, having
those open frank conversations with them, you get a lot more
information.

171 Ben And also if you think about the service that we providing to our 172 clients it's not the same as in a retail environment where you pissed off 173 with Pick n Pay because something was wrong with the product and 174 tomorrow you go to spar. Okay our products are so entrenched in their 175 business, so it's not that tomorrow they can say okay I'm not happy 176 with you we changing vendors. It can't happen like that. On the one 177 side it's good, there is a longer relationship with the client but if you not 178 providing the good customer service then over a period of time they 179 will swop you out with another vendor then it's this bigger impact 180 financially on the business as we are now loosing clients. It is very 181 important to have a good relationship with your client. It makes them 182 more loyal.

And it's also our name. If one of our clients decided to leave us and partner up with another vendor because they were not happy with our service, it will be difficult for us to get new clients as rumours spread. It would slowly start to ruin our name and reputation. That is why I have learnt that no matter what, even if your client is going to a new vendor, do not leave that relationship on a bad note. Even if one a year you call that manager to make sure he is happy with his new vendor, do it.

190 You mentioned something about a root analysis to identify the

191 problem, could you elaborate on that a little more.

192 Pam Jessica you know more about this. That's her horrible document that193 she has to set up not me thank goodness.

194 Jess We do root-cause analysis on all critical issues, so every issue that
195 comes into our space has got a different priority, so critical issue is the
196 service is completely down, no one can work, we support those 24/7.
197 So even if they log it the middle of the night, they phone us we start
198 working. We have high which is a module is not working, so let's say
199 activations aren't working but everything else is working, that would be

200 our responsibility although activation is a critical path and then we

201 have the medium and lowest. So medium and lowest have a long time 202 to fix it, it's not necessarily the end of the world, and they can still 203 operate. So for critical tickets, once we have resolved the critical issue, 204 we have to give them a root cause analysis, so we do a full 205 investigations into what was the issue? How did we fix it? And then we 206 look a little bit deeper to say okay how could we have picked it up 207 sooner? How could we prevent this happening ever again? So we 208 identify some preventative maintenance, enhancements of our 209 monitoring, in a lot of cases the tickets is logged by our customer and 210 we want to change that to say well if there is an issue coming we 211 should know it first, we shouldn't wait for our customers to call so all of 212 that is part of our root cause analysis document where we start really 213 digging into things and finding out exactly what the problem is. 214 Nat Okay so that's only done on serious cases. 215 **Jess** Only on critical tickets for now yeah. We can't do it on every single 216 ticket but on every ticket we do have, when we close a ticket we have 217 to give them a solution, what did we do to fix it? So that they can also 218 have a clear idea of what was the issue. 219 Nat On your website when I was reading to understand your company 220 more, I read something called VX view, could you elaborate more on 221 that because I understand it as a highly sophisticated billing and 222 customer care platform. 223 Ben So Pam is actually the product expert 224 **Pam** Who is your phone with? 225 Nat Telecommunications company B. 226 **Pam** Okay so every month you get a bill from Telecommunications company 227 B. Imagine you were post-paid, even for prepaid we do it, so what 228 happens, ya you buy a voucher, you buy R100 voucher, so your 229 R100 voucher goes, you activate it, you put in the codes, it goes onto 230 your phone, doof there is a R100 available but in that doof few seconds 231 or milliseconds that voucher code runs through all the systems, it goes 232 everywhere into Telecommunications company B, that code talks to a 233 whole lot of other systems and a billing system which says okay you 234 have R100 now and that's our billing system. So our billing system

235 says okay there is R100, now you send a WhatsApp, that takes data, 236 are you on Wi-Fi or aren't you on wi-fi? Data, so we have files and that 237 file is money that comes off your account and then you have 10 cents 238 left and we go oops sorry you can't send that WhatsApp there is no 239 more money left, so our system creates the bill, so it's the billing 240 engine, it's a billing platform. Everything you do runs through our 241 system, every WhatsApp, every call, everything you do we know about, 242 we don't go check all your WhatsApp's, a lot of people think they can 243 do that, in order to be able to do that is nearly impossible but so we 244 don't check that everything is encrypted, everything is safe, but our 245 system run everything that happens. So if you were post-paid, if you had a contract the same would happen, we log you have R100 246 247 contract, here is your part you can start using the contract, end of the 248 month, a bill gets provided, everything gets put on the bill, it says you 249 sent so many smses, you data was this, so many international calls, 250 this is what you have done, there is your bill, there is R100. When it 251 hits a R100 and the month wasn't over yet, we tell you, you had a limit 252 or we tell you you are close to depleting the available amount and then 253 you can always top it up as well. So that system runs everything so 254 that's what the billing engine is for. This system is also very useful as 255 you get consumers who complain that they were over charged and that they did not do this or that. From that system, we are able to pull a 256 257 report and show them ok look this is what happened. You were talking 258 here for 20 minutes, you were oversees and you made this call and 259 sent this message which costed you this amount. You must remember 260 as well that it is important to listen to your consumer but you really have 261 to focus and listen to what they are saying. Sometimes they are just 262 there to irritate you and waste their time or they just do not want to pay 263 the bill.

Ben Most of our clients are running our billing system, that's our flagship
product and that's where we start. So for all post-paid customers all
customer details is carried on our system but then our system is either
used at the call centre, it interfaces with core network elements, so we
entrenched in all the mobile operators and we gather all data and all

269 records and then we produce a bill.

270 **Pam** So post-paid means contract, so what happens is you fly to Egypt 271 tomorrow and you roam; our system speaks to whichever operator you 272 in, because now your phone goes, what's in Egypt I can't think ... Say 273 you in Kenya Airtel comes up, okay so now you roaming on Airtel and 274 it's not mtn. Let's use Telecommunications company C because I keep 275 picking on Telecommunications company B, because it's roaming so it 276 says Airtel, we have all the agreements that Telecommunications 277 company C has with all these other network operators as we would 278 call, we have all the agreements and we have all those costs and those 279 rates in our system. So now Airtel goes okay VX view there is a file that 280 gets sent to Telecommunications company C which is our VX view, and 281 they say you are using this amount of money and this is how your calls are going and it gets billed, then that's comes onto your bill so we 282 283 know how much your international bill is. So it's much bigger than just 284 hat you doing now, it's what you doing outside of the country etc. etc. 285 So there is all these extra billing parts onto our system that we make 286 available. So in that one second that you dialling in that code to say this 287 is what's going on it's amazing how that runs through, its milliseconds 288 and it goes through into all the systems, the system goes yes it's okay 289 yes the money is here, yes its valid, yes its fine, yes link her on, yes 290 she is allowed to make the call and then you call your mom or dad or 291 uncle and say oh it's awesome this VX view works well because I was 292 allowed to make this call.

293 **Nat** I can now see why you are in sales.

294 **Ben** Half of its lies but ...

295 Pam That's just, a lot of people don't know what goes in the back, its296 millions of things.

297 **Nat** The back end is quite critical if you think about it.

Pam But its fine, you don't care, you just want it to work, we make it work,
and if it doesn't work, that's when you go to your provider and comes
to us and that's when the tickets come and we fix it. The only reason
why I am using these company names is because I know you will be
changing the names so we won't get into any.

303 Nat Okay I need to phrase this question correctly, so once you obtain the 304 feedback that you have and say for example the information that you 305 gather from this feedback, after it has gone through the root analysis 306 and everything and you see that this actually is very important and can 307 actually help you as your organisation maybe enhance your strategic 308 goals. How do you do that? For example how do you integrate it with 309 your strategic goals because I know it will be complicated to suddenly 310 change your strategic long terms goals.

311 Ben What's happening is with, so a client can either log a problem with us 312 or they can log a change request, they say currently your system is 313 doing this, we want a new product and we want your system to do Y, 314 we would then create that Y for the customer. So we have got day to 315 day support but we also doing product development for them, but then 316 if we a product development, we put it into Mozambique, then that 317 same product we do then a general upgrade to our master software, so 318 as we then upgrade all other customer that same functionality is then 319 available for them.

320 Nat Okay so basically what you do to one, everyone gets affected with it?321 Ben Yes.

322 **Jess** They have the option to get it as well.

323 Ben So it would be, so we put it into Mozambique, on our masters software
it automatically gets upgraded, when in Lesotho when it's time for them
to do the upgrade to the next version, this new product is in that
upgraded version, we just need to configure it for Lesotho, so it's
available but up to them.

330 **Jess** It becomes part of our road map, so we have a road map of where we 331 want our product to go and with our customers' requests that come in, 332 they feed into our road map, so we go okay that's a fantastic idea, lets 333 feed that into our road map, we will drop it in 2 versions from now and 334 then we start upselling that to customers to say okay we can also do 335 this now. They have the option to take it, we don't say it's here you 336 have to use it, they have the option to say okay. It's the same on your 337 phone, you can upgrade your phone, it gives you an alarm and pictures 338 and whatever else and you have the option to upgrade it, it's up to

- you when you want to do it. If you busy the whole day on telephone
  calls you don't have time to upgrade it, it's your loss, you missing
  whichever new feature is there.
- 342 Ben Ya but still when you upgrade the features it does not mean you would
  343 even use the features. The feedback we got from customer A made us
  344 improve the product so as the vendor, we would like all our clients to
  345 receive the upgrade.
- 346 **Jess** Then all of a sudden your mails look different.
- 347 Ben Or but the same would happen with a, if there is a serious bug in the
  348 system, same will happen, so this thing happened in one country,
  349 we will fix it for that client but then the same fix will be given to all the
  350 customers.
- Nat: So okay so you mentioned that it's an option for the consumers to
  or clients let me put it that way to get that upgrade, so hypothetically
  speaking, let's say Lesotho wants the upgrade and so does
  Mozambique, and it works perfectly in Lesotho but in Mozambique it's
  not working perfectly and they want to go back to the old system for
  example.

357 Pam They can't.

358 **Ben** The thing with new products or features like that, it's not a change to 359 the entire system it's a little change in the system with a product that 360 can be used and to get it working with the client we still need to do 361 specific configurations for that client, so the functionality is there but 362 they can't start using it tomorrow we need to configure it to adapt it to 363 their environment.

364 **Jess** When it comes to our versioning, so part of our road map, say we have 365 4 new versions coming out in a year, we only support up to a certain 366 number of versions back from our current version, otherwise we have 367 customers on very very old versions that we have to support which 368 very difficult because they would start logging issues and we say but 369 that's already been fixed in the latest version, we have to get you up to 370 the latest version. So their parts of our road map to say you have to be 371 on the current version minus 2 at worst.

372 Ben The same works for development as well, so if a customer that's on

373		a very old version wants a new product, we working on our master
374		version which is the latest one but then you need to retrofit it to work on
375		10 versions back and then it becomes a customisation on each site and
376		that's what we don't want. We want all our customers to be on the
377		same version.
378	Nat	Ok I understand now. With regards to shop online, what are the factors
379		that affect your consumers experience?
380	Pam	So you would look at availability and how quick you can get it,
381		sometimes you want something fast and there is just the timeline you
382		can't help it but I never get to the shops so online for me is, I personally
383		have it delivered to the office so hence they all know what I doing my
384		life, they go there is another parcel for you.
385	Jess	When the couriers walk in they practically walk straight to her desk
386	Pam	So availability and then in a retail environment I would say you look
387		at what is offered to you. I once bought the wrong pair of boot because
388		they were not UK size so bad advertising is also a factor.
389	Jess	It was my benefit because they landed up being my size.
390	Pam	But things like that, everything these days is in a hurry so sometimes
391		you do have to concentrate while you do something online as well.
392	Jess	They also look for convenience, for grocery shopping for instance,
393		when I have to buy the big heavy stuff like when I used to have dogs
394		and they used to eat all the time, I would shop online for all their tinned
395		food and bags of food and for all the cool drinks that we have because
396		they big they bulky they heavy, you shop online they deliver to the
397		house and you go nanny, she unpacks everything so you don't have to
398		walk around and buy those heavy things. So I use that a lot, but the
398 399		
		walk around and buy those heavy things. So I use that a lot, but the
399		walk around and buy those heavy things. So I use that a lot, but the downside of shopping like that is sometimes the things you want are
399 400		walk around and buy those heavy things. So I use that a lot, but the downside of shopping like that is sometimes the things you want are not there, you know you used to buying sunlight dishwasher liquid or
399 400 401		walk around and buy those heavy things. So I use that a lot, but the downside of shopping like that is sometimes the things you want are not there, you know you used to buying sunlight dishwasher liquid or whatever and then it's not available online so then you like okay I have
399 400 401 402		walk around and buy those heavy things. So I use that a lot, but the downside of shopping like that is sometimes the things you want are not there, you know you used to buying sunlight dishwasher liquid or whatever and then it's not available online so then you like okay I have to go to the store because you want that brand. So sometimes when
399 400 401 402 403	Pam	walk around and buy those heavy things. So I use that a lot, but the downside of shopping like that is sometimes the things you want are not there, you know you used to buying sunlight dishwasher liquid or whatever and then it's not available online so then you like okay I have to go to the store because you want that brand. So sometimes when you shop online specifically for groceries you have to sacrifice the

407 house it's like way not ripe enough, I got something that's rock hard it's 408 going to take 2 weeks to ripen and I really want to use it know, whereas 409 if I was in the shop I would have picked one that is ripe and perfect. Or 410 you get a lettuce head that's only going to last you one day but I 411 would've went and got another one that would've lasted like 2 weeks. 412 It's all about quality too. I don't buy fresh food online anymore. 413 Ben I would say delivery time is important, so like Takealot.com that you 414 pay a bit extra and they with you tomorrow. 415 **Jess** Even though they say we going to be with you next week, the next day 416 they rock up. 417 Ben But that's where this one day only experience to them is good rather 418 than waiting 1 week, 2 weeks. And then also for me the checkout 419 procedure and payment look guys now there is apps, I think it's actually 420 better and one day we will only pay for things through apps like 421 Zapper. That's one of the payment options and its easy because it links 422 to my phone, I put in my code, payments done so it's done, there is 423 security, there is no credit card details that goes to them. There is other 424 guys that now got a direct interface into your online banking so again 425 instead of putting your credit card details you pick which bank you at, it 426 links to your online banking app on your phone and you log in and the 427 payments already created you just approve, so its ease of payment and 428 security. 429 **Pam** Because the last thing you want is for them to hack your credit card, I 430 have had that with Amazon. And then you cancel your credit card and 431 then you have to wait for a new one, and everywhere you do anything 432 online you have to change everything again, I'm lazy I like it easy. 433 Nat Okay so in terms of an online store, what is the first thing that attracts a 434 consumer to that store? 435 **Pam** Convenience, they must have everything. 436 Nat Okay so only convenience? 437 **Pam** The design and reputation as well but mostly convenience. See I have 438 a busy lifestyle so if I can get everything I want delivered to me without, 439 why not. 440 **Ben** I would say simplicity and it mustn't be cluttered, it's like a Google

screen, log in, what do you want, not to many stuff I don't want and
also don't like it where you have shopped once online and then they
start sending you emails to say we think you might like this, you don't
know what I want so don't tell me.

445 Nat Okay so have you ever experienced anything bad in terms of online446 shopping?

447 Pam Yes, I shopped via Facebook and I just never got it and they told me 448 they gave me a refund, I said well give me the proof, no check your 449 bank statement so I told them to go to hell and it's not in my bank. 450 Because I commented on somebody else's Facebook they said this 451 product is wonderful, I said no its not I'm still waiting for it since 452 Christmas, so oops I bad mouthed them and then I was a bad customer 453 and then they tried resolving it and they still haven't. Poor customer 454 service.

I had a bad experience on bid or buy where they not upfront about, 455 **Jess** you know they give you the item, this item costs R400 but then you go 456 457 and you pay for it and then they get in touch with you and they go but 458 you didn't pay courier fees, I'm like where am I supposed to see that 459 there is courier fees and then they would take forever to deliver 460 because on the actual site they didn't say that they didn't have stock, 461 it's for sale. So you order it and then you say where is it? No we don't 462 have any stock, we waiting for stock to come in, so it's just they not 463 upfront to say that this is going to take 4-5 weeks because we still have 464 to go and get the stock. So false advertising and poor customer 465 service.

466 **Pam** Some sites actually say but there is only 1 in stock, you have the 467 availability to wait, like my children are in the states so for Christmas 468 I buy them whatever online and they go this will only be there after 469 Christmas, so sad so sorry. Then I say yes I would still like it and then I 470 send a picture to the kids saying o you going to get this so you going 471 to get a new year's present also, whatever or you say sorry find 472 something else. Rather tell me then I can work with it and prepare for 473 the bad news coming but yes they must be open and honest.

474 Nat Okay so the last question that I would like to ask just to round up

141

475 the discussion is, how do you prefer to provide feedback whether i t's

476 online in the physical retail shopping, email, social media.

477 Pam Email.

478 **Nat** Only email?

479 Jess Social media.

480 **Nat** Do you find that effective?

481 Jess Very effective. I'm currently having a war with Pick 'n Pay and it's on
482 social media and I'm getting a lot of people supporting me, so that they
483 see it's not just me being vindictive it's a problem that they have.

484 **Ben** I had a situation earlier this year where I went online to open a bank

485 account with one of the big banks and I did it online because they said

- they can open it online, I submitted all my documents and everything
- 487 and nothing happened. A week went by, 2 weeks went by and
- 488 downloaded Twitter especially just for that, I tagged them and I sent out 489 the nasty little message and it went so far that the CEO office phoned
- the nasty little message and it went so far that the CEO office phoned
  me to apologise and to sort it out and the next day someone else
- 491 phoned me and the next day the card was delivered , so ya its, I'm not
  492 normally a guy that complains but social media is....

493 Jess I think it's also when you dealing with big corporations and big
494 wholesale stores and stuff, they very aware of you know social media,
495 they leave a footprint, so if there are complaints they do tend to
496 respond to it.

- 497 Pam Bad news travels much faster than good news, even in our business, 498 I mean we can have. You know the 4 of us can sit on one office, I can 499 be working on VX view and I might have done something wrong, I can 500 go this stupid programme whatever and then yesterday you got stuck 501 but it was actually your fault, yes I know it's stupid and its difficult 502 because you just in a bad mood because you had a fight this morning 503 and then everything goes negative and then now we the bad guys. Or 504 another company did something that's also on the back end that links 505 to but they taking long to do this but it's us because you see here the 506 VX view but the other company is actually messing up but it's us, so it's 507 pretty difficult sometimes.
- 508 **Nat** That actually answered all of my questions.

# **APPENDIX I: STRUCTURED QUESTIONNAIRE**

# PLEASE ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS BY CROSSING (X) THE RELEVANT BLOCK OR WRITING DOWN YOUR ANSWER IN THE SPACE PROVIDED.

EXAMPLE of how to complete this questionn	aire:
Your gender?	
If you are female:	
NA-1-	1

Male	1	
Female	X	_

## Section A – Background information

### Mark X in the applicable box to answer the question or fill in the answer in the space provided

This section of the questionnaire refers to background information. I am aware of the sensitivity of the questions in this section, the information will allow me to compare groups of respondents.

1 2

1. Gender

Г

Male Female

2. Age (in complete years)

### 3. Ethnicity

Black	1
White	2
Coloured	3
Indian or Asian	4

## 4. Highest qualification to date

Grade 11 or lower (std 9 or lower)	1
Grade 12 (Matric, std 10)	2
Post-Matric Diploma or certificate	3
Baccalaureate Degree(s)	4
Post- Graduate Degree(s)	5

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## Section B – Consumer feedback preference

# Mark X in the applicable box to answer the question or fill in the answer in the space provided

This section of the questionnaire will allow the researcher to evaluate how consumers prefer to provide feedback to organisations.

### 5. How do you prefer to provide feedback? Mark all applicable

Email	1
Survey	2
After service call	3
Social media (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter)	4
Comment box on the organisations website	5
Other (specify)	6

### 6. How often do you provide feedback to organisations

1	
2	
3	$\langle 0 \rangle$
4	
5	
	1 2 3 4 5

### 7. When do you prefer to provide feedback?

Once I have paid for my product or service	1	
After I have received the product or service		
One (1) day after I have received the product or service	3	
Other (Specify)	4	

# 8. Do you feel as a consumer that it is necessary for an organisation to gather/obtain consumer feedback?

Yes	1
No	2

### 9. What motivates/encourages you to provide feedback? Mark all applicable

Incentives	1
That I can provide feedback and remain anonymous	2
Knowing that my feedback will improve the service I receive	3
Other (Specify)	4

#### 10. Do you purchase products and services from an online store?

Yes	1	
No	2	

# Section C – Consumer experience

#### Mark X in the applicable box to answer the question

This section is used to determine what effects consumers experience when shopping online

# If you do not purchase products online, please skip this section and go straight to section D.

The questionnaire has identified 4 factors that can affect a consumers experience while shopping online. Please rate how important you feel each statement that relates to the factor using the following 5 point scale where

- 1. =Totally unimportant
- 2. =Unimportant
- 3. =Neutral
- 4. =Important
- 5. =Very important

11. Appearance	Totally unimportant	Unimportant	Neutral	Important	Very important
An online store's design should catch my attention	1	2	3	4	5
The colour scheme that the online store uses should draw me to purchase from them.	1	2	3	4	5
An online store should be easy to navigate through	1	2	3	4	5
The feature of a search bar option should be available in an online store.	1	2	3	4	5
The overall layout needs to be easy to read so that I can easily purchase products or services I would like from the online store.	IRG	2	3	4	5

12. Quality of products	Totally unimportant	Unimportant	Neutral	Important	Very important
A online store needs to have good quality products	1	2	3	4	5
An online store should have a good reputation in terms of quality of the products they sell.	1	2	3	4	5
An online store should ensure that they balance their good quality products with excellent consumer service.	1	2	3	4	5
Quality of products are important to ensure that I come back to purchase more items from that specific online store. Products should be of high quality to ensure that I come back to purchase more items from that specific online store.	1	2	3	4	5

13. Security	Totally unimportant	Unimportant	Neutral	Important	Very important
An online store needs to have the necessary security features in place to ensure that my personal and financial details are kept safe	1	2	3	4	5
As a customer, I should be notified when an online stores suffer a security breach	1	2	3	4	5
An online store needs to ensure that their security features does not harm the experience customers have while purchasing online.	1	2	3	4	5
I as a consumer should be notified when there is unusual activity on my personal registered account on an online store.	1	2	3	4	5

14. Consumer service UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBU	Totally unimportant	Unimportant	Neutral	Important	Very important
Customer service is required when you encounter a problem with	1	2	3	4	5
your online order.					
Online stores should have a clear and simple return policy on	1	2	3	4	5
their products.					
The employees of an organisation need to know how to answer	1	2	3	4	5
consumers' questions and concerns with regards to online orders					
or service. (e.g. call centre employees)					
I expect employees of an organisation to treat me with respect	1	2	3	4	5
when I contact them about online orders and services.					

## Section D – Consumer attitude

This section is used to determine what the consumer's attitude is in terms of providing consumer feedback to an organisation.

To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements, please indicate your answer using the following 5-point scale where:

- 1. = Strongly disagree (SD)
- 2. =Disagree (D)
- 3. =Neutral (N)
- 4. =Agree (A)
- 5. =Strongly agree (SA)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
15. Organisations should collect consumer feedback as it will assist them in improving the services and products they offer to consumers	1	2	3	4	5
16. Consumer feedback allows a consumer to express their needs and wants to an organisation.		2	3	4	5
17. Consumer feedback allows a consumer to feel that their opinion matters to the organisation.	1	2	3	4	5
18. A consumer should provide feedback to an organisation if they know they will get something in return. (e.g. incentives, better product deals)	1	2	3	4	5
19. Consumers should provide feedback to an organisation so that the service they receive can be improved.	1 ERSI	2 TY	3	4	5
20. Consumers should take the time to complete a two minute questionnaire or answer a few questions over the phone so that the organisation can gather their feedback.	QF NESE	2 BURG	3	4	5



# APPENDIX J: THEMES IDENTIFIED IN THIS STUDY

How to obtain feedback from consumers	How to encourage consumers to provide feedback	What are the factors contributing to consumer	The importance of consumer feedback	Management of consumer feedback
		experience		
So what happens is that one query would come in from a client, it will either come in via, and normally on a ticket which is what would come through Jessica and Jessica and her team would resolve it. If it is	We have biweekly support meetings with each and every customer and in that we ask them to please complete the survey because it's a valuable tool. We give them the feedback of any	It's very easy to sell a product, okay maybe it's not that easy but to support and keep the customer happy is not easy, and they have perceptions that they are the only one and they don't care how		I don't know what word to use but it is also too much of information and not all of the information is relevant. We do root-cause analysis on all critical issues, so every issue that comes into our
the end of the world and the moon is going to fall and the sun is going to go to another planet because that's how they feel,	surveys that have been completed but it's really, I mean, they just not interested to be perfectly honest, they just don't do it.	many people you have here supporting them but you have to keep them happy. So you would look at availability	communication at the end of the day, whichever way you use, WhatsApp works, telephone calls works and Skype, skype is very	space has got a different priority. So we identify some preventative maintenance, enhancements of our monitoring, in a lot of cases the
literally, exaggerated okay, then sometimes I would get a telephone call, a WhatsApp, a	I have had 2 surveys come back where they were dissatisfied and then we contact the	and how quick you can get it. I personally have my products delivered to the office so hence	So if the engineer is investigating something on the ticket, it's updated on there	tickets is logged by our customer and we want to change that to say well if there is an issue
skype, we use Skype a lot in our environment because all the clients all over Africa	customer directly to get additional feedback to know what were they dissatisfied about, so it kind	they all know what I do in my life; they go there is another parcel for you.	and that's communicated back to the customer so that there is constant communication.	coming we should know it first, we shouldn't wait for our customers to call so all of that is
We also use, the tool that they use to log their issues on they get feedback on the tool, so any work that we do is updated on what we call a ticket.	of prompts us to engage with the client and say okay what exactly where you unhappy about, how can we fix it? What did we do wrong? We also keep evidence of	Customers also look for convenience. The downside of shopping online is that sometimes the things you want are not there. So sometimes when	Although we encourage our customers to use this because it's a very valuable tool for us, but on average I get less than 1% of the tickets that are closed with a	part of our root cause analysis document where we start really digging into things and finding out exactly what the problem is.
So what happens is the problem actually goes	everything that was changed, fixed	you shop online specifically for groceries you	completed survey.	ticket we have to give them a solution, what did

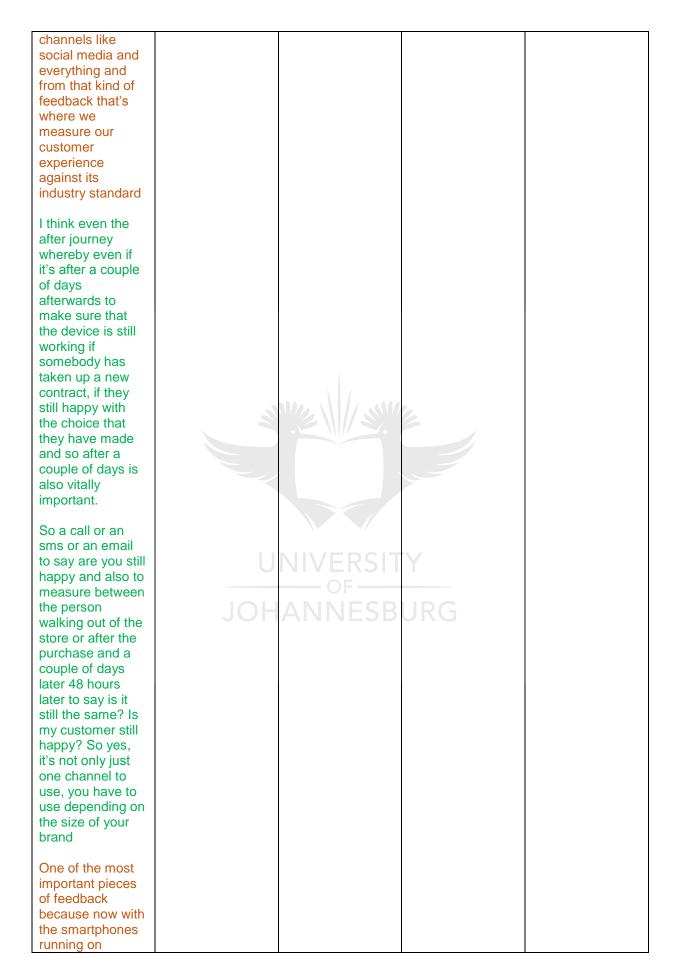
## Pam=Grey Benny=Blue Jessica=red Benji=Brown Mike=Green

the new selection		have to an adding		une de te fin 10
through to		have to sacrifice	We also use this	we do to fix it?
Janice, Janice	Some people you	the brands that	information in	So that they can
does, it depends	might have to say	you normally use	other project we	also have a clear
on the level of	here is a bundle,	and you use	work on for other	idea of what was
problem, if it's	if you respond,	other brands.	clients. It allows	the issue.
just the tickets	although that's		us to limit	
resolve, the ticket	another negative	It's all about	mistakes that we	
will be closed,	side to it but that's	quality too	have made in the	If there is a
logged, saved	beside the point,		past.	serious bug in the
and they would	but you will get a	I would say	16	system, same will
note that's its	response.	delivery time is	if you not	happen, so this
resolved	L I anno 1997 ann an 1997 anns an	important	providing the	thing happened
and a second state of	However you do	The sheeless	good customer	in one country,
so every ticket	get those people	The checkout	service then over	we will fix it for
closed they have	who will answer	procedure and	a period of time	that client but
an option to	just to get that	payment. So its	they will swop	then the same fix
complete a	incentive and not	ease of payment	you out with	will be given to all
customer survey	really care but it	and security	another vendor	the customers.
and to provide us	also depends on	Real and the Physical Street	then it's this	
feedback of the	your organisation,	l'm lazy I like it	bigger impact	When it comes to
experience that	can it spoof out	easy.	financially on the	our versioning, so
they received	the guys who just	The decision of	business as we	part of our road
If we also that	want to answer	The design and	are now loosing	map, say we
If we don't close	and get an	reputation as well	clients. It is very	have 4 new
an issue in time,	incentive, or you	but mostly	important to have	versions coming
it will get	receive everything	convenience.	a good	out in a year, we
escalated, if	as it is	See I have a	relationship with	only support up
everything	Then you fiv that	busy lifestyle so if	your client. It	to a certain
happens within	Then you fix that	I can get	makes them	number of
the agreed SLA	problem, getting	everything I want	more loyal.	versions back
you won't get	that same	delivered to me	And it's also our	from our current
feedback on it, it only gets	customer to go back when you	without, why not	name. If one of	version, otherwise we
escalated also	have fixed the	I would say	our clients	have customers
again to our	problem is a	simplicity and it	decided to leave	on very very old
client's top	problem.	mustn't be	us and partner up	versions that we
management if	problem.	cluttered, it's like	with another	have to support
something went	What tends to	a Google screen,	vendor because	which is very
wrong and then	happen is exactly	log in, what do	they were not	difficult because
we will get	what Mike just	you want, not to	happy with our	they would start
feedback, but if	said, the	many stuff. and I	service, it will be	logging issues
things go	promotion, you	also don't like it	difficult for us to	and we say but
according to	encourage the	where you have	get new clients	that's already
plan, we will not	customers. I don't	shopped once	as rumours	been fixed in the
get. We then go	think you know	online and then	spread. It would	latest version, we
and fix the issue	this but there are	they start	slowly start to	have to get you
and like Janice	very strict rules on	sending you	ruin our name	up to the latest
stated, we do	app store, most of	emails to say we	and reputation	version. So their
provide them with	the rules of the	think you might		parts of our road
a survey but they	app stores you	like this, you	So that system	map to say you
don't complete it.	know you not	don't know what I	runs everything	have to be on the
So we prefer	really allowed to	want so don't tell	so that's what the	current version
phone calls or	give incentives to	me.	billing engine is	minus 2 at worst.
even face to face	people to		for. This system	
communication	download your	Poor customer	is also very	You don't have
as then we obtain	app or change the	service	useful as you get	the user's, our
that feedback	comments so you		consumers who	apps are
immediately.	have to adhere to	So false	complain that	identified by
· · · · ·				
	those rules, you	advertising and	they were over	phone number,

by engaging with the customer directly. So the meetings that I on the app store, so customers need to say what they want. But on the app store, so customers need to say what they want. But need to say what they want. But on the app store, so customers they want. But they want. So customers they want. But they want.	ave the users hone number it become very lifficult. So what he teams actually to is for the erious comments
the customer directly. So the meetings that Iso customers need to say what they want. ButRather tell me then I can work with it andthat system, we are able to pull a report and showbec diff the	ecome very lifficult. So what ne teams actually lo is for the
directly. So the meetings that Ineed to say what they want. Butthen I can work with it andare able to pull a report and showdiff the	lifficult. So what ne teams actually lo is for the
	lo is for the
have with the what you can prepare for the them ok look this do	
	erious comments
operations incentivize them bad news coming is what ser	chous comments
	ney actually
5	ollow up with the
	ustomer and
	olitely ask the
	ustomer for
	ermission to
	ave their phone
	umber. Then
	ney trace the experience of that
<b>U</b>	ustomer
• • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • •	ecause without
	ne phone number
	here is absolutely
	othing you can
• •	lo, so the only
	vay is to express
	ermission from
just a couple of saying. the	ne customer.
questions, The best So I think it is Sometimes they	
	Ve have teams to
	ather the
	eedback and
	nakes sense of it
system and bugs Yes, it is guys to distribute not want to pay	1
	Iso another way
	f tracking as well s to even track
	neir usage
	ecause the
	sage is still the
	ame before or
	fter the
	ngagement with
	ne network,
vendor, we would customer journey, Mystery shopping development, we	
like all our clients how the works. You can put it into If I	I can add to
to receive the customer sees it also get actual Mozambique,	nat, customers
upgrade. complaints from then that same	
Email you get a trend then a general	re more likely to
saying of a upgrade to our give	ive you feedback
	when they are
Very effective.also deal withso as we thenupsI'm currentlythat. There canupgrade all other	pset than when
	ney are happy
Pick n Pay and you set like how same	
it's on social long it takes to set functionality is	vith you so you
	ave to be
getting a lot of peoplethe customer line those things youthem.pro	rompted to
	ctually get that
so that they see measure. much faster than	, get that

the patient ma				feedbook as well
it's not just me		Consider vour	good news	feedback as well
being vindictive		Consider your	In the staff of the	when customers
it's a problem		target audience	In that fit of rage,	
that they have.		But it is a cost in	the consumer will	are happy with
		navigating even	provide the best	you,
I had a situation		the colours can	feedback that	
earlier this year		make a huge	states how bad	
where I went		difference	they are being	
online to open a		because certain	treated	
bank account		purple isn't really	O a life an alle	
with one of the		going to like	So it's really	
big banks and I		purple	important to	
did it online		An one that is not	actually read what	
because they		An app that is not	the customers are	
said they can		filled with adverts	saying and to	
open it online, I		it is those app that	read when they	
submitted all my		easy simple. So	said it because	
documents and		for me an app is	you know apps,	
everything and		easy to use not	there is different	
nothing		clatter, no	versions. So you	
happened. A		advertising and	will see the	
week went by, 2		speed	improvements	
weeks went by			that we make in	
and downloaded	_	I agree that I also want ease of use	our upgrades.	
Twitter especially			For exemple I	
just for that, I		get fast at the	For example I	
tagged them and I sent out the		point and efficient	have twitter, every	
		Easters very	time I log off it would ask me if I	
nasty little		Factors vary	want to rate them	
message and it went so far that		according to age	and every time, I	
the CEO office		aroupe	just maybe later	
phoned me to		groups	but im never	
apologise and to			going to actually	
sort it out and the			do it unless I find	
next day	U	INIVERSII	a major	
someone else		—— OF ——	problem	
phoned me and		ANNECD		
the next day the	JOH	ANNESD	I feel it is	
card was			important but I	
delivered , so yes			feel that there is a	
its, I'm not			step that you	
normally a guy			need to do before	
that complains			that. I think for me	
but social media			in order for an	
is			organization they	
			need to have	
Big corporations			visibility of	
and big			customer	
wholesale stores			experience	
and stuff, they			whether or not the	
very aware of you			customer actually	
know social			gives you	
media, they leave			feedback	
a footprint, so if				
there are	 			
complaints they				
do tend to				
respond to it.			So regular	
			customer	
		1	-	

I think the best engagement or way to answer monitoring is that is you know very important. because I What we design experience the services a lot for one customer, myself including it might not work online services is for another through you know customer so you immediate may not apply the design to feedback after another. getting the service. So after getting a service So I think whether it's online customer or whether its feedback is telephonically to extremely key in the call centre or terms of figuring you actually go to out what a store, You need customers want to obtain that and sometimes feedback feedback is what immediately as they say but also consumers will what they do not contact you to provide feedback It becomes part unless there is a of our road map, big problem. so we have a road map of In a retail store, where we want they usually have our product to go those self-service and with our pins at the customers' entrance or when requests that you are paying. come in, they That is also a feed into our road quick method to map, so we go obtain feedback okay that's a while it is still fantastic idea, fresh in the lets feed that into consumers mind. our road map, we Depending on the will drop it in 2 channel the idea versions from is to get feedback now and then we immediately after start upselling experiencing the that to customers service before the to say okay we customer forgets, can also do this so it's either now. They have through sms or the option to take through IVR. it, we don't say it's here you have If it's online it's to use it. They the same thing have the option you then get an to say okay. online prompt to rate the service that you just got but of course yes there is other



standard operating platforms you actually get actual ratings of the app on the Samsung App Store, so that we take very seriously.		
Some customers just don't want to work with you, what you can do is to get permission from the customer to run a diagnostic test. From a diagnostic perspective you can see what's going on and see what you can use to enhance your customers experience		

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