



**A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF USER-GENERATED CONTENT
OF THE SEVEN ORIGINAL EQUIPMENT MANUFACTURER
BRANDS IN SOUTH AFRICA**

by

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DECLARATION

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I declare that this dissertation entitled “A content analysis of user-generated content of the seven Original Equipment Manufacturer brands in South Africa” is my own work and that all sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. I further declare that I have not submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at the University of South Africa (Unisa), or at any other higher education institution, for another qualification. I further declare that I submitted the dissertation to originality checking software and that it falls within the accepted requirements for originality.



01/06/2020

SIGNATURE

DATE

Mrs Magdalena Sophia van Heerden

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ABSTRACT

Increased consumer expectations and diverse consumer needs have led to consumers turning to the internet as a communication medium to share their positive and negative experiences, feelings, and level of satisfaction with others. The primary objective of this study was to explore the nature of user-generated content, in terms of consumer complaint and compliment behaviour related to the seven OEM brands in South Africa. The study focused on the South African automotive industry, and the consumer behaviour associated with post-purchase responses on an online consumer advocacy platform, called Hellopeter.com. A qualitative research design, making use of a content analysis, was employed. In total, 185 user-generated content items were collected from Hellopeter.com for the data-collection period, and 176 complaints and 9 compliments were analysed. The results of this study indicated that the nature of user-generated content related to the seven OEM brands in South Africa could be categorised according to eight broad themes: seven themes were specifically related to consumer complaint behaviour, while one theme was associated with consumer compliment behaviour. The top consumer complaints and compliments related to the OEM brands on Hellopeter.com were also determined. The nature of the user-generated content showed various similarities to that of the general services industry but proved to be unique to the automotive industry. Specific recommendations were made and included that open communication channels and proper feedback systems should be put in place to satisfy consumer needs, and that the findings of the study should be used as a benchmark to monitor and improve consumer complaint and compliment behaviour, as a means to create loyal consumers.

Keywords:

Consumer behaviour, user-generated content, consumer complaint behaviour, consumer compliment behaviour, consumer decision-making, post-purchase response strategies, Original Equipment Manufacturers, OEMs, automotive industry, South Africa.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION.....	I
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	II
ABSTRACT	III
TABLE OF CONTENTS	IV
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS.....	X
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY	1
1.1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY	2
1.3 MOTIVATION FOR THIS STUDY	5
1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT	6
1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	7
1.6 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES	8
1.6.1 Primary research objective.....	8
1.6.2 Secondary research objectives	8
1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	8
1.7.1 Secondary research.....	9
1.7.2 Primary research	9
1.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	12
1.9 CHAPTER OUTLINE	13
1.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY	14
CHAPTER 2: CONSUMER DECISION-MAKING AND POST-PURCHASE RESPONSES	15
2.1 INTRODUCTION	15
2.2 CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR.....	16
2.2.1 Consumer behaviour in the South African automotive industry	16
2.2.2 Consumer behaviour defined	17
2.2.3 Consumer behaviour model.....	20
2.2.4 The importance of consumer behaviour	21
2.2.5 Relationship marketing as an important element of consumer behaviour.....	22
2.3 CONSUMER DECISION-MAKING	23
2.3.1 Levels of consumer decision-making	24
2.3.2 Models of consumer decision-making	25
2.3.3 Consumer decision-making process	27
2.4 CONSUMER POST-PURCHASE RESPONSE BEHAVIOUR.....	39
2.4.1 The disconfirmation model.....	39
2.4.2 Neutral and positive post-purchase consumer responses	43
2.4.3 Negative consumer post-purchase responses	46

2.5	CHAPTER SUMMARY	57
CHAPTER 3: THE SOUTH AFRICAN AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY.....		58
3.1	INTRODUCTION	58
3.2	HISTORY OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY	58
3.3	POSITION OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY WITHIN THE SOUTH AFRICAN ECONOMY	60
3.3.1	South African automotive industry stakeholders.....	62
3.3.2	Automotive clusters in South Africa.....	64
3.3.3	Original Equipment Manufacturer brands in South Africa.....	66
3.3.4	South African automotive dealerships.....	72
3.4	TOTAL DOMESTIC VEHICLE MARKET SALES	77
3.5	CHALLENGES WITHIN THE AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY IN SOUTH AFRICA	80
3.6	FUTURE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY	84
3.7	CHAPTER SUMMARY	86
CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....		87
4.1	INTRODUCTION	87
4.2	MARKETING RESEARCH DEFINED	88
4.3	THE RESEARCH PROCESS	88
4.4	THE RESEARCH DESIGN	90
4.5	DESCRIPTORS OF THE OVERALL RESEARCH DESIGN OF THE STUDY	91
4.5.1	Type of study	91
4.5.2	The research reasoning approach	93
4.5.3	The method of data collection	95
4.5.4	The ability of the researcher to manipulate the variables in the study	95
4.5.5	The purpose of the study	96
4.5.6	The time dimension.....	97
4.5.7	The research environment	97
4.6	THE RESEARCH APPROACH	98
4.6.1	Quantitative research.....	98
4.6.2	Qualitative research	99
4.6.3	Mixed-method research	99
4.7	DATA-COLLECTION PLAN	101
4.7.1	Why was the data collected?	101
4.7.2	What was the research strategy?	101
4.7.3	Where was the data collected?	107
4.7.4	What was the source/s of data?	108
4.7.5	How was the data collected?	109
4.7.6	How often was data collected?	109
4.7.7	How many of the data sources were accessed?	110

4.8 DATA ANALYSIS	111
4.8.1 Step 1: Organise and prepare the data for analysis	112
4.8.2 Step 2: Read through all the data.....	113
4.8.3 Step 3: Code the data	113
4.8.4 Step 4: Use the codes to start generating themes.....	117
4.8.5 Step 5: Interrelate the themes.....	118
4.8.6 Step 6: Interpret the meaning of the themes	119
4.9 RELIABILITY, VALIDITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS	119
4.9.1 Credibility	120
4.9.2 Transferability	121
4.9.3 Dependability.....	122
4.9.4 Confirmability.....	122
4.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	123
4.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY	127
CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS	128
5.1 INTRODUCTION	128
5.2 BACKGROUND TO ANALYSING AND INTERPRETING THE DATA	129
5.3 FREQUENCY REPORTS	130
5.3.1 User-generated content per OEM brand	130
5.3.2 Complaints per OEM brand.....	131
5.3.3 Compliments per OEM brand.....	132
5.3.4 Compliment-to-complaint ratio	133
5.4 THEMES AND CODES DEVELOPED FROM THE DATA	135
5.4.1 Theme: Poor communication	137
5.4.2 Theme: Unsatisfactory dealership service.....	143
5.4.3 Theme: Poor customer service	153
5.4.4 Theme: Consumers demanding action.....	160
5.4.5 Theme: Disappointing OEM brand experience.....	163
5.4.6 Theme: Motor vehicle manufacturing and assembly	168
5.4.7 Theme: Consumers instigating harmful consequences	171
5.4.8 Theme: Customer service excellence	175
5.5 REPORTING ON CODING CATEGORIES	182
5.5.1 Expected codes	182
5.5.2 Surprising codes	183
5.5.3 Codes of unusual or conceptual interest	183
5.6 WORD COUNTS	184
5.7 REFLECTION JOURNAL/ GENERAL OBSERVATIONS MADE	185
5.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY	188
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	189

6.1 INTRODUCTION	189
6.2 REFLECTIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS LINKED TO EACH SECONDARY RESEARCH OBJECTIVE	189
6.2.1 Secondary research objective 1	190
6.2.2 Secondary research objective 2	192
6.2.3 Secondary research objective 3	193
6.2.4 Secondary research objective 4	197
6.2.5 Secondary research objective 5	198
6.2.6 Secondary research objective 6	201
6.3 ADDRESSING THE PRIMARY RESEARCH OBJECTIVE	203
6.3.1 Overarching conclusion and recommendations linked to the primary research objective	205
6.3.2 Summary of research objectives' findings, conclusions and recommendations. 207	
6.4 ASSUMPTIONS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY	213
6.4.1 Assumptions	213
6.4.2 Limitations	213
6.5 POSSIBLE FUTURE RESEARCH SUGGESTIONS.....	215
6.6 CONCLUSION.....	216
LIST OF REFERENCES.....	218
APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	240
APPENDIX B: CODING LIST	242
APPENDIX C: DECLARATION OF PROFESSIONAL EDIT	248

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1:	Consumer behaviour model	20
Figure 2.2:	Consumer decision-making process	28
Figure 2.3:	Consumer post-purchase evaluations	35
Figure 2.4:	Disconfirmation model	40
Figure 2.5:	Consumer post-purchase response tendencies	43
Figure 2.6:	Taxonomy of consumer complaint behaviour	47
Figure 3.1:	Overview of the history of the South African automotive industry	59
Figure 3.2:	Automotive clusters and their OEMs	65
Figure 3.3:	Share of total dealership sales	74
Figure 3.4:	South African new vehicle market share	77
Figure 3.5:	South Africa total vehicle sales 2014 - 2020.....	80
Figure 4.1:	The research process	90
Figure 4.2:	Classification of the research design.....	92
Figure 4.3:	Qualitative data analysis process.....	111
Figure 5.1:	User-generated content collected per OEM brand	130
Figure 5.2:	Complaints analysed per OEM brand.....	132
Figure 5.3:	Compliments analysed per OEM brand.....	133
Figure 5.4:	Compliments versus complaints for all OEM brands	134
Figure 5.5:	Poor communication theme	137
Figure 5.6:	Unsatisfactory dealership service theme	144
Figure 5.7:	Poor customer service theme.....	154
Figure 5.8:	Consumers demanding action theme.....	160
Figure 5.9:	Disappointing OEM brand experience.....	164
Figure 5.10:	Motor vehicle manufacturing and assembly theme.....	168
Figure 5.11:	Consumers instigating harmful consequences theme	172
Figure 5.12:	Customer service excellence theme.....	176
Figure 5.13:	Word cloud – negative words.....	184
Figure 5.14:	Word-cloud: Positive words.....	185
Figure 6.1:	Nature of user-generated content for the seven OEM brands in South Africa	204

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1:	Data-collection plan	10
Table 1.2:	Chapter outline	13
Table 2.1:	Expectation inputs for the South African motor vehicle purchaser.....	41
Table 2.2:	Perception inputs for the South African motor vehicle purchaser	42
Table 2.3:	Motives for consumer complimenting behaviour	45
Table 2.4:	Summary of consumer complaint categories' research	52
Table 2.5:	Dissonance arousal factors in the motor vehicle purchase decision.....	55
Table 3.1:	Key sectors in the South African economy.....	61
Table 3.2:	South African automotive industry representative bodies.....	63
Table 3.3:	Categories of business in the South African automotive industry	64
Table 3.4:	The main functions of an automotive dealership	73
Table 3.5:	OEM new vehicle market share 2016 - 2018	78
Table 4.1:	Research reasoning approaches	94
Table 4.2:	Descriptors of the research design for this study.....	98
Table 4.3:	Characteristics of the research approaches	100
Table 4.4:	Approaches to qualitative content analysis	102
Table 4.5:	Advantages and disadvantages of content analysis	103
Table 4.6:	Previous studies using content analysis as a research strategy	105
Table 4.7:	Difference between codes, categories and themes	117
Table 4.8:	Reliability and validity in qualitative research	120
Table 4.9:	Trustworthiness criteria and equivalent quantitative criteria	120
Table 4.10:	Ethical issues with the use of online secondary data.....	125
Table 5.1:	Compliment-to-complaint ratio per OEM brand	135
Table 5.2:	Theme creation criteria	136
Table 5.3:	Summary of themes.....	180
Table 6.1:	Description of the main complaint themes.....	194
Table 6.2:	Description of the main compliment theme	197
Table 6.3:	Main complaint categories on Hellopeter.com.....	199
Table 6.4:	Top ten codes related to consumer complaints according to frequency of codes	200
Table 6.5:	Main codes related to consumer compliments according to frequency of codes	202
Table 6.6:	Summary of the main findings associated with the primary research objective	204
Table 6.7:	Summary of research objectives' findings, conclusions and recommendations....	208

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS

The following acronyms and abbreviations are used throughout the dissertation.

AAAM	African Association of Automotive Manufacturers
ACM	Automotive component manufacturer
AIEC	Automotive Industry Export Council
BMWSA	BMW South Africa
CBU	Completely Built Unit
CCB	Consumer Complaint Behaviour
DTIC	Department of Trade, Industry and Competition
FMCSA	Ford Motor Company of Southern Africa
IDC	Industrial Development Corporation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
MBSA	Mercedes Benz / Daimler South Africa
MIDP	Motor Industry Development Programme
NAACAM	National Association of Automotive Component and Allied Manufacturers
NAAMSA	National Association of Automobile Manufacturers of South Africa
NADA	National Automobile Dealers' Association
NSA	Nissan South Africa
OEM	Original Equipment Manufacturer
OES	Original Equipment Supplier
OICA	International Organization of Motor Vehicle Manufacturers
RMI	Retail Motor Industry Organisation
TSA	Toyota South Africa
VWSA	Volkswagen of South Africa
WOM	Word-of-mouth

CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In the fast-changing, dynamic and competitive business environment of today, the internet has become one of the most effective and efficient marketing and communication tools used by both consumers and organisations (Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014; Automotive Business Review, 2019). The traditional relationship between the consumer and the organisation, which used to be based on a one-on-one information and communication-gathering process, has changed. As a result, consumers are exposed to greater levels of easily accessible information about products and services, which influence their own and other consumers' perceptions and decisions (Litvin, Goldsmith & Pan, 2008; Cheung & Lee, 2012; Dutton & Blank, 2015; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2017). Consumers now have the power to dictate and inform organisations how business should be done (Kruger, 2018).

The automotive industry operates in a competitive marketplace where consumers are increasingly using the internet to research their purchase decision, and also to share positive and negative service experiences with others (Sparker, 2016). Web-based consumer advocacy and opinion platforms (such as Hellopeter.com) allow consumers to share their experiences with a multitude of other consumers at the click of a button (Eigenraam, Eelen, Van Lin & Verlegh, 2018). Technology, therefore, plays a vital role in assisting to improve consumer experiences (Automotive Business Review, 2019), and the consumer decision-making process is increasingly being influenced by user-generated content (Wuyts, Dekimpe, Gijsbrechts & Pieters, 2010; Kruger, 2018). For this reason, it is imperative that organisations understand how and why consumers share their service experiences with others. By developing a detailed understanding of consumer complaint and compliment behaviour, organisations will be able to better manage consumer expectations and overall experiences, as a means to lower negative consumer responses, and increase consumer loyalty.

The aim of this study was to determine the nature of user-generated content related to the consumers of the automotive industry of South Africa. User-generated content is described by Bahtar and Muda (2016) as an activity where consumers express and share their views, opinions and feedback regarding products and services on an online

platform, to assist other consumers in making their purchase decisions. For the purpose of this study, the focus of the user-generated content was specifically on online consumer complaints and compliments.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the reader with an overview of the research study, in order to understand the theory and motivations for conducting the research. This chapter begins with a brief background to the study, from where the motivation, problem statement, research questions and research objectives are discussed. From the research objectives, the research methodology employed in this study is briefly explained, and the ethical considerations applicable to this study are presented. In conclusion, the outline for the chapters to follow is provided to serve as a framework for the remainder of the study.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The South African automotive industry is the global, turbo-charged engine for the manufacturing, production, servicing and maintenance of vehicles. This industry makes a major contribution to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and export figures, while also providing in the region of 457 000 employment opportunities within the formal economic sector (NAAMSA, 2020). The South African automotive industry contributes approximately 6,9% to the country's GDP, which makes it one of the most important contributors to the South African economy (AIEC, 2019; NAAMSA, 2020). The automotive industry is also considered to be the largest manufacturing industry contributing to the South African economy, and accounts for approximately 30,1% of the country's manufacturing output and 0,69% of the total global vehicle production figures (AIEC, 2020; NAAMSA, 2020).

Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) and their component suppliers play a major role in the global automotive manufacturing industry, and the survival and growth of these OEMs are of the utmost importance for the South African economy, as vehicles are assembled for both the local and international markets (AIEC, 2019). The seven OEMs that currently have operating plants in South Africa are: Toyota, Volkswagen, Nissan, Ford, BMW, Mercedes Benz and Isuzu (previously General Motors).

The South African automotive industry makes a vital contribution to the transport needs of many South Africans. In a developing country such as South Africa, it is expensive and difficult to improve public transport services to compete in an

environment where the car is king. Public transport services are limited and not always available for all to use, and as a result, motor vehicles have become the primary mode of travel for many South Africans (Oxford, 2013). Therefore, one of the most expensive, and vital decisions South African consumers are faced with today, is the decision to purchase a motor vehicle (Koekemoer, 2014).

South African consumers wishing to purchase a motor vehicle become involved in a complex decision-making process, where information is sought to support their decision, after which different alternatives are evaluated, before the final decision is made (Lurie & Wen, 2014). Once the purchase has been made, consumers are faced with the post-purchase evaluation stage of the consumer decision-making process (Shiffman & Kanuk, 2017). During this stage, consumers compare the level of the product performance with their preconceived expectations, and evaluate whether their needs are being met, and if they are satisfied with the product purchase (Belch & Belch, 2015).

To effectively market themselves, organisations are urged to better understand how these decisions are influenced, why consumers buy certain products or services, what they expect to receive for the money paid, why they react in a certain manner, and how future purchases will be influenced by post-purchase evaluations and responses (Wuyts *et al.*, 2010).

With the rapid advancement of technology and the rising popularity of the internet, consumers are increasingly using online web forums and review sites as a communication channel to voice their positive and negative service experiences (Au, Buhalis & Law, 2009; Wuyts *et al.*, 2010; Cheung & Lee, 2012; Yoo, Kim & Sanders, 2015; Balaji, Khong & Chong, 2016; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2017; Eigenraam *et al.*, 2018). This phenomenon is known as electronic word-of-mouth or word-of-mouse.

Word-of-mouth in the business environment is defined as any form of communication that occurs between two or more individuals regarding their positive or negative service experiences (Wuyts *et al.*, 2010). Electronic word-of-mouth, in its broader sense, refers to the act of making a positive or negative statement on an online forum about an organisation, which is then seen by a multitude of stakeholders on the internet (Hennig-Thurau & Walsh, 2003). Interestingly, Bahtar and Muda (2016) state that the terms 'electronic word-of-mouth' and 'user-generated content' refer to the

same phenomenon, namely, where consumer experiences are shared on an online medium as a means of influencing other consumers' perceptions. Hansen, Wilke and Zaichkowsky (2010) argue that it is vital that consumers have the opportunity to voice their service experiences, as it is an important component of both consumer satisfaction and consumer loyalty.

In contrast to previous years, consumers are now faced with a multitude of third party online websites, such as Hellopeter.com, Saconsumercomplaints.co.za, Google Review, and a whole range of social media sites, to voice their service experiences. As a result, the traditional complaint management strategies of the automotive industry had to be adapted to accommodate the use of the internet as a primary communication channel (Zaugg, 2006; Cheung & Lee, 2012; Balaji *et al.*, 2016; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2017).

It is vital that organisations monitor their online activity, and they should be aware of what is being said about their organisation, and how it is handled on these third-party online sites (Sari, Alikılıç & Onat, 2013; Sparker, 2016). This forms an important component of service outcome management and is a vital component of relationship marketing (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2017). Organisations need to have a clear understanding of the outcome of the consumer service experience, before attempting to create a loyal consumer base (East *et al.*, 2014). Sparker (2016) states that motor vehicle buyers are actively engaging with online content throughout the entire decision-making process, and it is critical for the automotive industry to manage online feedback and ensure that the user-generated content published about the organisation attracts future consumers and does not drive them away.

With one in every seven people in South Africa owning a car, service failures are bound to happen, and Dr Norman Lamprecht, executive manager of NAAMSA, warned that the automotive industry suppliers may be facing substantial threats because of increased service failures and increased online complaints, specifically on Hellopeter.com (Ueckermann, 2013). Hellopeter.com is an online consumer advocacy and business reputation management platform which aims to increase the service levels of organisations by providing consumers with an online public platform to report on their service experiences (Hellopeter.com, 2018a).

Hellopeter.com was the brainchild of customer service expert, Peter Cheales. The idea for this site started in the year 2000 when Cheales decided to develop a web forum where consumers can voice their bad service experiences for all to see. He claims that he had to find a way of creating a web forum where consumers can complain but organisations are also entitled and allowed to respond to each complaint (Maunder, 2013). The main aim was to provide a problem-solution interaction and not just a discussion forum. In March 2016, the Hellopeter.com platform was relaunched after the acquisition of a consortium of entrepreneurs and US based venture capital fund, Founder Collective. As a result, Hellopeter.com has now been recognised as South Africa's largest consumer advocacy and online business reputation management platform (Hellopeter.com, 2018a).

A full review of the literature associated with the background information given above, is included in Chapters 2 and 3 of this dissertation.

1.3 MOTIVATION FOR THIS STUDY

The traditional relationship between the consumer and the organisation has changed due to the increase in the use of a broader range of information sources, such as the internet and third-party consumer advocacy platforms (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2017). Consumers have become dependent on the internet to gather information, as well as to share their positive or negative service experiences with others.

The automotive industry in South Africa is facing various challenges, such as losing loyal consumers and supplier contracts, as a result of increased service failures and increased online complaints, specifically on Hellopeter.com (Ueckermann, 2013). Despite the researcher's best efforts, no prior studies of this nature available within the automotive industry of South Africa, could be found. It is for this reason that the researcher endeavoured to determine the nature of online complaints and compliments related to the seven OEM brands in the South African automotive industry.

The above-mentioned challenges form the foundation upon which the research problem of this study was formulated. The research problem will be explained in the next section.

1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The author conducted an extensive literature search to establish the nature of previous research related to online complaints and compliments on web forums. There has been a wealth of previous research, specifically about online complaints, in various industries (Harrison-Walker, 2001; McAlister & Erffmeyer, 2003; Lee & Hu, 2004; Yang & Fang, 2004; Youn & Kincaid, 2009; Au *et al.*, 2009; Pantelidis, 2010; Nimako & Mensah, 2012; Jugwanth & Vigar-Ellis, 2013; Sari *et al.*, 2013; Huppertz, 2014; Koekemoer, 2014; Kruger & Mostert, 2014; Wickens, Wiesenthal, Hall & Roseborough, 2013; Einwiller & Steilen, 2015; Balaji *et al.*, 2016; Garín-Muñoz, Gijón, Pérez-Amara & López, 2016; Patwary & Omar, 2016; Dinçer & Alrawadeih, 2017), however, much of this research focused only on consumer complaints and not on compliments. There is a lack of research (Friman & Edwadsson, 2003; Pantelidis, 2010; Barreda & Bilgihan, 2013; Naylor, 2016) on both the complaints and compliments related to an internet complaint forum within a specific industry.

No studies on the nature of user-generated content, specifically related to the seven OEM brands in South Africa and the automotive industry, have been done prior to this research study. The automotive industry in South Africa is a fast growing and extremely competitive service industry (NAAMSA, 2019). Due to more demanding customers and increased levels of service failures, organisations are faced with increased customer complaints, specifically on Hellopeter.com (Lamprecht in Ueckermann, 2013).

For the purposes of the current study, the researcher did an extensive search to validate Lamprecht's statement, and to determine the magnitude of online complaints and compliments related to the automotive industry on Hellopeter.com. The search was executed by focusing on the automotive industry category and revealed that 23 870 complaints and compliments were logged over the last year on Hellopeter.com. That equates to a total of 65,4 complaints and compliments being submitted on Hellopeter.com per day. The search also revealed that there are 299 automotive industry organisations listed on Hellopeter.com. These organisations include the seven OEMs, part dealers, service stations and component suppliers. In terms of the seven OEM brands, it was found that there is not a single OEM brand that responds to online complaints and compliments on Hellopeter.com. This illustrates that, although consumers want to voice their service experiences online, organisations are

either hesitant to respond, or do not monitor websites for online complaints and compliments.

The research problem therefore pertains to the lack of specific research and knowledge about the South African automotive consumers' post-purchase responses and user-generated content on a specific online platform. There is a significant indication that consumers are increasingly using online platforms to voice their positive and negative service experiences, and the researcher aims to contribute to the body of knowledge by determining the nature of online complaints and compliments on Hellopeter.com for the South African automotive industry consumer.

The researcher developed specific research questions to assist in addressing the research problem, and these are provided in the section that follows.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The primary research question that was formulated to guide this study was:

What is the nature of consumer complaints and compliments within the automotive industry of South Africa?

From this primary research question, the following secondary research questions were developed:

- How often do consumers of the seven OEM brands post about their service experiences on an online consumer advocacy forum?
- What is the likelihood of the consumers of the seven OEM brands complaining on an online consumer advocacy forum?
- What are the main themes of online consumer complaints related to the seven OEM brands?
- What are the main themes of online consumer compliments related to the seven OEM brands?
- What are the most prominent reasons why consumers of the seven OEM brands complain on an online consumer advocacy forum?
- What are the main reasons why the consumers of the seven OEM brands leave a compliment on an online consumer advocacy forum?

1.6 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

From the research questions, one primary, and six secondary research objectives were identified and developed as indicated in the sections below.

1.6.1 Primary research objective

The primary objective of this study is to explore the nature of user-generated content, as found on Hellopeter.com, in terms of consumer complaint and compliment behaviour related to the seven OEM brands in South Africa.

1.6.2 Secondary research objectives

To achieve the primary objective, the following secondary objectives guided this study:

- To investigate the frequency of user-generated-content posted on Hellopeter.com related to the seven OEM brands in South Africa.
- To determine the compliment-to-complaint ratio on Hellopeter.com related to the seven OEM brands in South Africa.
- To report on the descriptive nature of the complaint themes on Hellopeter.com related to the seven OEM brands in South Africa.
- To report on the descriptive nature of the compliment themes on Hellopeter.com related to the seven OEM brands in South Africa.
- To determine the most prominent reasons why consumers of the seven OEM brands in South Africa complain on Hellopeter.com.
- To determine the main reasons why consumers of the seven OEM brands in South Africa leave a compliment on Hellopeter.com.

The next section discusses the appropriate research design and methodology developed from the research objectives.

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The current study empirically explored the nature of user-generated content within the automotive industry of South Africa, more specifically, consumer complaints and compliments related to the seven OEM brands. The research methodology employed in this study consisted of two phases, namely secondary and primary research. The first phase consisted of a review of the relevant academic literature and the second

phase consisted of a qualitative content analysis and interpretation of the empirical data that had been collected. A brief overview of the research methodology employed in this study is provided in the sections that follow but is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

1.7.1 Secondary research

The first phase of the research consisted of a comprehensive review of the literature relevant to the primary research objective. Secondary research was conducted by consulting various published academic articles, newspapers, textbooks, dissertations and theses, to gain more information on the consumer decision-making process, post-purchase responses and the South African automotive industry. The information and literature gathered during this phase of the research was synthesised and is included in Chapters 2 and 3 of this dissertation.

1.7.2 Primary research

The primary research phase of this study researched user-generated content by means of a qualitative research approach which made use of content analysis.

1.7.2.1 Research design

The primary research component of this study is described as being explorative and descriptive in nature, utilising a qualitative research approach. Qualitative research involves the collection of data in the form of words, images and open-ended questions (Zikmund, Babin, Carr & Griffin 2013; Cooper & Schindler, 2014). Qualitative research is employed to understand the meaning derived from individuals or groups, and to achieve an in-depth understanding of a particular phenomenon that cannot be quantified as with the use of quantitative research approaches (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012; Bryman & Bell, 2014; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Qualitative research is generally associated with descriptive research designs. This study is descriptive in nature, as the researcher identified codes and themes that were categorised in a nominal way in order to describe the frequency of their occurrence (Saunders *et al.*, 2012; Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen & Snelgrove, 2016). The study is also explorative in nature due to an inductive reasoning approach, whereby the researcher moved from the particular to the general, in order to discover a pattern that could represent some degree of order among all the evidence (Babbie, 2016).

1.7.2.2 Data-collection method

Babbie (2016:323) defines content analysis as “the study of recorded human communications”. Content analysis has also been described as a research method used to collect descriptive data on content variables, which allows the researcher to gain more precise and reliable observations about the given content (Krippendorf, 2019). Zikmund *et al.* (2013) agree with the definition, and add that content analysis involves the systematic observation of communication to identify the content and characteristics of specific information. Content analysis is a fitting method to use when the researcher is faced with large volumes of data, and the data presented is not necessarily within a specific context (Krippendorf, 2019).

Empirical data, in the form of secondary textual data from Hellopeter.com related to the seven OEM brands in South Africa, was collected by means of content analysis and observation of the online complaints and compliments during a two-month period. Company responses were also observed, and it was found that none of the brands responded to consumer complaints or compliments.

This data-collection method proved to be an appropriate method as it allowed the researcher to observe and record the user-generated content at first hand, without having to develop a survey questionnaire, and the data could not be manipulated in any way.

The data-collection plan employed in this study is summarised in Table 1.1 below, and discussed in greater detail in Section 4.7 in Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

Table 1.1: Data-collection plan

Questions for developing a data-collection plan	The data-collection plan
WHY was the data collected?	To determine the nature of online user-generated content related to the seven OEM brands within the South African automotive industry.
WHAT was the research strategy?	Content analysis
WHERE was the data collected?	Hellopeter.com (online consumer advocacy forum).
WHAT was the source/s of data?	User-generated content (complaints and compliments) related to the seven OEM brands on Hellopeter.com
HOW was the data collected?	Each OEM brand was searched for by name, and complaints and compliments for the two-month data-collection period were captured in Microsoft Word and imported to AtlasTi for analysis.

HOW OFTEN was data collected?	Data was collected for a period of two months.
HOW MANY of the data sources were accessed?	A total of 176 complaints and nine compliments were analysed.
JUSTIFY why this was the best way for collecting the data?	It has been proven to be an acceptable data-collection and analysis method for similar studies within other service industries. The content analysis also provided the most accurate representation of the nature of the user-generated content on Hellopeter.com, as related to the seven OEM brands in South Africa.

Source: Adapted from Vithal & Jansen (2019:21).

Once the data was collected, the researcher analysed the data, as briefly discussed below.

1.7.2.3 Data analysis

The purpose of qualitative data analysis is to make sense of rich text by building patterns, themes and categories from within the data into more abstract units of information that allow the researcher to draw certain conclusions (Creswell, 2014; Snyman, 2014). Qualitative data analysis, specifically, involves the close reading of textual matters to interpret the text into meaningful categories and themes (Krippendorf, 2019).

Once all the primary data was collected on Hellopeter.com, the researcher followed a combination of the conventional and summative approach to analyse the data using content analysis. The conventional approach to content analysis involves the following (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Bryman & Bell, 2014):

- Coding categories are derived directly from the textual data.
- Texts are read repeatedly to gain a sense of the data-set as a whole.
- Words are highlighted to capture key concepts.
- Codes are developed based on the key concepts identified in the texts.
- Codes are grouped into categories which are then further classified into subcategories.
- New insights emerge from the data when following this approach.

The summative approach focuses on interpreting and analysing hidden content from the data in order to explore the usage of words and ranges of meaning. It is also a

method that is used to report on the frequency of codes and categories to determine the importance of the codes (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Bryman & Bell, 2014).

The conventional approach was followed, as the analysis was not based on an existing theory, and little was known about the phenomenon in the particular industry. For this reason, the researcher read and re-read the consumer complaints and/or compliments related to the seven OEM brands on Hellopeter.com to gain a holistic picture of the data. Certain words and/or phrases were highlighted to capture key, overlapping concepts in the data.

From there, the researcher developed certain codes, based on the concepts identified from the consumer complaints and/or compliments. Codes are described as constructs that represent the meaning of the text to be used to create patterns for later analysis (Saldaña, 2016). The identified codes were then organised and categorised according to relevant themes which are reported on in Chapter 5 of this dissertation. The specific method followed to analyse the data of this study is discussed in much greater detail in Section 4.8 in Chapter 4 of this dissertation. The summative approach was also followed as the researcher explored the usage of words, during the reading and re-reading of the data, in order to determine the frequency of codes and categories in the data.

The data analysis was done by making use of a computer-assisted coding programme called Atlas.Ti. Atlas.Ti is an integrated statistical programme that supports the analysis of written texts, audio, video and graphic data (AtlasTi.com, 2020). This program helps to manage, explore, compare and extract meaningful segments from large amounts of data in a systematic, yet flexible way. Atlas.Ti enabled the researcher to extract meaningful reports based on the analysis and findings of themes and codes, to be used for the data analysis discussion as presented in Chapter 5 of this dissertation.

Before the empirical data could be collected for the study, the researcher had to obtain ethical clearance to conduct the data collection.

1.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This research study was guided by the ethical standards set by the University of South Africa. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of the

Business Management Department at the University of South Africa, prior to the data collection, and is included as Appendix A. The application was considered to be a low risk, due to the secondary nature of the data which was available within the public domain.

No informed consent form was necessary, as data was obtained from an online consumer advocacy platform, which is publicly available, without the use of a questionnaire. Secondary sources utilised within the study were referenced in order to not only acknowledge the researchers' work but also to prevent plagiarism.

1.9 CHAPTER OUTLINE

This dissertation is structured into six chapters, including this chapter, as outlined in Table 1.2 below.

Table 1.2: Chapter outline

Chapter	Overview
Chapter 1: Introduction and background	This chapter serves as a reference point by introducing the fundamental components of this study. This chapter provides the needed background information and an explanation of the research problem and objectives of the study.
Chapter 2: Consumer decision-making and post-purchase evaluations	Chapter 2 provides an in-depth literature review of the consumer decision-making process, with a focus on the post-purchase evaluation phase with the purchase of a high-value item such as a motor vehicle.
Chapter 3: The South African automotive industry	This chapter provides a detailed description of the environment in which the South African automotive industry operates, providing the needed background to the OEM brands and the future of the South African automotive industry.
Chapter 4: Research methodology	Chapter 4 presents a detailed explanation of the methodology used to conduct the primary research of this study. The discussion focuses on the research process, research design, research approach, data-collection plan and data analysis.
Chapter 5: Data analysis	This chapter consists of the detailed analysed research results, in terms of understanding the nature of online complaints and compliments in the automotive industry. The themes and categories that emerged from the data are discussed in this chapter.
Chapter 6: Conclusions and recommendations	The last chapter outlines the conclusions and recommendations based on the data analysed in Chapter 5,

and reports on the findings in relation to the objectives of this study and provides recommendations for future research.

Source: Researcher's own compilation.

1.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter provided an introduction and rationale to this study, where the research problem was identified, and the research objectives were developed. A brief overview of the research methodology and ethical considerations was provided. The next chapter serves as the first literature review chapter, which presents a comprehensive discussion of the consumer decision-making process, with specific focus on post-purchase evaluations and responses.

CHAPTER 2: CONSUMER DECISION-MAKING AND POST-PURCHASE RESPONSES

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Consumers are considered to be the most important role players in any organisation, including the automotive industry. In addition, continuous consumer support will play a vital role in the long term, as organisational success is dependent on understanding customer satisfaction, consumer behaviour, and more specifically, the consumer decision-making process (Roberts-Lombard & Brijball Paramasur, 2017). The South African consumer faces an important and expensive decision when purchasing a motor vehicle (Koekemoer, 2014). It is crucial to involve all the automotive industry's role players in this purchase decision, as satisfied and loyal consumers are considered to be the most vital assets to this industry (Nyadzayo & Khajehzadeh, 2016).

Business owners and the OEM brands need to understand how consumer decisions are influenced, why they purchase certain products or services, what they perceive to receive for the money paid, why they react in a certain manner, and how future purchases are influenced by post-purchase evaluations. This knowledge will enable the OEM brands to change the way they attract and interact with their consumers. The OEM brands will be able to create and maintain effective marketing strategies that will emphasise the importance of examining the dynamic interaction between the OEMs and the behaviour of their consumers. Peter and Olson (2010) describe this as the study of consumer behaviour.

Consumer behaviour is described as dynamic, and business owners need to understand that the consumers of today have more access to information, making it more difficult to satisfy and maintain their needs in diverse target markets (Brijball, 2000; Saker, Taylor-West & Grzesinski, 2016). Due to the diversity of consumer needs and increased expectations, consumers often use the internet as a communication medium to share their experiences, feelings, and level of satisfaction with others (Hanekom, 2006; Belch & Belch, 2015).

The primary purpose of this literature review chapter is to briefly describe consumer behaviour within the South African automotive industry, elaborate on the concept of

consumer behaviour, provide an overview of the consumer decision-making process by means of a consumer decision-making model, and focus specifically on the post-purchase evaluation phase in terms of consumer responses. User-generated content, in the form of compliments and complaints, created during the post-purchase evaluation phase will also be discussed in this chapter, as this will form the basic theoretical framework on which the rest of the study, including the empirical research, will be built.

2.2 CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

This section presents a broad discussion of the literature relevant to consumer behaviour in general, and the behaviour of the South African automotive consumer, specifically.

2.2.1 Consumer behaviour in the South African automotive industry

Shende (2014) maintains that the purchase of a motor vehicle is the second most important and expensive purchase decision, after the purchase of a house. He also stresses that it is of utmost importance to understand consumer buying behaviour within the automotive industry (Shende, 2014).

Export Enterprises SA (2019) describes the typical South African consumer as extremely brand conscious, seeking sophisticated products and services. Personal appearance, social class and value for money are deemed as the biggest influencing factors in the South African consumer's decision to purchase a product and/or service. The majority of South African consumers decide to satisfy their needs by making debt (Export Enterprises SA, 2019). This can be seen as a major threat to the country, as the typical South African household carries a substantial amount of debt from the financing of purchases, and they are exposed to interest rate fluctuations (Fitch Solutions, 2018).

Based on the report from Fitch Solutions (2018), it is projected that South African consumers will spend 72,2% of their household spending on essential items such as housing, utilities, transport, clothing and food. Motor vehicle purchasing forms part of the transport component of the essential items, and is an important component of consumer spending. The most important drivers for buying a motor vehicle have been

identified as consumer disposable income, better road safety, family needs, family size and lifestyle (Shende, 2014).

The size of the South African middle class is rapidly increasing, and as a result, they spend more money on sophisticated goods, such as motor vehicles, to improve their social status and personal appearance (Export Enterprises SA, 2019). The automotive industry is also constantly growing and becoming more competitive. However, with the growth and development consumer expectations are also changing, and it is important for organisations to understand the behaviour of consumers within the South African automotive industry (Mashigo, Weeks & Erasmus, 2015).

Chaudhary and Tripathi (2012) conclude that motor vehicles are bought to suit a consumer's style and persona, like when buying clothing. Kruger (2018) states that the way in which consumers are buying cars, specifically in South Africa, has changed. As a result, motor vehicle manufacturers and dealerships need to know how to shape and utilise consumer perceptions in order for them to excel in the marketplace and to ensure consumer loyalty and brand longevity. Consumer behaviour is therefore ever-changing, and it is of the utmost importance to understand this field of study.

2.2.2 Consumer behaviour defined

For the last 50 years, academics and marketers have shown great interest in consumer behaviour as a field of study. New expertise in the field of behavioural sciences that was developed during the 1960s resulted in a new legitimate field of study known as consumer behaviour (Du Plessis & Rousseau, 2007). Consumer behaviour studies are rapidly evolving, as marketers, economists and academics recognise and implement new techniques and transdisciplinary perspectives to understand the nature of consumer buying and consumption behaviour. It is of extreme importance that organisations understand how consumers behave in specific buying situations, to enable them to manage and improve marketing strategies to ultimately, create loyal consumers (East, Wright & Vanhuele, 2014).

Consumer behaviour can therefore be defined as: the behaviour consumers display when searching for, purchasing, consuming, evaluating and disposing of products and services that they expect will satisfy their needs (Schiffman, O'Cass, Paladino & Carlson, 2014; Belch & Belch, 2015). Mpinganjira and Dos Santos's (2013) definition of consumer behaviour concludes that consumer behaviour entails the manner in

which consumers deal with the entire purchasing process, to satisfy specific consumer needs and requirements. Strydom (2011:56), in turn, defines consumer behaviour as “the dynamic interaction of affect and cognition, behaviour, and the environment by which human beings conduct the exchange aspects of their lives”.

Peter and Olson (2010) stress the importance of the fact that business owners should realise that consumer behaviour is dynamic in nature, is an interaction of affect and cognition, involves an exchange process, and is goal orientated. From the definitions provided above, the following core elements of consumer behaviour can be identified:

- ***Consumer behaviour is dynamic***

The dynamic aspect of consumer behaviour refers to the constantly changing thoughts, feelings, emotions and actions of consumers on a daily basis. The constant and rapid growth of the internet has resulted in dramatic changes to the way in which consumers search for information (Kruger, 2018). On-going consumer research strategies need to be implemented to keep up with the constantly-changing needs and trends of the target market. Marketing strategies therefore need to be constantly adapted to accommodate the dynamic nature of consumer behaviour (Peter & Olson, 2010).

- ***Consumer behaviour involves interactions***

As is clear from the definition, consumer behaviour involves the interaction of affect and cognition. This refers to the interaction between the consumer’s thoughts, feelings, actions and the environment. It is, therefore, vital that business owners understand exactly what it is that influences consumer decisions, their buying behaviour as well as their post-purchase evaluations. They also need to know how these interactions will influence the consumer to gain a clear description of what the products and services mean to consumers. This will assist in developing effective strategies to enable them to attract current and potential consumers to purchase their products and/or services. The better the understanding of this interaction, the better organisations can satisfy their consumers’ needs and create value for the society at large (Peter & Olson, 2010).

- ***Consumer behaviour is an exchange***

The exchange process of consumer behaviour involves a give-and-take relationship between people. People (consumers and/or business owners) give up something that is of value to them, and others and receive something of value in return. Value is described as a trade-off of benefits between the features of the products and the sacrifice made (money spent) to purchase the product (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2017). Consumer behaviour mostly involves consumers (buyers) 'exchanging' money to receive products and services from the marketers (sellers). This contributes to the role of marketing in the society at large, which ultimately helps to create an exchange process by formulating and implementing different marketing strategies in the organisation (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

- ***Consumer behaviour is goal orientated***

Consumer behaviour is considered to be goal orientated, as consumers make a decision about which specific product, service, or brand to buy, and in which specific quantities, in order to satisfy a need and achieve a certain goal. Kopetz, *et al.* (2012) found that there were numerous factors that display the dynamic operation of consumers' goals. Therefore, the goal-orientated element assists to illustrate how consumer choices, behaviours and preferences can be regarded as a joint function of cognitive and motivational principles (Baumgartner & Pieters, 2008).

Based on the definitions of consumer behaviour provided above, as well as the core elements of consumer behaviour, the researcher proposes that the following definition of consumer behaviour be used for the purpose of the current study:

The behaviour and dynamic interaction of affect and cognition that individual consumers display during the decision-making and exchange process to satisfy diverse needs and requirements.

To put these elements and the definition of consumer behaviour in perspective, a consumer behaviour model, as discussed in the next section, can be used.

2.2.3 Consumer behaviour model

A consumer behaviour model can be described as a model that represents all the variables (or some part thereof) of buying behaviour and the structure of the consumer decision-making process (Wiese, 2008).

Various researchers have studied the field of consumer behaviour, and as a result, various consumer behaviour models have been developed, for example, the Howard Sheth model (Howard & Sheth, 1969), Nicosia model (Nicosia, 1976), Engel, Kollat and Blackwell model (Engel *et al.*, 1978); Engel, Blackwell & Miniard model (Blackwell *et al.*, 2001), and the Kotler and Keller model (Kotler & Keller, 2016). These consumer behaviour models provide the in-depth workings of the consumer behaviour phenomenon.

Blythe (2013), however, developed a more general model of consumer behaviour based on the definitions, as well as the core elements of consumer behaviour, which is illustrated in Figure 2.1 below.

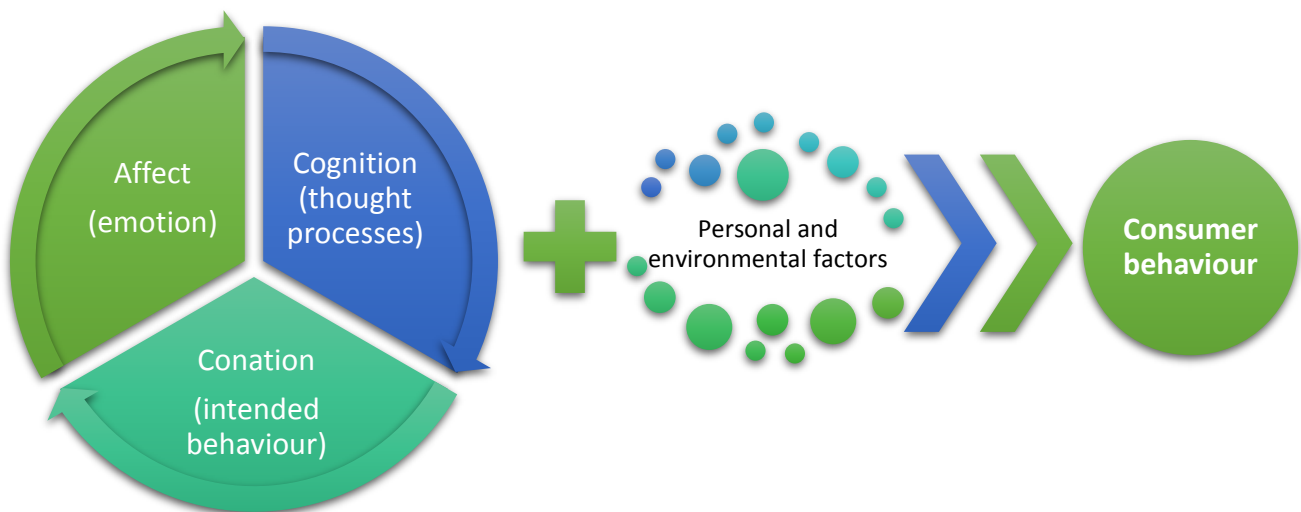


Figure 2.1: Consumer behaviour model

Source: Adapted from Blythe (2013:7).

Based on the information provided in Figure 2.1, consumer attitudes that are formed as a combination of thought processes, emotions and intended behaviour, are influenced by various personal and environmental factors which ultimately create consumer behaviour. This model can be explained as follows:

- **Cognition** is defined by Leon Festinger (1957), the founder of the cognitive dissonance theory, as the process of coming to know and understand. It involves the mental actions or thought processes that include perceptions, problem solving and memories that enable the individual to acquire knowledge and create an understanding through experience and the senses (Whitman, 2011; Harmon-Jones & Mills, 2019).
- **Affect** is referred to as the emotional interpretation of perceptions, information, and knowledge, and is usually associated with both positive and negative attachments to people, products, services and ideas (Clore, Schiller & Shaked, 2018).
- **Conation** is described as the intentional and personal motivation for behaviour, and involves the individual's deliberate, goal-oriented freedom to make his/her own choices about what to do (Huitt & Cain 2005).

This model of consumer behaviour was deemed to be most appropriate for this study, as the essence of consumer behaviour had to be explained in order to provide greater detail with regards to the consumer decision-making process, as discussed in Section 2.3 of this chapter.

2.2.4 The importance of consumer behaviour

According to Roberts-Lombard and Brijball Paramasur (2017), organisations are becoming more aware of, and increasingly recognise, the importance of understanding the vital role consumer behaviour plays in the survival and success of the organisation. By studying consumer behaviour, organisations will be able to gain valuable insight into consumer profiles, needs, expectations, motivations, and the purchase evaluations of their consumers. This will, in turn, help them to identify the reasons why consumers buy what they buy, how they will react and respond after the purchasing procedure, and how future purchases may be influenced. This is specifically important for the topic of this study, which concerns organisations within the automotive industry.

The most important reason for understanding consumer behaviour, is to deliver long-term customer value to ensure the survival and success of the organisation (Roberts-Lombard & Brijball Paramasur, 2017). This can be achieved by:

- retaining existing customers by satisfying and exceeding their needs and expectations;

- adopting the marketing concept by focusing on specific consumer needs; and
- becoming more focused on the customer to serve the diverse needs of the society.

For the purpose of this study, an understanding of the consumer behaviour and consumer decision-making within the automotive industry in South Africa, will provide the OEM brands with a holistic view of the process followed in the complex decisions associated with buying a motor vehicle, the level of satisfaction after the purchase procedure, as well as the consumer responses after the purchase experience.

2.2.5 Relationship marketing as an important element of consumer behaviour

Roberts-Lombard and Brijball Parumasur (2017) describe relationship marketing as an approach that is employed by an organisation to establish and maintain the relationship between the organisation and its consumers. Schiffman and Kanuk (2017) argue that relationship marketing aims to create a strong, long-lasting relationship with a specific consumer group. The essence of relationship marketing lies in the fact that emphasis is placed on retaining existing consumers, rather than attracting new consumers, and creating a loyal consumer base (East *et al.*, 2014; Roberts-Lombard & Brijball Parumasur, 2017).

The principles of relationship marketing include trust, honesty, commitment, open communication channels, focus on consumer interests, quality commitment, added value, and the willingness to retain consumers (Wilshere-Preston, 2015). The successful retention of consumers will only be possible if the organisation can manage the principles in a professional and ethical manner (Roberts-Lombard & Brijball Parumasur, 2017).

According to Schiffman and Kanuk (2017), the internet has led to the growth of various online collaborative platforms (like that of Hellopeter.com), where organisations and consumers can interact to develop a more engaging consumer service experience. It is, however, important that these platforms and relationships be managed, to ensure that consumers are retained, to ultimately ensure long-term profitability of the organisation. Relationship marketing, therefore, also involves the management of online collaborative platforms, as a means to create a loyal consumer base. East *et al.* (2014) indicate that these long-term loyal consumers are more likely to increase profitability than short-term consumers.

The consumers of today are known to be less loyal than in the past due to six reasons: abundance of choice, availability of information, entitlement, commoditisation, insecurity and time scarcity (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2017). As a result, consumers are more sensitive to price, sceptical, more prone to complain and litigious. It is for this reason, important that relationship marketing be included as part of the discussion of consumer behaviour, as it forms an integral component of this study.

Taking the definition, the four core elements, the consumer behaviour model, and the importance of consumer behaviour and relationship marketing into consideration, it is clear that consumers do not function in isolation, and that the dynamic nature and complex interactions force them to make complex decisions on a daily basis. Consumer decision-making therefore plays one of the most important roles in consumer behaviour, and will be discussed in more detail in the section that follows.

2.3 CONSUMER DECISION-MAKING

As consumer decision-making and choice are important components of the theory of consumer behaviour, the levels of consumer decision-making and the consumer decision-making process within the South African automotive industry need to be elaborated on.

Within the competitive automotive economic environment in South Africa, the survival and development of the OEMs are crucial (Tolmay, 2012). The success and survival of OEMs and their brands require accurate and comprehensive information about their consumers' specific needs, motivation, attitudes and actions during the entire consumer decision-making process (Mihart, 2012). Knowing exactly what consumers need, how they search for information, and how they respond after the purchase, will help the OEM brands to communicate the information that is truly important to the consumer, and allow them to respond to post-purchase evaluations in a way that will simplify the decision-making process for the consumer (Lubbe, 2013).

When South African consumers have to make a decision about the purchase of a motor vehicle, they follow a complex process where they seek for more information to support their decision, after which they evaluate the different alternatives in order to make the final purchase decision (Lurie & Wen, 2014).

The sections below briefly discuss the various aspects relevant to consumer decision-making.

2.3.1 Levels of consumer decision-making

Consumers are faced with various decisions on a daily basis that can range from being simple to complex, and as a result, not all decisions will require the same degree of information search (Schiffman *et al.*, 2014). For this reason, it is imperative to distinguish between the different levels of consumer decision-making.

Moving away from the traditional simple versus complex decision-making levels, Schiffman *et al.* (2014) identified the following three levels of consumer decision-making:

2.3.1.1 *Routinised response-behaviour*

This is described as the most basic level of consumer decision-making, where consumers are faced with low involvement or simple decisions (Mpinganjira & Dos Santos, 2013). At the routinised response-behaviour level, consumers already have experience with the product category, and an established set of criteria has been created for the selection, and there is hardly ever a need for additional information search (Schiffman, Kanuk & Hansen, 2012). These include purchases of everyday products, such as bread and sugar, where the purchase decisions are fairly simple and easy to take (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2015).

2.3.1.2 *Limited problem-solving*

Limited problem-solving decisions occur when consumers have a basic set of established criteria to evaluate products and/or services. Consumers know the various brands that are available, but they are, however, still indecisive about which specific brand to purchase. Consumer involvement at this level is moderate and information search will be limited (Lamb, Hair, McDaniel, Boshoff, Terblanche, Elliot & Klopper, 2015). These include purchases for occasional products like replacing a mobile phone, or buying a new laptop (Schiffman *et al.*, 2012).

2.3.1.3 *Extensive problem-solving*

At the most complex level of consumer decision-making, consumers have not yet established a set of specific criteria, the product/service is fairly expensive, or the product/service could present a major risk to the consumer. At this level, consumer

involvement is high, the level of uncertainty and confusion will result in extensive internal and external information searches, it will involve a meticulous evaluation of all the possible alternatives, and the purchase process will be fairly long (Schiffman *et al.*, 2012; Tsiotsou & Wirtz, 2014; Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2015). Compared to simple decisions, extensive problem-solving decisions will be more comprehensive, involving higher risks, and would normally be relevant to more expensive items (Lurie & Wen, 2014). Post-purchase evaluations, with extensive problem-solving decisions are also more likely to be complex and dissonance causing (Brijball, 2000; Parumasur, 2015).

Given the time spent on searching for, and the complexity and variety of choices available, the South African consumer's decision to purchase a motor vehicle can therefore be considered to be an extensive problem-solving decision (Mohammadian & Miller, 2013). The purchase of a motor vehicle involves a "high level of social and psychological involvement" (Shende, 2014:2). Motor vehicles are considered to be an expensive purchase that needs significant information searches before a final purchase decision can be made. These consumers will have a high level of involvement in the decision-making process, and will seek more extensive information than when making simple decisions, in order to reduce the level of perceived risk when buying a motor vehicle.

However, understanding only the level of decision-making the South African motor vehicle consumer is faced with, will not provide the OEM brands with enough information to know how to react to consumers' post-purchase behaviour. It is for this reason imperative that they have an understanding of the different views consumers tend to adopt with regards to their decision-making processes.

2.3.2 Models of consumer decision-making

Before the consumer decision-making process is discussed in detail, it is important to understand the different views of and models of the consumer decision-making process. According to Schiffman and Kanuk (2017), there are several schools of thought, known as the models of consumer views, which provide a perspective on why consumers behave the way they do during the decision-making and purchase decision, as listed below:

- ***Economic view***

This view has been described as the economic man theory, where perfect competition exists, and consumers make rational decisions. According to the economic view, consumers have all the knowledge of the product and are aware of all the available alternatives, their advantages and disadvantages, and have the ability to choose the best alternative. However, these 'perfect' conditions do not exist, and consumers do not always have sufficient information to make perfect decisions (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2017).

- ***Passive view***

Compared to the rational economic view, this model views consumers as submissive, impulsive and irrational. It has been described as an unrealistic view as it does not acknowledge that consumers play a dominant, yet equal role in the purchase decision. Consumers with this view have also been described as defenceless when it comes to the ability to be manipulated by marketers (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2017).

- ***Cognitive view***

This view depicts the consumer as a thinking problem-solver and an information processor. The cognitive view describes the consumer as someone who does not have all the knowledge about the product, the brands and the available alternatives. These consumers need to actively seek for information to attempt to make satisfactory decisions to allow them to solve complex problems and evaluate the post-purchase satisfaction levels. This problem-solving view is also mainly based on the goal-orientated aspect of consumer behaviour, as a particular goal is set to achieve complex problems (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2017). The cognitive view, therefore, assumes rationality, and the final decision rests on the information gathered and a comparison and investigation of the available alternatives to meet consumer needs (East *et al.*, 2014).

- ***Emotional view***

This view is sometimes referred to as the impulsive decision-making view, as consumers often associate their purchases with feelings and emotions. These deep feelings and emotions lend themselves to a highly involved purchase

decision. When emotional purchase decisions are made, consumers regard the pre-purchase information search as less important, and they place more emphasis on their current emotional state. Emotional purchases are associated with making consumers feel better (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2017).

For the purpose of this study, the cognitive view of the consumer decision-making model was followed, as this view focuses on the importance of information search in order to finalise the purchase decision. The cognitive view is appropriate as it encompasses the important information search and problem-solving abilities of the consumer that forms an important component of this study.

Now that the consumer decision-making view has been established, the consumer decision-making process can be discussed in detail.

2.3.3 Consumer decision-making process

Consumer decision-making is seen as a cognitive process involving mental activities and thought processes to solve simple or complex problems (Blythe, 2013; Roberts-Lombard & Brijball Parumasur, 2017; Stankevich, 2017). As was established in previous sections of this chapter, the decision-making process for extensive problem-solving decisions differs from that of limited problem-solving decisions. When consumers are faced with a complex decision, they will automatically exert an affect and cognition process to solve the problem (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2017). For this reason, and given the background to consumer views, the cognitive decision-making process will be discussed. The decision-making process which South African consumers will follow when deciding to purchase a motor vehicle progresses through five stages as seen in Figure 2.2 below.

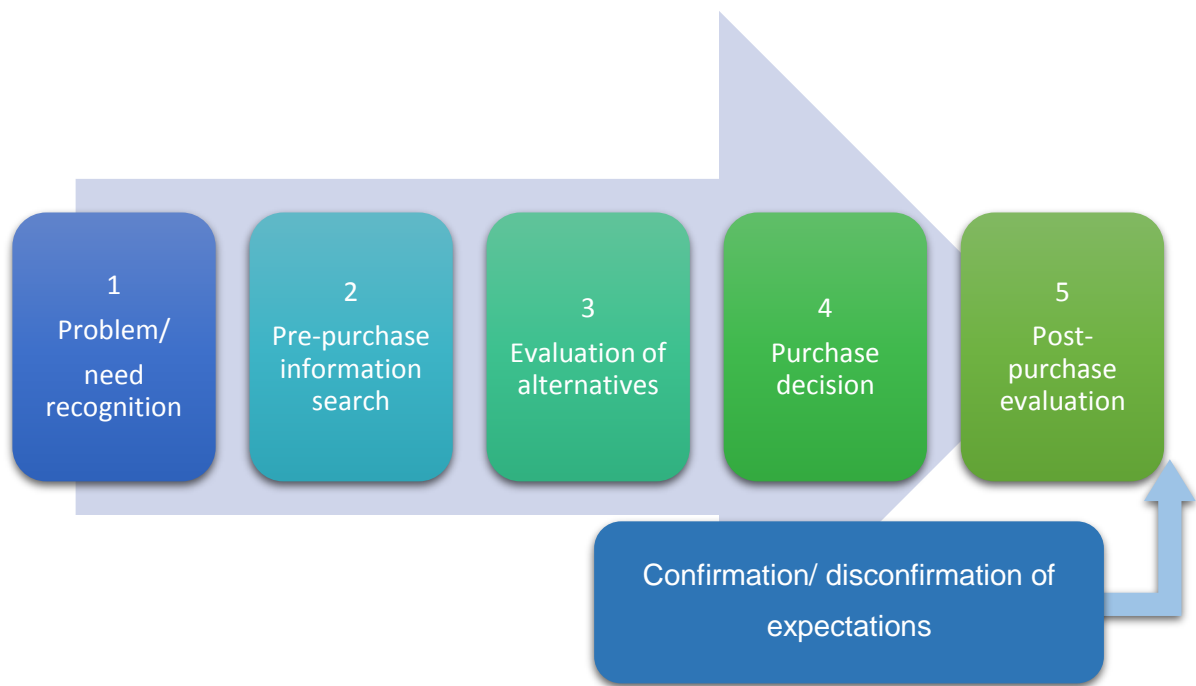


Figure 2.2: Consumer decision-making process

Source: Adapted from Schiffman & Kanuk (2010:483) and Mpinganjira & Dos Santos (2013:20).

These five stages will be discussed below, but the main focus will be on the last stage, namely, the post-purchase evaluations stage. It is after the post-purchase evaluation phase where consumer expectations may be confirmed or not, and where consumers decide what they are going to do, based on their evaluations. This last stage is critical for the rationale behind this study.

2.3.3.1 Problem/need recognition

Once a consumer recognises that there is a problem/need, and becomes motivated to solve the problem, the first step in the consumer decision-making process has taken place (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2015). During this stage, the consumer is faced with a difference between their actual current state and their ideal or desired state (Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard & Hogg, 2013; Belch & Belch, 2015; Roberts-Lombard & Brijball Parumasur, 2017).

The recognition of a need may be triggered by various internal or external influences (Mpinganjira & Dos Santos, 2013). Internal influences include any existing consumer knowledge, previous experiences, perceptions, motives, personalities and attitudes. External influences refer to stimuli related to marketing, market and socio-cultural factors (Schiffman *et al.*, 2012). For instance, the internal need that could arise to buy

a motor vehicle could be as a result of the consumer wanting to buy a new model of the current vehicle based on their previous experience, or due to the current vehicle being too old, having reliability problems and needing replacement. An external influence could be explained as friends and family, or even advertising campaigns, motivating and persuading the consumer to want to buy a motor vehicle (Mpinganjira & Dos Santos, 2013).

2.3.3.2 Pre-purchase information search

Once the consumer has identified the need to purchase a motor vehicle, the consumer needs to gather adequate information to resolve the extensive problem (Solomon *et al.*, 2013). This stage guarantees that the consumer gains increased knowledge of the product and the market, and an increased level of satisfaction with the final purchase decision (Korhonen, Lauraéus-Niinivaara, Saarinen & Öörni, 2011; Mpinganjira & Dos Santos, 2013; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2017).

The amount of research needed during this phase is dependent on the complexity of the problem, the price of the product/service and the risk involved in the purchasing decision (Solomon *et al.*, 2013; Lurie & Wen, 2014; Tsiotsou, & Wirtz, 2014; Roberts-Lombard & Brijball Parumasur, 2017; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2017). For limited problem-solving decisions and routinised response behaviour, information searches would be fairly low. For more complex decisions, such as buying a motor vehicle, this stage would involve a far more comprehensive information search. For the prospective motor vehicle purchaser, information gathering is therefore considered a vital step in the consumer decision-making process.

Consumers will firstly conduct an internal/limited search which is mainly based on their previous experiences, preconceived expectations, and current knowledge of the product and brands. An internal/limited information search is applicable to minimal risk, and well-known products (Pather, 2014; Roberts-Lombard & Brijball Parumasur, 2017). If the internal limited search does not yield enough information to enable the consumer to continue through the decision-making process, the consumer will consult external sources to retrieve the needed information (Belch & Belch, 2015). Less experienced consumers, who are unfamiliar with the products/brands and where the risk involved in the purchase is high, will engage in a more extensive external information search (Schiffman *et al.*, 2012; Mpinganjira & Dos Santos, 2013; Roberts-Lombard & Brijball Parumasur, 2017).

According to Belch and Belch (2015), the following are typical sources of external information which a consumer could consult during their pre-purchase information search:

- Internet sources: this includes information collected from company websites, comparison sites, such as Pricecheck.co.za, and consumer advocacy forums like Hellopeter.com (East *et al.*, 2014).
- Personal sources: this includes information from friends, family or co-workers.
- Marketer controlled commercial sources: this includes information gained from advertising, internet advertising and salespeople.
- Public sources: this includes information gathered from newspapers, magazine articles, and reports on television.
- Personal experience: this includes information collected from actual handling or testing of the product.

Schiffman and Kanuk (2017) argue that the internet has become a vital component of the pre-purchase information search and it has a substantial impact on the consumer decision-making process. According to Gretzel and Yoo (2008), various consumers make use of the internet to voice their opinions, and actively seek for more information from other individuals in the online community. With the continuous growth and development of the internet and electronic commerce, online consumer reviews and user generated-content have also become an important source of external information that consumers use to make their purchase decisions.

Consumers are now faced with ample information that is easy to obtain, as the internet is user-driven and places the consumer in full control. O'Connor (2008) argues that consumers need not depend on the developers of websites to gain the information they need. They can now receive unfiltered, relevant information directly from their peers, shifting full power and control to the consumers. Automotive Business Review (2019) agrees with the above, and indicates that various consumers conduct substantial research, specifically with regards to peer reviews and recommendations, before narrowing down their choices. According to Marketdealer.com (2019), South African automotive industry consumers rely heavily on online reviews when making decisions about the purchase of a motor vehicle, and the impact of these online review platforms should not be underestimated. Export Enterprises SA (2019) describes the

South African consumer as well-informed, and able to access information and shop across various channels.

Consumers constantly have to face external information stimuli, which they perceive or interpret in their own manner, and which may reduce the level of uncertainty or conflict that arises from the purchase decision. These stimuli are constantly and simultaneously interacting to shape the opinion and future decisions of consumers (Zhang, Zhao, Cheung & Lee, 2014).

The motor vehicle purchaser will therefore consult a number of information sources and use a combination of internal and external searches to gain the needed product knowledge and information that is required to make a satisfactory decision. The motor vehicle purchaser could first recall previous experiences with a particular brand, discuss the idea with friends or family and ask for their inputs, conduct an online search on company websites, read reviews of consumer reports and user-generated content on Hellopeter.com, and take the vehicle for a test drive (Belch & Belch, 2015).

The information-providing aspect of this step is vital, as consumers need to gain enough information that will enable them to establish a set of criteria so that they can evaluate the possible alternatives in the next step.

2.3.3.3 Evaluation of alternatives

The evaluation of all the possible alternatives forms the third step in the consumer decision-making process. Most of the effort put into the decision-making process takes place during this step, as the consumer now needs to make a selection, based on the established set of criteria and the available alternatives (Solomon *et al.*, 2013). It is, however, important to highlight that at this stage, the consumer has not yet made a final decision but is merely considering the set of criteria and product preferences (Lamb *et al.*, 2015).

There are two types of information that consumers tend to use when they evaluate the possible alternatives (Schiffman *et al.*, 2012; Mpinganjira & Dos Santos, 2013; Solomon *et al.*, 2013; Belch & Belch, 2015), namely:

- The evoked set (this is known as a list of brands and/or models from which the consumer plans to make a selection); and
- The criteria used by the consumer to evaluate the brands and/or models.

The consumer will firstly compile the evoked set, which usually consists of three to seven brands/products, to make the evaluation process less intimidating and confusing. This set will consist of the brands and products the consumer is familiar with and finds acceptable as a purchase possibility (Schiffman *et al.*, 2014). After compiling the evoked set of alternatives, the consumer is ready to make the final decision, based on the criteria set that evolved from the pre-purchase information search (Mpinganjira & Dos Santos, 2013).

To illustrate: during this stage, the motor vehicle purchaser, as a cognitive consumer, will compare the various motor vehicle brands and motor vehicles they have identified as being capable of solving the extensive problem and satisfying their initial need. The consumer will compile a set of three to seven motor vehicle brands and their models in the same range and compare the choice of the vehicle, based on their established set of evaluation criteria (Roberts-Lombard & Brijball Parumasur, 2017). The evaluation criteria for purchasing a motor vehicle normally involve objective attributes like price, warranty, fuel economy, after sale services, and subjective attributes including image, styling and performance (Belch & Belch, 2015).

At some point in the decision-making process, all the listed alternatives identified in the evoked set will be evaluated, and the consumer needs to stop searching for and evaluating information, in order to make the final purchase decision (Belch & Belch, 2015).

2.3.3.4 Purchase decision

The final purchase decision is described as the mental activity of selecting the most desirable and most suitable alternative from the evoked set, and which comes closest to satisfying the established need (Schiffman *et al.*, 2012; Roberts-Lombard & Brijball Parumasur, 2017).

One should, however, note that at this stage the consumer is faced with a final decision to either purchase the product or not. Not purchasing the product may also imply that the consumer is only postponing the actual purchase, and may not necessarily be an indication that no purchase will ever be made (Du Plessis & Rousseau, 2007). Therefore, the purchase decision and the actual purchase cannot be described as the same thing. When the consumer has decided on the product and brand to purchase, they still need to make the actual purchase. Time delays between the purchase

decision and the actual purchase are often noticed with more complex purchases like that of buying a motor vehicle, for example, due to the availability of products, availability of money, and seasonality (Belch & Belch, 2015).

In this instance, the South African motor vehicle purchaser is now faced with the final decision to buy the motor vehicle that meets all the pre-establish evaluation criteria to satisfy the initial recognised need. Once the decision has been taken to make the actual purchase, there are three types of purchases that consumers can engage in (Schiffman *et al.*, 2014), namely:

- Trial purchases: these are considered to be first-time product purchases in smaller quantities than usual, to test the product.
- Repeat purchases: these usually imply that the consumer has tested the product and it met the needs of the consumer, therefore the consumer is willing to purchase the product for a second time in bigger quantities than before. Consumers will choose to make purchases from the same company again based on their past experiences (Chiu, Cheng, Yen & Hu, 2011).
- Long-term commitment purchases: once consumers are satisfied with the purchase and the product continues to satisfy their needs, they would usually decide to engage in long-term commitment purchases, which ultimately create loyal consumers. Long-term commitment purchases are usually associated with durable goods and high-risk products. The purchase of a motor vehicle would usually skip the trial purchase and move directly from evaluation and product decision, to long-term commitment purchasing (Schiffman *et al.*, 2012).

During this phase, consumers will form certain pre-purchase expectations, based on past experiences, as well as the image of the company/brand created within the media (Chiu *et al.*, 2011). After the actual purchase of the motor vehicle has taken place, the consumer now uses the vehicle. The consumer can now assess whether the purchase fulfilled their needs and if their expectations have been met or exceeded. This leads to the final stage in the consumer decision-making process (Roberts-Lombard & Brijball Parumasur, 2017).

2.3.3.5 Post-purchase evaluations

The consumer decision-making process does not end with the actual purchase of the product. The last step of this process involves the evaluation of the purchased product, which is at the centre of this study.

As was established during the first step of the consumer decision-making process, consumers enter into the purchasing decision for different reasons and with different expectations. During this stage, consumers compare the level of product performance with their expectations and evaluate whether their needs have been met, and if they are satisfied with the product purchase (Belch & Belch, 2015; Parumasur 2015; Roberts-Lombard & Brijball Parumasur, 2017).

With specific reference to this study, once the consumer has purchased the motor vehicle and some time has passed, the consumer will now be able to assess if the purchase of the motor vehicle has fulfilled their needs and if their expectations were met, exceeded or not (Schiffman *et al.*, 2012; Roberts-Lombard & Brijball Parumasur, 2017).

Schiffman and Kanuk (2017:429) identified three possible psychological outcomes that consumers experience during the post-purchase evaluation stage:

- actual performance matches expectations, leading to a neutral feeling;
- performance exceeds expectations, leading to positive disconfirmation of expectations and customer satisfaction; and
- performance is below expectations, leading to negative disconfirmation of expectations and customer dissatisfaction.

Roberts-Lombard and Brijball Parumasur (2017) confirm these outcomes and added a fourth outcome, known as post-purchase conflict. Figure 2.3 below is a graphical representation and summary of the four post-purchase evaluations consumers face in the decision-making process. These dimensions will be discussed in detail below.



Figure 2.3: Consumer post-purchase evaluations

Source: Adapted from Roberts-Lombard & Brijball Parumasur (2017:255).

2.3.3.6 Neutral assessment/ post-purchase indifference

Products that have met consumer needs, but that did not exceed their expectations cause consumers to feel neutral towards the product after the purchase experience. These consumers tend to engage in either impulse buying or inertia after the purchase (Roberts-Lombard & Brijball Parumasur, 2017). Inertia means that consumers will buy the same brand and product again, because it is not worth the time and effort to search for alternatives. Impulse buying refers to no thought before buying a product and virtually no information search (East *et al.*, 2014). Many motor vehicle purchasers may feel post-purchase indifference when their expectations were met. These consumers are not of concern for this study, as they will not engage in any post-purchase evaluation responses. For the purpose of this study, this level thus does not need to be elaborated on.

2.3.3.7 Post-purchase satisfaction/positive disconfirmation

The ultimate outcome of the entire decision-making process would be to achieve total customer satisfaction, as consumers are the lifeblood of any organisation, and satisfied consumers are crucial to their survival and success (Juhola, 2011).

A positive assessment or positive disconfirmation of the purchase decision will result in post-purchase consumer satisfaction (Schiffman & Wisenblilt, 2015; Roberts-Lombard & Brijball Parumasur, 2017). A vital element that will determine the level of consumer satisfaction, is the exceeding of consumer expectations. Pantelidis (2010)

explains that if a service provider can exceed the consumers' expectations and preconceived judgements, it will lead to consumer satisfaction. This positively improves a consumer's willingness to share information with other individuals, and the willingness to return to the same service provider.

In addition to making a profit, the primary goal of any organisation would therefore be to create a loyal consumer base and retain existing consumers in order for them to become loyal (Panddiya, Kumar & Choudhury, 2014). The research done by Gondek and Heinemann (2013) ultimately concludes that consumer satisfaction and loyalty are interlinked and they have a definite impact on the profitability and growth of any organisation. Satisfied consumers, and those consumers whose expectations were met and exceeded, are more likely to become loyal, spread positive word-of-mouth, share positive service experiences on Hellopeter.com, and contribute to the success of the organisation (Schiffman *et al.*, 2012).

The South African motor vehicle purchaser in this instance, will experience an increased level of satisfaction when the purchase and consumption have exceeded their expectations.

It is equally important to understand that unsatisfactory delivery of products and/or services may lead to consumer dissatisfaction and a feeling of disconfirmation (East *et al.*, 2014).

2.3.3.8 Post-purchase dissatisfaction/negative disconfirmation

Post-purchase dissatisfaction is the result of a negative assessment of the product after the purchase, where the product did not meet the recognised need and expectations of the consumer (Roberts-Lombard & Brijball Parumasur, 2017).

According to Hong and Lee (2005), negative disconfirmation does not automatically imply that consumers are dissatisfied. The actual psychological and cognitive process whereby the consumer evaluates and interprets the negative disconfirmation, ultimately produces consumer dissatisfaction. The perceptions and expectations of the product performance have a direct effect on the satisfaction levels of the consumer. Krishnamoorthy and Ajith Prabhu (2018) argue that dissatisfied consumers immediately respond by sharing their experience and dissatisfaction with others, and may even complain directly to the organisation. The chances that these consumers will repurchase the same product or brand in the future, are extremely low.

Mpinganjira and Dos Santos (2013) describe this phase as consumers experiencing a negative cognitive discrepancy, leaving them with negative emotions of feeling dissatisfied. The negative emotions may continue, unless the consumer can find reasonable explanations or answers as to why the product did not perform as expected, or if the discrepancy can be fixed.

Many South African motor vehicle purchasers experience product and service failures, which result in negative disconfirmation and various attempts to find answers as to why their expectations were not met. These consumers tend to respond to the dissatisfaction in various ways, which will be discussed in detail in Section 2.4.3.

2.3.3.9 Post-purchase dissonance

Consumers often experience some level of uncertainty based on their choice of product, chosen from the evoked set of alternatives. Many consumers experience post-buying conflict and question whether they have made the correct decision by buying the product (Parumasur, 2015; Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2015; Roberts-Lombard & Brijball Parumasur, 2017). This is particularly true for complex extensive problem-solving decisions, high-risk products and expensive products, such as buying a motor vehicle (Peter & Olson, 2010; Mpinganjira & Dos Santos, 2013; Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2015). The feeling of doubt, anxiety and discomfort after the purchase, is known as post-purchase conflict or cognitive dissonance (Mpinganjira & Dos Santos, 2013; Schiffman *et al.*, 2014; Belch & Belch, 2015; Parumasur, 2015; Roberts-Lombard & Brijball Parumasur, 2017).

Leon Festinger (1957), the founder of the cognitive dissonance theory, concludes that cognitive dissonance will occur as a result of some discrepancy between the consumer's prior expectations, evaluation of alternatives and the actual purchase decision. Dissonance is described as the existence of unequal relations among cognitions which the consumer recognises after the purchase. Cognitive dissonance is therefore used to describe the feeling of discomfort or unease in the consumer's mind, resulting from holding two conflicting beliefs, and based on the principle that consumers who experience dissonance, will be motivated to attempt to reduce or eliminate the level of uncertainty as it is an uncomfortable state of mind (Roberts-Lombard & Brijball Parumasur, 2017).

Individuals strive to achieve equilibrium and cognitive consistency in their behaviour, and one of the most basic needs that therefore may have a significant effect on the consumer decision-making process and consumer behaviour, is the need for cognitive consistency (Brijball, 2001). Cognitive dissonance has shown various implications for organisations, such as consumer dissatisfaction, negative word-of-mouth, decreased consumer loyalty and little to no repurchase intentions. It is, therefore, imperative to assess consumer post-purchase evaluations to determine if consumers experience post-purchase dissonance (O'Brien, 2017).

It is, however, important to note that the post-purchase evaluation phase of a high-value purchase item, such as a motor vehicle, may continue for some time, and will not always be evaluated immediately after the initial purchase has taken place. This simply implies that the post-purchase evaluation phase will continue throughout the use of the vehicle, within its reasonable expected lifespan (Mpinganjira & Dos Santos, 2013). Consumers may then experience any of the four evaluations during the reasonable lifespan and use of the motor vehicle, and may choose to respond in several different ways.

Based on the above-mentioned information, it is vital for business owners and marketers to know whether consumer attitudes towards their products change positively or negatively after the actual purchase. Positive responses to the product may prove that marketing strategies were successful, while negative responses will provide the organisation with a form of feedback on how they can take corrective action to help increase consumer satisfaction levels (Roberts-Lombard & Brijball Parumasur, 2017).

In this discussion of the consumer decision-making process, a number of concepts were examined to understand the complex problem-solving decision South African consumers are faced with when purchasing a motor vehicle. The decision to purchase a motor vehicle involves fairly extensive problem-solving activities which include a substantial amount of information search, cognitive activity in evaluating the alternatives from the evoked set, which is greatly influenced by the information search, the actual decision to purchase the motor vehicle, and the level of satisfaction after the purchase experience.

For the South African automotive industry, and more specifically the OEM brands, this information is of extreme importance to ensure that they create a loyal customer base. As it is easier for any organisation to retain an existing consumer, the OEMs should carefully evaluate how the South African motor vehicle purchaser makes purchase decisions.

This process continuously showed that the decision-making process occurs as an interaction of affect and cognition, as identified in the definition of consumer behaviour (Peter & Olson, 2010). These steps provided the much-needed rationale behind this study, in order to elaborate on the consumer responses to post-purchase evaluations.

2.4 CONSUMER POST-PURCHASE RESPONSE BEHAVIOUR

From the information provided in the preceding sections, it is clear that the accessibility and transparency of information has a significant influence on the consumer decision-making process. Consumers are continuously receiving information stimuli, which they perceive or interpret in a manner that either reduces, or increases the level of satisfaction, uncertainty, doubt and conflict with their purchase decision (Brijball, 2000; Silverman, 2001; East *et al.*, 2014). Consumers will engage in different response strategies after they have consumed and evaluated the product and/or service. Schiffman & Kanuk (2017) state that the degree and intensity of post-purchase responses are dependent on the importance of the product, as well as the experience of the product during consumption.

2.4.1 The disconfirmation model

According to East *et al.* (2014), if the consumer's experience of the product, after the purchase and use, greatly differs from their expectations and perceptions, they will be motivated to do something about the difference. This led to the development of the disconfirmation model as indicated in Figure 2.4 below.

This disconfirmation model is applicable to the post-purchase satisfaction, post-purchase dissatisfaction and post-purchase conflict phases, and is critical to introduce in this section. This model confirms what has already been discussed regarding consumer disconfirmation in the preceding sections.

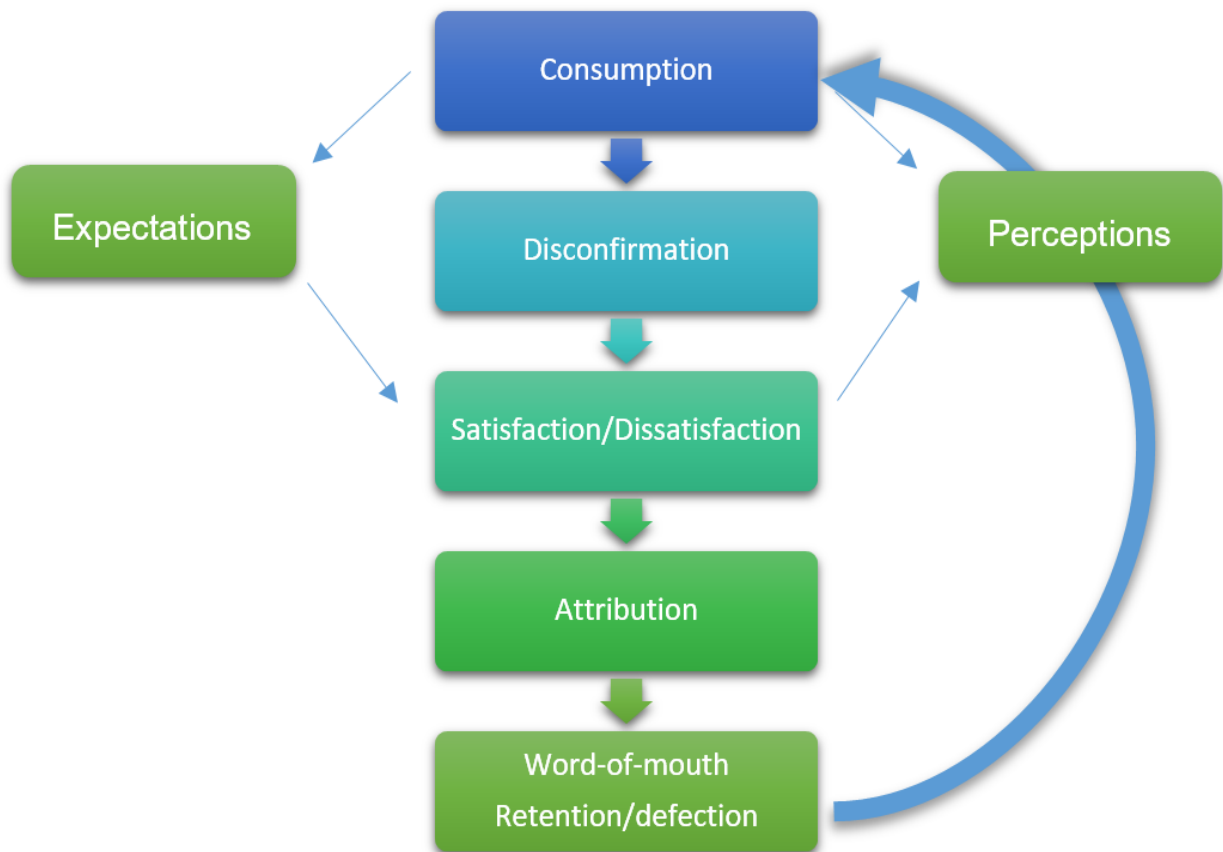


Figure 2.4: Disconfirmation model

Source: Adapted from East *et al.* (2014:174).

Fripp (2019) describes the expectations component of the model as the overall expectations of the consumer before the purchase decision has taken place. Consumer expectations that are built before the purchase, are comprised of a combination of inputs (Fripp, 2019).

These inputs are presented in Table 2.1 below and explained with specific reference to the South African motor vehicle purchaser.

Table 2.1: Expectation inputs for the South African motor vehicle purchaser

Expectation input	Explanation
Most recent communications of the organisation	Any form of advertising and promotional deals. These include OEM brand adverts in magazines, online, radio and television. Certain dealerships also launch seasonal promotional deals. These form the last point of communication received from the OEM brand and create certain consumer expectations.
The brand's image and reputation	The brand's image and reputation are described as the collective long-term communication and advertising efforts. Consumers create expectations based on a reputation that has been built over several years of communication efforts from the OEM brands.
Word-of-mouth	Any form of consumer communication with other consumers regarding positive or negative service experiences. Consumers may have certain expectations with regards to a specific motor vehicle, based on a recommendation from a friend.
External media reports, online reviews and information	This input ties in with the word-of-mouth input. The motor vehicle purchaser forms various expectations based on information they have found on the internet and from online reviews.
The consumer's previous experience with the organisation	These relate specifically to loyal customers. Various consumers are brand loyal when it comes to motor vehicles, as they, and others, have had positive experiences with the brand/organisation, and return to the establishment.

Source: Researcher's own compilation based on: Fripp (2019).

Perceptions, in turn, are defined as “a person's awareness of, reaction to and interpretation of stimuli” (Mpinganjira & Dos Santos, 2013:76). Fripp (2019) describes perceptions as the overall value perceived by the consumer, after the purchase has taken place.

Consumer perceptions may be influenced by a combination of the factors indicated in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2: Perception inputs for the South African motor vehicle purchaser

Perception input	Explanation
Overall quality of the product and/or service	This refers to the enjoyment, benefits reaped, ease of use and how well the product worked. The motor vehicle purchaser will assess the quality of the vehicle, the driving ability and overall driving experience during the use of the vehicle.
Interaction and relationship with staff	Consumer perceptions can easily be created based on their interactions with staff during the purchase and after the sale. For the automotive industry, it is especially true when it comes to after-sale service and interaction with staff during their vehicle service at a dealership.
The service experience and process	This refers to the actual service experience and process. Consumers will form perceptions on the ease of the service experience with the dealership, and the overall experience.
Perceived value for money	Perceived value for money is difficult to quantify, as it is based on what consumers are willing to give up for a specific quality level. All organisations should aim to provide consumers with value for money.
Image and social status benefits	Perceptions are created if the consumer's self-esteem and social status have been enhanced by becoming a customer of the organisation. For example, the status of driving a BMW or Mercedes Benz, making the consumer feel superior to others, based on their vehicle brand.

Source: Researcher's own compilation based on: Fripp (2019).

Both consumer expectations and perceptions work as a collective in determining a consumer's perception of value for money received, which then lead to consumer confirmation or disconfirmation.

It is, however, important to note that an attribution level has been added to the disconfirmation model indicated in Figure 2.4 above. The attribution level is described as a causal explanation that is developed as a result of the satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the product purchase and experience (East *et al.*, 2014). During the attribution level consumers decide exactly how they will respond to the satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the purchase experience.

Roberts-Lombard and Brijball Parumasur (2017) suggest that consumers tend to respond in different ways after post-purchase evaluations have taken place. These response tendencies associated with each of the four post-purchase evaluations, are summarised in Figure 2.5, and will be discussed in detail below the figure.



Figure 2.5: Consumer post-purchase response tendencies

Source: Adapted from Roberts-Lombard & Brijball Parumasur (2017:255).

2.4.2 Neutral and positive post-purchase consumer responses

This section will discuss the first two consumer responses illustrated in Figure 2.5 above, namely, the neutral assessment and the post-purchase satisfaction response.

2.4.2.1 Neutral assessment response tendencies

The neutral assessment of consumers during post-purchase evaluations can be described as post-purchase indifference (Du Plessis & Rousseau, 2007). This simply means that consumers tend to respond in a neutral way by neither having negative or positive verbal responses to the purchase experience. This may cause the organisation harm, as other consumers might find certain products suspicious, and refrain from purchasing the product (Roberts-Lombard & Brijball Parumasur, 2017). For the purpose of this study, it is not necessary to go into further detail on neutral assessment response tendencies, as they cannot be measured or analysed.

2.4.2.2 Post-purchase satisfaction response tendencies

Santos and Boote (2003) argue that consumers are rational decision-makers, and as a result, do not purchase any product with the expectation of being dissatisfied. Consumers purchase products to, indeed, be satisfied. Schiffman and Kanuk (2017) describe a satisfied consumer as someone who feels that they have received value and value for money. This is based on an evaluative judgement made according to the

list of alternatives and the evoked set, and ties in with the exchange component of consumer behaviour, as explained in Section 2.2.1.

Furthermore, Mpinganjira and Dos Santos (2013) add that consumer satisfaction implies that the consumer has reached the highest point of satisfaction after the purchase process, while they are still using the product. This is the ultimate emotional state each organisation should aim to achieve, as consumer satisfaction guarantees long-term profitability and consumer loyalty (Ažman & Gomišček, 2012). Consumers who experience post-purchase satisfaction are more likely to re-purchase the same product or continue to purchase from the same company/brand, and this is described as consumer loyalty (East *et al.*, 2014).

During this phase, consumers may decide to respond to the satisfaction levels by means of positive word-of-mouth. Wuyts *et al.* (2010) define word-of-mouth in the business environment as any form of communication that occurs between two or more individuals regarding positive or negative service experiences. Electronic word-of-mouth, or user-generated content, refers to the act of making a positive or negative statement on an online forum about an organisation, and which is seen by the broader public on the internet (Hennig-Thurau & Walsh, 2003; Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2015).

Positive word-of-mouth allows the consumer to provide information to other consumers that highlights their positive product or service experience, and which should in turn, encourage other consumers to purchase the product or service (BusinessDictionary.com, 2020b). Positive word-of-mouth encompasses that the consumer recommends the product or service to friends or family, writing positive online reviews and compliments (Andersen, 2018).

Kraft and Martin (2001) argue that compliments may be an even more legitimate and effective feedback tool than that of complaining. Santos and Boote (2003) found that the higher the level of positive disconfirmation, the greater the intensity of the compliment.

Kraft and Martin (2001) identified eight motives for consumer complimenting behaviour. These findings were confirmed by Payne, Parry, Huff, Otto and Hunt (2002) and Otto, Payne, Parry and Hunt (2005). These motives, and their implications, are presented in Table 2.3 below.

Table 2.3: Motives for consumer complimenting behaviour

Motivation	Implication
Delight or great satisfaction	The consumer experiences a positive emotional outcome and is more open to the expansion of the relationship.
Dissonance reduction	The consumer needs some reassurance due to doubt about the purchase.
Reciprocity / social norms	The consumer feels obligated to conform to social norms and is more sensitive to being interpersonally proper.
Improve relationship with a service person	Rewarding employees who excel in customer relations as a means to retain low staff turnover.
High involvement with product or service	Consumers are highly likely to engage in positive word-of-mouth.
Voting behaviour to continue special services or products	Mostly applicable for niche products and services.
To buffer complaints and increase effectiveness	Consumers feel that they need to be friendlier to accompany a complaint.
Flattery: to obtain a tangible reward	Consumers attempt to get an undeserved reward with flattery.

Source: Adapted from Kraft & Martin (2001:10).

However, much more research has been done on consumer complaint behaviour and negative word-of-mouth (Singh, 1988; Hong & Lee, 2005; Vásquez, 2011; Tronvoll, 2012; de Matos & Leis, 2013; Filip, 2013; Jugwanth & Vigar-Ellis, 2013; Huppertz, 2014; Koekemoer, 2014; Kruger & Mostert, 2014; Balaji *et al.*, 2016; Garín-Muñoz *et al.*, 2016; Patwary & Omar, 2016; Dinçer & Alrawadeih, 2017) than on compliment behaviour and positive word-of-mouth (Kraft & Martin, 2001; Payne *et al.*, 2002; Otto *et al.*, 2005; Khoo-Lattimore & Ekiz, 2014; Deng & Ravichandran, 2016).

Only a few studies have focused on both complaints and compliments (Friman & Edwadsson, 2003; Pantelidis, 2010; Barreda & Bilgihan, 2013; Naylor, 2016). A vast majority of the above-mentioned studies were conducted in the tourism and service industry, and an extremely limited number have been conducted specifically in the automotive industry (Koekemoer, 2014).

According to Thomas (2018), only one in every ten satisfied consumers is likely to leave a compliment or decide to spread positive-word-of-mouth online. Research has found that it takes approximately 40 positive reviews/compliments to offset the

damage that was caused by a single online complaint/negative review. The ideal compliment-to-complaint ratio, which has been described in previous research as the 'praise-to-criticism ratio', is 5:1, indicating that for every complaint, one should aim to receive at least five compliments (Zenger & Folkman, 2013). Within South Africa, Bronkhorst (2012) found that the average compliment-to-complaint ratio, for all industries, specifically on Hellopeter.com, is 1:4. It is for the above-mentioned reasons that a wealth of research on consumer complaint behaviour is available, and very little on consumer compliment behaviour.

As a result, this study will encompass both complimenting and complaining behaviour related to the seven OEM brands in South Africa. After various search attempts, the researcher could not find any research on consumer complimenting behaviour within the automotive industry in South Africa. It is for this reason, that the above-mentioned general motives will be used to discuss the results of the analysis of the compliments component of this study.

It should, once again, be highlighted that consumer evaluations of the purchase of a motor vehicle will continue throughout the motor vehicle's useful lifespan. As a result, consumers may experience different satisfaction levels throughout the product's use, and different evaluations may occur at any time. It is for this reason that the negative disconfirmation responses need to be discussed.

2.4.3 Negative consumer post-purchase responses

This section will discuss the last two consumer post-purchase responses, as illustrated in Figure 2.5 above, with a discussion of Consumer Complaint Behaviour (CCB) also included.

2.4.3.1 *Post-purchase dissatisfaction response tendencies*

Although each organisation aims to provide the greatest level of satisfaction to their consumers, service failures are unavoidable. These failures may result in consumer dissatisfaction, and it is vital to manage these failures to improve consumer satisfaction (Balaji *et al.*, 2016).

When the performance of the purchased product does not meet consumer expectations, they will be dissatisfied, and experience negative disconfirmation (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2017). Consumers may choose to respond to the negative disconfirmation in various ways. Krishnamoorthy and Ajith Prabhu (2018) argue that

dissatisfied consumers immediately respond by sharing their negative experiences with others. They also decide not to purchase the same product again, or lodge a complaint.

According to Day and Landon's taxonomy of consumer complaint behaviour (1977:432), there are several response strategies consumers can follow after experiencing some form of dissatisfaction. These findings have been researched over the years by various other authors (Liu, Watkins & Yi, 1997; Crié, 2003; Mousavi & Esfidani, 2013; Wu, Tao, Zhang & Wang, 2015; Istanbuluoglu, Leek & Szmigin, 2017), and are still used as the basis for the theory related to consumer complaint behaviour. These strategies are displayed in Figure 2.6 below.

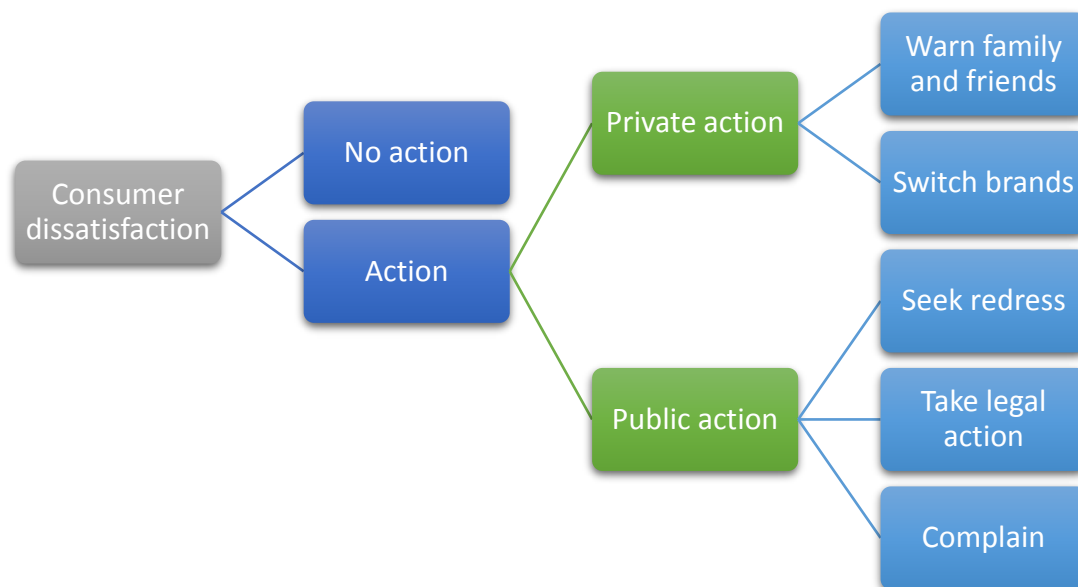


Figure 2.6: Taxonomy of consumer complaint behaviour

Source: Adapted from Day & Landon (1977:432).

Based on the information provided in Figure 2.6, consumers may choose to take no action, private action or public action, as listed below.

- **No action**

No action is described as an indifferent response, because consumers refrain from taking action. This ties in with the neutral response strategy of deciding to say nothing. This may create suspicion about the products, and lead to future consumers deciding not to purchase the product (Roberts-Lombard & Brijball Parumasur, 2017). This non-response strategy is of no concern for the purpose of this study, as it cannot be analysed.

- **Private action**

When consumers decide to take private action, they usually warn friends and family members about the product and/or organisation or spread negative word-of-mouth privately. This poses problems for the organisation, as consumers view word-of-mouth as a credible source of information and will not purchase from the organisation when they have received negative feedback from friends and family (Kruger & Mostert, 2014). In an attempt to display their dissatisfaction, many consumers also choose to switch brands to avoid future dissatisfaction (Roberts-Lombard & Brijball Parumasur, 2017). This response strategy is of no concern for the purpose of this study as consumers' private actions cannot be analysed.

- **Public action**

Many consumers, however, decide to take public action as a result of the dissatisfaction. Public action comprises of consumers seeking redress from the organisation in the form of repairs, refunds or exchanges. Redress behaviour depends on the nature of the specific product and the consumer's circumstances. Consumers may also threaten to take legal action against the organisation (Roberts-Lombard & Brijball Parumasur, 2017). When consumers decide to take public action, complaint behaviour is in the form of voice responses. Jugwanth and Vigar-Ellis (2013) describe a voice complaint as a confrontational tactic to relieve consumer dissatisfaction and it forms the final component of public action. These voice complaints are of the utmost importance for this study. Consumer complaint behaviour will be discussed in the sub-section below.

Due to the complex decision-making process followed, and the expensive prices of motor vehicles, the South African motor vehicle purchaser would be more likely to take public action when experiencing dissatisfaction (Solomon *et al.*, 2013).

Consumer complaint behaviour will now be discussed as an important component of the post-purchase evaluation stage.

2.4.3.2 Consumer Complaint Behaviour

Consumer Complaint Behaviour (CCB) is described as the identification and analysis of all the aspects that are involved in the consumer's reaction to and evaluation of the product and/or service failure (Garín-Muñoz *et al.*, 2016). Tronvoll (2012) describes complaining as an activity where the negative service experience and perceptions

trigger an emotional state of wanting to partake in complaining behaviour. An organisation that manages consumer complaints in an appropriate manner, gains the opportunity to improve consumer relationships and create loyal consumers.

Within the theory of consumer complaint behaviour, it is believed that dissatisfaction with high value products that require extensive problem-solving and have longer life expectancies, such as motor vehicles, generally result in more consumer complaints (Day & Landon, 1977). Huppertz (2014), however, states that it is difficult to complain directly to an organisation, and there are only a few consumers that are able to do this. Patwary and Omar (2016) highlighted the fact that consumers tend to voice complaints to other people, publicly and privately, rather than to complain directly to the organisation.

Consumers need to experience an extremely high level of dissatisfaction to actually make the effort to complain directly to the organisation, as it requires a great amount of effort to complain directly to the organisation. It is for this reason that there is a significant rise in online complaints, electronic word-of-mouth, and online reviews (Huppertz, 2014; Naylor, 2016; Patwary & Omar, 2016).

According to Naylor (2016), there are several online public platforms/ communication channels where consumers can voice their complaints. These include, and are not limited to:

- Micro-blogging sites, such as Twitter;
- Social network sites, for example, Facebook;
- Blogging or personal websites;
- Content communities, such as YouTube;
- Review sites, such as TripAdvisor;
- Company websites with review options;
- Search engines, for example, Google reviews;
- Feedback or consumer complaint sites, such as Hellopeter.com; and
- Social news aggregation sites, such as Reddit.

Harrison-Walker (2001) argued that complaint sites are usually the first place where consumers decide to lodge a complaint. For this specific study, Hellopeter.com was

used as the communication channel to analyse the complaints and compliments related to the seven South African OEM brands. Hellopeter.com is described as an online consumer advocacy and business reputation management platform, which may fall under the above-mentioned review or complaint sites (Hellopeter.com, 2018a). The use of Hellopeter.com as the communication channel choice for this research, is discussed in detail in Section 4.7.3 of this study.

It has been established that consumers can complain in various ways and use a variety of channels to voice their dissatisfaction. In order to achieve the objectives of this study, however, one should also elaborate on the different motives for complaining or the complaint categories, specifically related to online complaints within the South African automotive industry.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher did an extensive search for studies and articles on the motives and nature of complaints within the South African Automotive industry. No such research exists in South Africa, or globally. The researcher did, however, find a few studies/articles which had a significant relevance to this study, which will be discussed below.

Hellopeter.com (2018b) compiled a list containing the most common complaints encountered on Hellopeter.com. This list contains the top eight most common complaints that are published for all service industries on Hellopeter.com, specifically where the top complaint relates to bad quality. This article was of significance as it provided the background needed, specifically to Hellopeter.com complaints, which could assist in proving that they are similar to the automotive industry and OEMs in South Africa.

Carinfo.co.za (2015) did a study within the South African motor vehicle insurance industry, to determine the best rated insurance company, based on reports gathered from Hellopeter.com. The results of the study summarised the five top complaint categories that were identified, based on the nature of the complaints. The five complaint categories were developed from the categories that had the most reports on Hellopeter.com. This study was not directly conducted within the automotive industry but has significance as it still relates to the South African automotive industry, and the study was conducted using Hellopeter.com.

A study by Jugwanth and Vigar-Ellis (2013) assessed the different categories and types of consumer complaints on Hellopeter.com. In addition, their study also identified the recovery strategies applied by companies, and evaluated the effectiveness of the companies' recovery strategies. Although not conducted specifically within the automotive industry of South Africa, the study is significant, as it is based on the general content of the reports found on Hellopeter.com, and these could be applied to the current study as well.

Nimako and Mensah (2012) found that there were several motives for consumers deciding to complain within the telecommunications industry. These findings are related to the telecommunications industry, but they could have relevance to this study, as the motives are related to service failures, and some overlap can be observed with the previously mentioned studies. The findings of these studies/articles have been summarised in Table 2.4 on the next page.

Table 2.4: Summary of consumer complaint categories' research

Title of the study/article	Authors	Date	Service industry	Complaint categories (Ranked from high to low)
The most frequent customer complaints.	Hellopeter.com	2018	General service industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bad quality • Poor customer service • Rudeness • Not keeping promises • Playing pass-the-parcel • No omni-channel touchpoints • Inaccessibility • Hidden costs
Are you using the Best Insurance Company in South Africa?	Carinfo.co.za	2015	Motor vehicle insurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Billing/Accounts • Repairs/Service • Feedback/Response • Call Centre • Breach of contract
Customer Complaint Behaviour and Companies' Recovery Initiatives: The Case of the Hello Peter Website	Jugwanth, B. & Vigar-Ellis, D.	2013	General service industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delay in response • Promise to do something and didn't • Unhelpful • Ignored • Defective product • Bad attitude • Rude or impolite
Motivation for Customer Complaining and Non-Complaining Behaviour Towards Mobile Telecommunication Services	Nimako, S.G. & Mensah, A.F.	2012	Telecommunications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek corrective actions • Seeking explanation • Seeking redress • Seeking apology • Expressing of emotions or anger • Seeking compensation for damages

Source: Researcher's own compilation.

In addition to the above complaint categories, the site, Business Queensland (2017), reported on the following common complaints specifically within the service industry:

- Faulty product
- Incorrect descriptions of the product
- Poor client service
- Slow delivery
- Poor response to information request
- Lack of communication
- Rude staff
- Uninformed staff
- Needs not accurately defined
- Promises not carried out
- Repeated complaints from the same client(s)

Although these categories do not refer specifically to the automotive industry, for the purpose of the current study, the researcher deemed the categories that were identified by Business Queensland as important, in order to provide a representative holistic picture of global consumer complaint motives.

All of the above-mentioned motives for complaints or complaint categories could be used as a benchmark to analyse and interpret the data collected for the current study, in order to draw meaningful conclusions. It should, however, be noted that these motives could not be used as pre-determined themes, as no studies could be found specifically within the context of the automotive industry in South Africa. This study also followed an inductive approach (Section 4.5.2), where themes and categories were determined from the data collected from Hellopeter.com.

From the above-mentioned sections, it is clear that consumers are easily drawn to online forums to lodge a complaint as a result of the dissatisfaction experienced during post-purchase evaluations. It is, however, important to note that these responses may well lead to post-purchase dissonance, and consumers then attempt to reduce the dissonance levels (Krishnamoorthy & Ajith Prabhu, 2018). These will be discussed in

the next section. Consequently, post-purchase dissonance and negative disconfirmation may very well result in the same response strategies.

2.4.3.3 *Post-purchase conflict response tendencies*

There are various factors that could increase dissonance levels within the consumer after the purchase experience. For the purpose of this study, the researcher only focused on the results of the studies by Singh (1988), Brijball (2000) and Parumasur (2015), as these studies set the benchmark of the cognitive dissonance theory, specifically within the automotive industry.

According to Singh (1988), cognitive dissonance is more likely to occur under the following circumstances:

- When the purchase is irrevocable: when purchasing a motor vehicle, the likelihood of taking the vehicle back and receiving the money back is little to none, thus the transaction cannot easily be reversed.
- Several desirable alternatives are available: the motor vehicle purchaser is faced with an abundance of brand choices among similar attractive models. Consumers who face a greater level of difficulty in the decision-making process (as with the purchase of a motor vehicle), with a high availability of alternatives, experience greater magnitudes of post-purchase dissonance.
- There is substantial cognitive overlap in the available alternatives: the available alternatives to motor vehicles are quite similar, although each is unique and have their own set of quality characteristics, the choice between the alternatives is difficult due to similarities.
- The consumer has a long-term commitment to the purchase due to the psychological significance of the product: the purchase of a motor vehicle is a long-term commitment and involves a tedious emotional decision that will have a major impact on the consumer's psychological state of mind.

Some of the factors identified above were confirmed by the study done by Brijball (2000), who identified eight dissonance arousal factors, which were specifically directed at the dissonance experienced when purchasing a new motor vehicle. The study evaluated the relative power of the various dissonance arousal factors to determine the magnitude of the cognitive dissonance experienced.

The dissonance arousal factors identified by Brijball (2000) are explained in Table 2.5 below.

Table 2.5: Dissonance arousal factors in the motor vehicle purchase decision

Dissonance arousal factor	Explanation
Awareness of expectations	Motor vehicle consumers are more likely to experience post-purchase dissonance if they are more aware of their needs before engaging in the purchase process, and their needs are not met after the purchase.
Unconfirmed expectations	Motor vehicle consumers develop expectations regarding the consequences of their purchase before the actual purchase takes place. When expectations are not met, the dissonance level rises.
Reported dissonance	The extent to which motor vehicle consumers recognise that they regret choosing the motor vehicle that they did, instead of the available alternative.
Effort expended	Effort refers to the resources the motor vehicle consumer invests in a purchase. The greater the effort invested, the greater the magnitude of cognitive dissonance will be if needs are not met.
Incongruence with self-concept	The extent to which motor vehicle consumers experience dissonance because of a discrepancy between their self-concept and actions taken or choice made. It measures perceived violation of the self-concept.
Price	This factor measures the degree of post-purchase regret or dissatisfaction experienced by the motor vehicle consumer due to the opportunity cost of having made a particular choice or decision.
Perceived persuasiveness of salesperson	Sometimes consumers feel pressurised by the salesperson into buying a motor vehicle that they do not want or do not consider to be the right price to pay, and this may be a cause of dissonance.
Level of confidence	The confidence level of the motor vehicle consumer is determined by the ease felt when making the purchase decision.

Source: Researcher's own compilation based on: Brijball (2000:59).

The importance of understanding the theory of cognitive dissonance and the dimensions relating to dissonance arousal will ultimately help the OEMs to ensure customer satisfaction and a loyal customer base. These dissonance arousal factors may be described as the motives or reasons why consumers decide to complain.

The motor vehicle purchaser will therefore experience higher levels of cognitive dissonance when (Brijball, 2000):

- they are extremely unaware of their expectations;
- their expectations are not met;
- the motor vehicle purchaser feels anxious about the purchase decision;
- consumers experience low levels of satisfaction or high levels of dissatisfaction;
- the purchase of a motor vehicle has psychological importance to the buyer;
- the purchaser engages in an extensive information search and evaluation that requires a lot of time and effort;
- the incongruence/discrepancy between the selected motor vehicle and the individual's self-concept is high;
- the motor vehicle is expensive and produces a financial strain on the consumer;
- the salesperson is persuasive;
- the purchaser lacks product-related information about the motor vehicle;
- the purchaser feels overly confident with the purchase;
- the features of the alternatives in the evoked set are similar and equally attractive;
- there is substantial cognitive overlap between the alternatives in the evoked set;
- and
- the consumer holds a perception of poor quality service being provided.

According to Parumasur (2015), the most important evaluative factors for the South African motor vehicle owner are: economy, price and performance. Therefore, if consumer expectations with regards to price, economy and performance are not met, there is a significant potential for the consumer to experience post-purchase dissonance. Parumasur (2015) concludes that the South African motor vehicle consumer is a high-involvement cognitive shopper that engages in a rational decision-making process.

The results found by Singh (1988), Brijball (2000) and Parumasur (2015) provide a good indication as to why motor vehicle consumers are more likely to experience dissonance in this complex decision-making and purchasing process. For the purpose of this study, it is of extreme importance to understand why motor vehicle consumers experience dissonance, and what factors would cause the dissonance level to be higher than expected. This provides the background as to why consumers follow

certain measures to reduce the level of internal inconsistency and consumer dissatisfaction.

When consumers attempt to reduce the dissonance levels, many decide to engage in negative word-of-mouth to share their negative experiences with other consumers (Balaji *et al.*, 2016). It is for this reason that most consumers follow the same strategies as explained in this section. Post-purchase dissonance ultimately leads to some level of dissatisfaction and disconfirmation, and hence, consumers want to take action to counteract the disconfirmation being experienced.

This section established a comprehensive explanation of the consumer decision-making process and the response strategies to post-purchase evaluations.

2.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This literature review chapter provided an overview of consumer behaviour within the South African automotive industry. It presented a brief background to consumer behaviour, and more specifically the consumer decision-making process for the South African motor vehicle purchaser. The last phase of the decision-making process, the post-purchase evaluation phase, was explained in detail, with specific reference to consumer responses to their satisfaction/dissatisfaction levels with the purchase. As part of this discussion, the reasons why consumers compliment and complain were discussed. These discussions build onto the next chapter, which introduces and elaborates on the South African automotive industry.

CHAPTER 3: THE SOUTH AFRICAN AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

South Africa has the second-largest economy in Africa, mainly due to a desirable resource base, an established manufacturing base, modern infrastructure, well developed legal and financial systems, and good communication systems. The South African automotive industry has been described as one of the most crucial contributors to the second-largest economy in Africa (Rossouw, 2016; AEIC, 2019). The automotive industry is known to be a vital component that drives sustainability, job creation and competitiveness within the South African economy. As a result, this industry has evolved into one of the leading manufacturing sectors in the South African economy (Naudé, 2013; AEIC, 2019).

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a brief overview of the history of the South African automotive industry. The current standing of the automotive industry within the South African economy will also be explored, focusing on the different categories of businesses in the South African Automotive industry, current challenges within the industry, and an insight into the original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) and dealerships in South Africa. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the current challenges facing the automotive industry, as well as the future of the South African automotive industry.

3.2 HISTORY OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

To fully grasp the current situation of the South African automotive industry, it is imperative that a brief overview of the history of this industry is first provided.

Barnes (2013) explains that prior to the 1920s, automotive vehicle sales in South Africa were almost non-existent. Individuals who were in the fortunate position to own or buy a motor vehicle, had to buy fully imported Completely Built Units (CBUs) which were quite expensive. Due to the imports of CBUs, there was no vehicle assembly or manufacturing industry present in the South African market, and only a small parts and accessories market existed for potential component manufacturers.

The South African Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (DTIC) (2015) developed a timeline, as indicated in Figure 3.1 below, to indicate how the automotive industry has evolved since the 1920s.

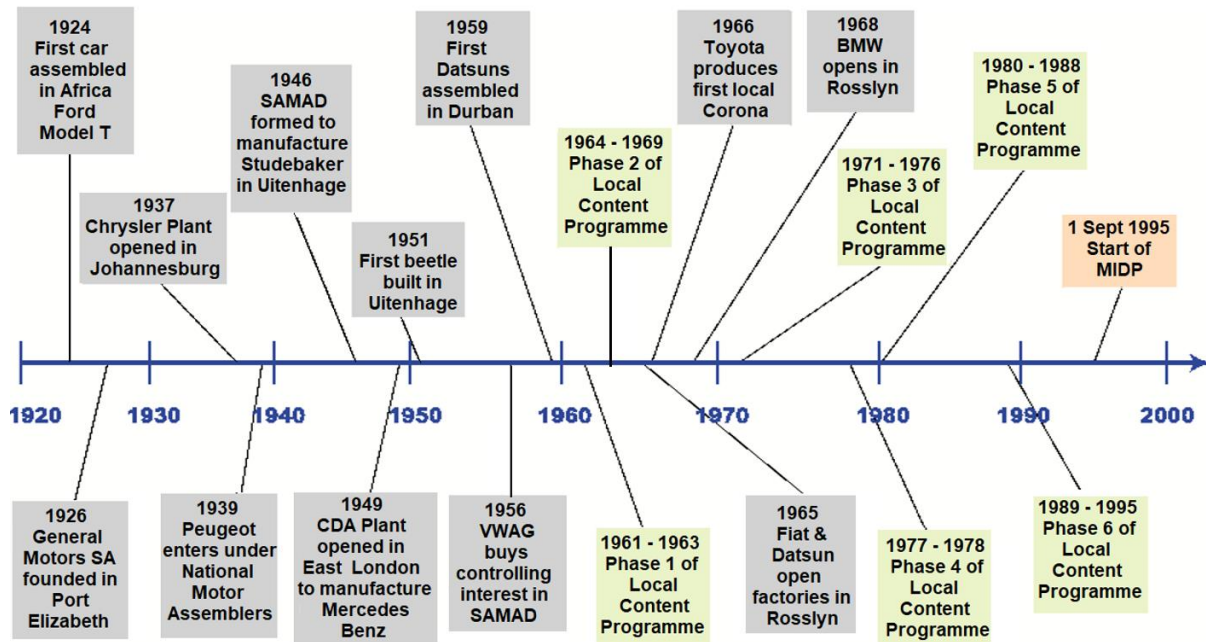


Figure 3.1: Overview of the history of the South African automotive industry

Source: DTIC (2015:8).

The first assembly plants were established by global brands, Ford and General Motors in 1924 and 1926 (Barnes, 2000; Barnes & Kaplinsky, 2000; Barnes, 2013; Nkunzi, 2014; FMCSA, 2020). Car sales picked up tremendously with the introduction of the Ford and General Motors vehicles in South Africa. This made South Africa a fairly early developing economy entrant within the automotive vehicle assembly industry (Barnes, 2013). As a result, two more assembly plants, that of Chrysler and the National Motor Assembly of Johannesburg, opened in 1937 and 1939, respectively.

The domestic vehicle market witnessed rapid expansions for the first four decades, with many other manufacturers entering the market. By 1960, vehicle production figures reached a total of 87 000 vehicles, the highest level of any other developing country at the time (Hartzenberg & Muradzikwa, 2002). By the 1970s, Nissan, BMW, Toyota and Mercedes-Benz had established manufacturing plants in South Africa.

The introduction of the local content programmes in 1961 aimed to protect the domestic market against vehicle and component imports (Nkunzi, 2014). These local

content programmes consisted of a series of targeted industrial policies that would run from 1961 to 1995.

In the early 1990s it became clear that the domestic vehicle market was not a sustainable industry, mainly due to the small market for motor vehicles in South Africa. The industry therefore had to find other ways of becoming competitive in the market, and the local content programmes had to be re-examined for the future development of the South African automotive industry. This led to the establishment of the Motor Industry Development Programme (MIDP) that came into effect on 1 September 1995. The MIDP aimed to “improve SA automotive industry’s international competitiveness, improve vehicle affordability in the domestic market, encourage growth in vehicle and component manufacturing, particularly through exports, stabilise employment levels in the industry and create a better industry foreign exchange balance” (NAACAM, 2011:8).

After the implementation of the MIDP in 1995, the automotive industry stakeholders formulated a common vision for the future direction of the automotive industry in South Africa (Lamprecht, 2009). The vision was to create a feasible, competitive industry, within both the domestic and international markets, that is capable of attaining continuous growth, as well as providing sustainable job creation in the long run. As a result, the automotive industry has grown to be one of the most competitive components of the manufacturing industry in South Africa.

Now that a brief history has been discussed, the position of the automotive industry within the South African economy will be explored in the section to follow.

3.3 POSITION OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY WITHIN THE SOUTH AFRICAN ECONOMY

The South African economy is represented as a globally integrated market-oriented economy with a GDP of approximately R4.8 billion, and a population of 57,73 million people (AIEC, 2019). Statistics South Africa (2019) describes the South African economy as having a diverse structure, vital for historical and future economic growth, strengthened by almost 20 years of sound macro-economic principles. Lamprecht (2009) and Naudé and Badenhorst-Weiss (2012a) argue that South Africa has a competitive advantage over other developing countries due to its excellent

infrastructure, the best industrial resources, access to raw materials and labour, and emerging market-cost advantages.

The key sectors responsible for driving the South African economy, as identified by the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) (2019:5), are listed in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1: Key sectors in the South African economy.

Economic sector	App. contribution to GDP
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	2,4%
Mining and quarrying	8,1%
Manufacturing	13,2%
Electricity, gas and water	3,8%
Construction	3,9%
Trade, catering and accommodation	15%
Transport, storage and communication	9,8%
Finance, real estate and business services	19,7%
Personal services	5,9%
General government services	18,1%

Source: Researcher's own compilation based on: IDC (2019:5).

It is evident from the above information that the manufacturing industry makes up a substantial share of the South African economy. It is part of one of the most important sectors, renowned for its efforts to ensure sustainable economic growth and employment multipliers (AIEC, 2019; IDC, 2019). The manufacturing industry in South Africa consists of various sectors that include agro-processing, automotive, chemicals, information and communication technology, metals, textiles, clothing and footwear (Brand South Africa, 2018). For the purpose of this study, the primary focus will be on the automotive manufacturing industry within the South African economy.

The automotive manufacturing industry has become the most important and dynamic contributor towards manufacturing within the South African economy (Naudé, 2013). The broader automotive industry, that incorporates the manufacturing, distribution, servicing and maintenance of motor vehicles, contributed 6,8% towards the country's GDP in 2018 (AIEC, 2019). The automotive vehicle component and production industry therefore represents the largest and most vital manufacturing sector within

the South African economy (Lamprecht, 2009; AIEC, 2019). The vehicle and component production sector of the automotive industry contributed towards the 29,9% of the total manufacturing output for South Africa for 2018 (Export.gov, 2019). According to the International Organization of Motor Vehicle Manufacturers (OICA, 2018), South Africa also represents the biggest market for domestic vehicles in Africa, accounting for 54% of the continent's total production figures. It is for this reason that the South African automotive industry can be described as an integral strategic and catalytic contributor to the South African economy (AIEC, 2018).

The South African automotive industry incorporates the manufacturing, distribution, servicing and maintenance of motor vehicles and components. The total economic impact of the South African automotive industry stretches far beyond the vehicle and component manufacturers. Significant revenues are also collected from vehicle sales, usage-related levies, taxes, production of vehicles, parts, services, and import duties (AIEC, 2015.) The local government supports the automotive industry through various incentives, including the afore-mentioned MIDP and the African Growth and Opportunity Act, to ensure the sustainability and growth of the industry (Lamprecht, 2009; Tolmay, 2012).

Mashigo *et al.* (2015) describe the South African automotive industry as a fast-growing industry that continually needs to adapt to the changing needs of consumers. As a result of the constant change of consumer needs and demands, there is a constant increase in competition and it becomes difficult to operate in the complex competitive environment. This industry's continued growth and performance is therefore highly dependent on the intelligent partnership between the automotive manufacturers and various industry role players. The survival and growth of these role players within the competitive global market are of the utmost importance for the South African economy (Naudé, 2012b).

These role players will be identified and briefly discussed in the section below.

3.3.1 South African automotive industry stakeholders

It is imperative to identify the various role players within the South African automotive industry, to create a better understanding of the workings of this industry. These key role players include automotive industry associations and different categories of businesses within the industry.

There are several automotive industry associations that represent both the manufacturing as well as the retail component of the automotive industry of South Africa (AIEC, 2019). These representative bodies are listed and described in Table 3.2 below.

Table 3.2: South African automotive industry representative bodies

Automotive industry association	Acronym	Description
National Association of Automobile Manufacturers of South Africa	NAAMSA	The representative organisation for franchise holders marketing vehicles in South Africa. This association also represents the collective, non-competitive interests of the new vehicle manufacturing industry in South Africa.
National Association of Automotive Component and Allied Manufacturers	NAACAM	Represents the interests of the component manufacturers in South Africa. Provides South African manufacturing companies with a forum through which to formulate policies for the benefit of the industry.
Retail Motor Industry Organisation	RMI	An organisation recognised as the leading voice in South Africa's automotive aftermarket, serving the daily needs of its members and playing a key role in enabling motor traders to deliver top class service to motoring consumers.
African Association of Automotive Manufacturers	AAAM	Aims to unlock the economic potential of the African continent by promoting a policy environment that is conducive to the development of the automotive sector.
Automotive Industry Export Council	AIEC	Serves as the umbrella body for the South African automotive industry's export promotion, and the development activities of the industry and the DTIC.
National Automobile Dealers' Association	NADA	A professional body that represents the interests of owners who operate and manage automotive dealerships in South Africa.

Source: Adapted from AIEC (2019:8).

To elaborate on the different categories of business within the automotive industry, Barnes and Morris (2008:34) categorised the global automotive industry as follows:

- the Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) or vehicle assemblers;

- the Original Equipment Suppliers (OESs); and
- the independent aftermarket.

In addition to the three categories identified by Barnes and Morris (2008), Naudé (2009:3) identified four categories of business, specifically within the South African automotive industry. These four categories are indicated in Table 3.3 below.

Table 3.3: Categories of business in the South African automotive industry

Role player	Description
Original equipment manufacturers (OEMs)	Comprising of passenger and commercial vehicle assemblies.
Original Equipment Suppliers (OESs)	Comprising of automotive parts and accessory sales through OEMs.
Automotive component manufacturers (ACMs)	The first-tier supplier in the automotive supply-chain, supplying components to OEMs, OESs and the aftermarket.
Automotive retail and aftermarket	Comprising of automotive parts and accessory sales through independent retailers and repair shops.

Source: Adapted from Naudé (2009:3).

These role players can further be categorised according to automotive clusters. The three automotive clusters in the South African automotive industry will now be briefly explained.

3.3.2 Automotive clusters in South Africa

The automotive manufacturing industry in South Africa is mainly concentrated in three provinces, namely, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape. These are known as the automotive clusters. According to Tolmay (2012), an automotive cluster consists of a number of OEMs and OESs. The OEMs, however, are the focal points of the cluster and are supported at all government levels (AIEC, 2019).

Gauteng has been described as South Africa's economic powerhouse, due to the fact that economic activities in the province contribute a third to South Africa's GDP (AIEC, 2019). As a result, Gauteng has been identified as the largest of the three automotive clusters. The Gauteng automotive cluster houses three OEMs, namely, Ford, Nissan and BMW. This cluster also consists of 200 OESs, and contributed 34,6% towards light vehicle exports in 2018 (AIEC, 2019).

The second largest automotive cluster is found in KwaZulu-Natal. This cluster consists of only one OEM, namely, Toyota, and 80 automotive component companies. Being the global port for trade into Africa and to the world, this cluster has several strategic and competitive advantages (AIEC, 2019).

The third and last automotive cluster in South Africa is located in the Eastern Cape. This cluster houses three of South Africa's OEMs, namely, Volkswagen, Isuzu and Mercedes-Benz. It should, however, be noted that Isuzu bought over the General Motors plant in 2018. Furthermore, this cluster consists of 150 automotive component companies. This automotive cluster also remains the industry's leading exporter, accounting for 50,6% of South Africa's total light vehicle exports for 2018 (AIEC, 2019).

These three automotive clusters, and their respective OEMs are depicted in Figure 3.2 below.

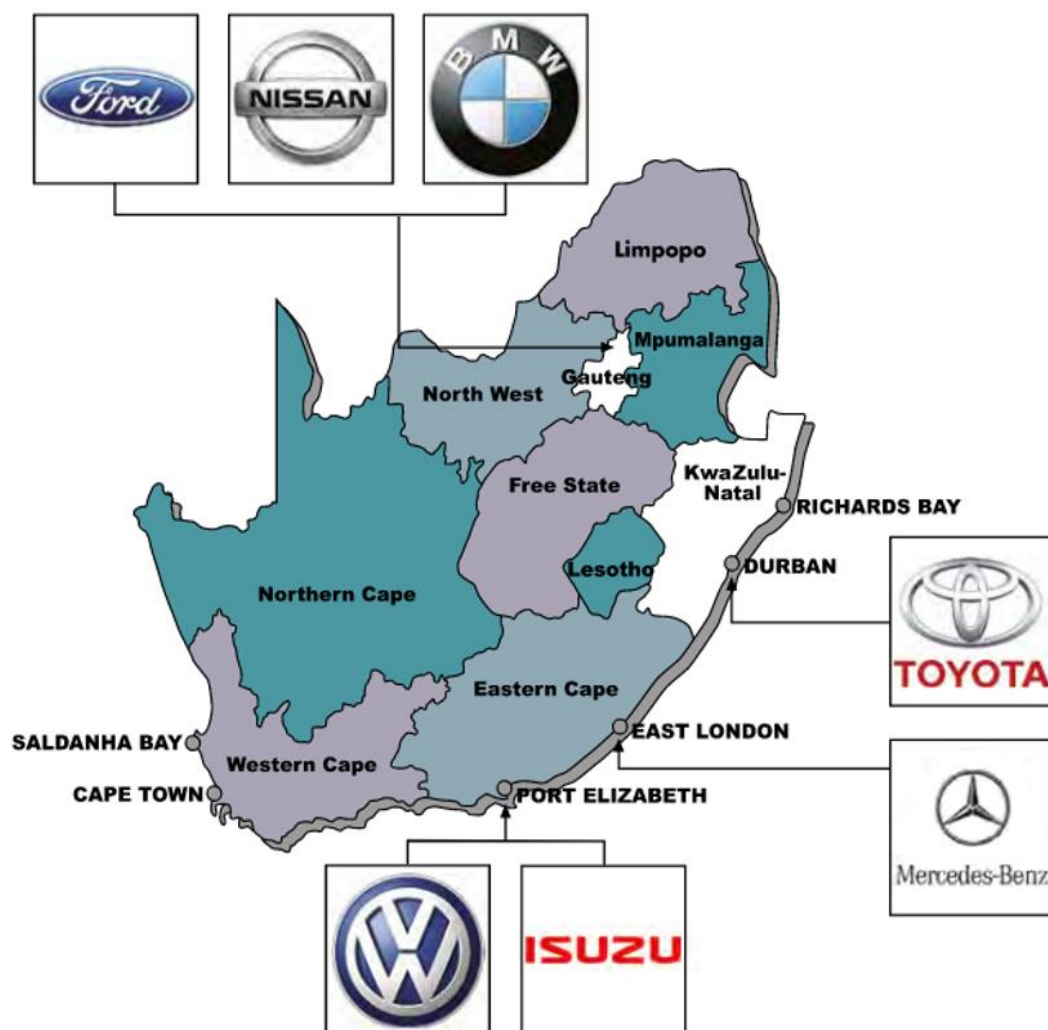


Figure 3.2: Automotive clusters and their OEMs

Source: AIEC (2019:25).

Due to the complexity and large scope of the automotive industry in South Africa, this study will focus on the seven OEM brands in South Africa. It is, however, imperative to understand how the OEMs fit into the broader scope of the automotive industry and automotive clusters in South Africa. The OEMs within South Africa will be discussed in the next section.

3.3.3 Original Equipment Manufacturer brands in South Africa

The Business Dictionary (BusinessDictionary.com, 2020a) defines an Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) as “a producer or manufacturer of a complete end product (such as a car engine, cooling unit, or a circuit board) or a sub-assembly (such as a carburettor, compressor, or a chip) used in an end product”. An original equipment manufacturer within the automotive industry refers to the original producer of a vehicle's components, or the producer of a final fully-assembled vehicle (Investopedia, nd.).

For the purpose of this study, the following definition of an original equipment manufacturer has been developed by the researcher and will be used:

The original producer of complete vehicle components, sub-assembly vehicle components and fully assembled vehicles, for both passenger and commercial use, within South Africa.

South Africa has a number of OEMs that form part of the three automotive clusters identified in the previous section. The seven OEMs that currently form the centre of the automotive clusters in South Africa are listed below, and are graphically depicted in Figure 3.2:

- Toyota South Africa (TSA)
- Volkswagen of South Africa (VWSA)
- Ford Motor Company South Africa (FMCSA)
- Nissan South Africa (NSA)
- Mercedes Benz / Daimler South Africa (MBSA)
- BMW South Africa (BMW SA)
- Isuzu Motors South Africa (Previously, General Motors)

An overview of each of the seven OEMs will be presented in the next section.

3.3.3.1 Ford

The Ford Motor Company of Southern Africa (FMCSA) was established in South Africa in 1923, and is still considered to be one of South Africa's leading OEMs (FMCSA, 2020a). According to FMCSA (2020a), the FMCSA is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Ford Motor Company. The FMCSA employs approximately 5 500 people and additionally supports almost 60 000 jobs among the value chain of its suppliers. As a result of FMCSA's continuous investment in the South African economy, the domestic turnover of Ford contributes to a total of 1% of South Africa's total GDP, therefore, it is regarded as an important role player in the manufacturing industry (FMCSA, 2020b)

The FMCSA consists of an assembly plant that was opened in 1967, located in Silverton, Pretoria, and an engine plant, established in 1964, located in Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape (Mail & Guardian, 2018). The Silverton assembly plant was expanded in 2019 to include an additional third shift, creating 1 200 new jobs at the plant. This expansion was necessary to meet the growing demand for models, and it increased vehicle assemblies to 720 per day (FMCSA, 2020b). Due to the size of operations at the Silverton assembly plant, the FMCSA forms part of the Gauteng automotive cluster.

All new Ford vehicles come out with a standard factory warranty of four years or 120 000 km, whichever comes first. In addition to the four-year warranty, Ford also offers all passenger and light commercial vehicles with a three-year unlimited kilometre Ford Protect Roadside Assistance plan. This plan provides roadside assistance and emergency rescue services to their customers for 365 days of the year (FMCSA, 2020c).

Chapter 1 of this dissertation introduced Hellopeter.com as an online consumer advocacy platform, which was used as the base-source of information for the qualitative research conducted for this study. As such, Hellopeter.com allows consumers to communicate their positive and negative service experiences with other consumers and businesses. According to Hellopeter.com, Ford South Africa received an average star rating of 1.58 out of 5, indicating that overall service experiences were described as being somewhere between terrible and poor, but the majority of the experiences were rated as terrible (1 star). Although certain Ford dealerships in South

Africa responded to consumer reports on Hellopeter.com, the Ford Motor Company of Southern Africa brand did not respond to any reports.

3.3.3.2 Nissan

Nissan South Africa has been supplying vehicles to South African customers for the last 56 years. Nissan South Africa currently accounts for approximately 10% of South Africa's new vehicle market share, consisting of a comprehensive range of passenger cars, and light-, medium- and heavy commercial vehicles (Jobvine.co.za, 2013; AIEC, 2019). The Nissan South Africa plant is located in Rosslyn, Pretoria, and forms part of the Gauteng automotive cluster.

According to Brand South Africa (2019), the Nissan Rosslyn plant employs 1 832 people and annually produces 40 000 vehicle units. Nissan offers a range of 28 different vehicles in South Africa, and it is considered to be one of the top five automotive manufacturers in South Africa (CMH Datsun, 2019).

Nissan South Africa offers a range of service plans and warranties, depending on the type of vehicle bought. The most common service plan included with new vehicle purchases is a three-year / 90 000 km plan. The factory warranty period for these new vehicles is six years / 150 000 km. All other Genuine Nissan Parts have a 12-month manufacturer's warranty (Nissan SA, 2020).

The Nissan South Africa brand does not respond to consumer reports on Hellopeter.com. Nissan South Africa, has an average star rating of 1.84 out of 5, indicating that overall service experiences were described as poor.

3.3.3.3 BMW

The BMW plant which is situated in Rosslyn, Pretoria was established in 1973, and forms part of the Gauteng automotive cluster. The BMW South Africa plant was the BMW group's first foreign plant outside Germany, and it represents the cornerstone of the group's global production network (Schutte, 2018; BMW Group, 2019). The Rosslyn plant is considered as world-class due to the capability of the plant to produce customised cars for discerning customers across the globe (BMW Group, 2019). BMW is considered one of the luxury vehicle brands in South Africa (Branquinho, 2019).

According to the BMW Group (2019), BMW South Africa employs over 49 000 people, both directly and indirectly. Approximately 4 680 people work at the plant and the

national sales organisation, while 4 956 form part of dealership staff at the local level, and there are approximately 40 000 first-tier supplier employees.

The BMW SA Motorplan has been implemented on all new BMWs since 1986. All new BMW vehicles therefore come with a standard five-year/ 100 000 km service and maintenance plan. Customers do however have the option to extend the motor plan to a maximum of seven years/ 200 000 km. BMW SA also offers approved used vehicles a one-year / 25 000 km motor plan cover (BMW SA, 2019).

BMW South Africa's star rating on Hellopeter.com was calculated as 1.75 out of 5, which is very similar that of the previously mentioned brands. BMW South Africa is another brand that do not respond to consumer complaints and compliments on Hellopeter.com.

3.3.3.4 Toyota

Toyota South Africa Motors was established in 1961 and has been identified as the key automotive player in the KwaZulu-Natal automotive cluster (TIKZN, 2016; Top Employers Institute, 2019). For 39 years running, Toyota has been identified as the market-leading automotive brand in the country, with a current market share of 24,2% (AIEC, 2019). Toyota South Africa is the only OEM in the KwaZulu-Natal automotive cluster (AIEC, 2019).

Toyota South Africa Motors is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Toyota Motor Corporation (TMC) with an annual production capacity of approximately 220 000 vehicles. The South African-built Toyota vehicles are exported to more than 80 countries globally (KZN Top Business, 2019).

Nationally, Toyota employs approximately 8 000 people and is constantly striving for continuous improvement in all its business practices and technologies (Top Employers Institute, 2019).

All new Toyota vehicles come with a standard factory warranty providing cover of three years/ 100 000 km, which includes a 24-hour roadside assistance plan (Bubear, 2017; Toyota South Africa Motors, 2019).

Although Toyota South Africa Motors has been identified as the market leader in South Africa, they do not respond to consumer comments on Hellopeter.com. Toyota South Africa's average star rating on Hellopeter.com was calculated as 2.05 out of 5,

indicating that most consumers perceive their service experience with Toyota to be poor, although a bit higher than that of the previously mentioned brands.

3.3.3.5 Mercedes-Benz

Mercedes-Benz South Africa (MBSA) is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Daimler AG, and the group of companies was established in South Africa in 1954 (MBSA, 2020a). Mercedes-Benz has also been described as one of the luxury vehicle brands in South Africa (Branquinho, 2019).

The MBSA plant is located in East London and forms part of the Eastern Cape automotive cluster. MBSA has been supplying premium passenger vehicles and versatile commercial vehicles for the South African market for the past 60 years. Across the group of companies, MBSA (2020a) directly employs approximately 4 000 people. In 2013, MBSA was awarded the title of top employer for the third consecutive year, awarded by the Top Employer Institute in South Africa (MBSA, 2020b).

All new Mercedes-Benz passenger vehicles come with a five-year/ 100 000 km service and maintenance plan and a two-year manufacturer's warranty. As part of the Mercedes-Benz PremiumDrive plan, new vehicles also come with a five-year/ 100 000 km roadside assistance service (MBSA, 2019).

Although the MBSA plant has been recognised as the best manufacturing plant in South Africa, the MBSA group does not participate on Hellopeter.com, and has an average star rating of only 1.55 out of 5, which was also closely related to previously mentioned brands.

3.3.3.6 Volkswagen

Volkswagen Group South Africa was established in 1946 and is also a wholly owned subsidiary of Volkswagen Aktiengesellschaft (VWAG) in Germany (VWSA, 2020a). According to VWSA (2020a), The Volkswagen Group South Africa is a multi-national corporation, with a strong commitment to boosting foreign direct investment in South Africa. The Volkswagen Group South Africa plant is located in Uitenhage, in the Eastern Cape automotive cluster, and has become one of the leading passenger car manufacturers in the country (Volkswagen Newsroom, 2019).

The Volkswagen Group South Africa directly employs approximately 6 000 people, while indirectly employing approximately 45 000 within the national dealer network.

Volkswagen South Africa has been recognised as the front-runner in terms of employee skills and development training within the automotive industry of South Africa (VWSA, 2020a).

All new Volkswagens have a standard three-year/ 120 000 km warranty, as well as a 12-year vehicle body anti-corrosion warranty. The various Volkswagen vehicles come out with different service plans. The standard service plans of new vehicles range from three-year/ 45 000 km to a five-year/ 90 000 km service plan, depending on the type of vehicle bought (VWSA, 2020b).

From the Volkswagen South Africa group, a few independent dealerships respond on Hellopeter.com, but the brand does not respond to these consumer complaints and compliments, and has an average star rating of 1.7 out of 5.

3.3.3.7 Isuzu Motors / General Motors

General Motors South Africa (GMSA) was established in 1913, with the assembly plant opening in 1926, where it built vehicles until 2017. GMSA was a wholly owned subsidiary of the multinational, General Motors Company, manufacturing and distributing vehicles under the following brands: Chevrolet, Opel and Isuzu (GM Media, 2013). The South African plant was located in Port Elizabeth and it served as the global group of the company's African headquarters.

The GMSA plant formed part of the Eastern Cape automotive cluster and employed approximately 1 800 people at its assembly plants and headquarters in Port Elizabeth (GM Media, 2013). GMSA also had 133 dealerships that were located in all the major towns and cities throughout the country.

GMSA, however, decided to cease operations in 2017, and sold the plant to Isuzu Motors, with full operation from 2018 (Williams, 2017). Ongoing support and after-sales for all GMSA Chevrolet and Opel consumers have been provided by Isuzu, since its inception in 2018 (Williams, 2017).

Isuzu Motors, South Africa, was established on 1 January 2018, and is described as a wholly owned subsidiary of Isuzu Motors Limited. Isuzu manufactures a total of 79 models of commercial vehicles and trucks. Isuzu aims to become a leader in the manufacturing and supply of motor vehicles in South Africa (Isuzu.co.za, 2019).

Even though General Motors South Africa dissolved at the end of 2017, the data collection on Hellopeter.com took place when they were still operational in South Africa, and as a result, had to be included in the literature. General Motors, South Africa, and their respective dealerships, did not respond to consumer comments on Hellopeter.com while they were still operational, and received an average star rating of 1.83 out of 5.

This concludes the discussion on the seven OEM brands that form the automotive clusters in South Africa. There are several other brands that do not have manufacturing plants in South Africa, however, their product lines are distributed and sold within the South African automotive industry. These brands include, and are not limited to, Hyundai, Honda, Renault, Chery, Chrysler, Citroen, Daihatsu, Datsun, Fiat, Foton, Geely and Jeep. These brands were not included in the study, as they did not have manufacturing plants in South Africa at the stage the research was concluded.

The South African OEMs, however, will not be able to uphold their production and service levels without the involvement of their respective dealerships in South Africa (Export.gov, 2019). An overview of the automotive dealerships, as well as the services they offer, is presented in the next section.

3.3.4 South African automotive dealerships

Carter (2015) defines a dealership as the total enterprise, which encompasses the actual property of the dealership, as well as the business operation. Dealerships receive an exclusive franchise for a specific trade area in which they act as the representative of the OEM for the motor vehicle buyer. The OEMs and dealers can therefore be regarded as equal partners in the marketing process of the motor vehicles (Carter, 2014). The automotive dealerships serve as the intermediary between the OEM and consumers, and customer satisfaction is of the utmost importance to retain consumers, and ultimately create loyal consumers (Nyadzayo & Khajehzadeh, 2016).

Although the focus of this study is not specifically on the automotive dealerships in South Africa, it is imperative that the services offered by the dealerships and their efforts to keep consumers satisfied, be explained. Dealerships are an integral component of the OEM brand, and as the point of contact for consumers, play an important role in the consumer service experiences (Nyadzayo & Khajehzadeh, 2016).

According to Export.gov (2019), South Africa currently has an estimated 1 374 new vehicle dealerships and 1 696 used vehicle dealerships. In total, there are an estimated 3 070 dealerships nationwide. The largest component of these automotive dealerships is found in the Gauteng region (Cars.co.za, 2019).

According to Carter (2015:196), automotive dealerships serve five main functions. These functions and their descriptions are presented in Table 3.4 below.

Table 3.4: The main functions of an automotive dealership

Function	Description
New vehicle sales	New vehicle sales are considered to be the primary function of automotive dealerships, although they are most definitely not the only source of profit for the dealership.
Used vehicle sales	This component of dealerships has been on the increase in the past few years due to the economic downturns consumers have been experiencing. As a result, used vehicles are offered at lower prices, which may have a stabilising influence on the dealership as a whole.
Fixed operations	Fixed operations refer to the service operations offered by the dealership. This component mainly generates revenues from warranty work as well as repair and maintenance. Although these fixed operations typically account for a relatively small share of the total revenue, it sometimes accounts for the largest share of the dealership's profits, as parts and services could sometimes be sufficient to cover all or most of the fixed expenses of the dealership. This component also includes after-sale service.
Parts	This component focuses on the sale of vehicle parts for the dealership. Although not always seen as a main contributor to dealership profits, this component has been on the increase in the past years.
Finance and insurance	This is the component that deals with the financing of vehicles bought from the dealerships. These finance and insurance consultants are employed by the dealership to determine if, and how much, consumers can afford. They have relationships with the various banks to determine the best rate for the customer.

Source: Adapted from Carter (2015:196).

Mashigo *et al.* (2015) found that most automotive dealerships in South Africa offer similar products and services, such as those listed in Table 3.4, and only a few dealerships offer distinct unique services that create additional value for the business. These unique services are specifically aimed at the servicing of hybrid vehicles. As a result, it is difficult for dealerships to create a unique service experience, and ultimately, gain a competitive advantage in the complex automotive environment.

According to the National Automobile Dealers Association (NADA) (2018:5), new vehicle sales continue to occupy the largest share of total dealership sales, as can be seen in Figure 3.3 below. It is, however, important to mention that finance and insurance sales figures have already been included in the respective new and used vehicle sales components.



Figure 3.3: Share of total dealership sales

Source: Adapted from NADA (2018:8).

Although parts and services form a small component of the total dealership sales, this component may be responsible for the largest share of dealership profits (Carter, 2015). As a result, dealerships, together with the partnership of the OEMs, need to have certain procedures in place to keep their consumers happy and satisfied. Dealerships need to understand what consumers regard as important when considering which service provider/ dealership to go to. According to the 2018 COX Automotive Service Industry Study (COX Automotive, 2018:34), consumers consider value for money, quality, convenience and trust as the most important factors when deciding on which dealership to go to.

Kushma (2019) states that consumer satisfaction and loyalty, specifically with regards to automotive dealerships, have been on the decline. This is due to various consumer frustrations when it comes to automotive dealerships. According to the 2018 COX

Automotive Service Industry Study (COX Automotive, 2018:16), the top five reasons consumers were frustrated with car dealerships were because:

- the service took longer than consumers expected;
- the dealership tried to push additional services;
- consumers had an appointment but had to wait in line;
- consumers had to make enquiries about how much the dealership will charge; and
- the dealership did not provide the consumer with a loan vehicle.

On the opposite end, the consumers who were satisfied with the service they received from the dealership and subsequently returned to the dealership, did so mainly because (COX Automotive, 2018:26):

- the consumer trusted the dealership;
- the consumer had a good purchase experience from the dealership;
- their vehicle was still under warranty;
- the consumer was introduced to the service department when purchasing the vehicle; and
- the consumer had a contract with the dealership.

According to Verhoef, Langerak and Donkers (2007), automotive dealerships contribute to brand retention through the various dealership functions, sales and their service efforts. It is clear that OEMs, together with their respective dealerships, need to look into the reasons why consumers are not satisfied with the service received, in order to improve their operations, and ultimately, exceed consumer expectations.

Casper Kruger, former managing director of the Ford Motor Company of Sub-Saharan Africa, indicated that the traditional dealership relationship was seen as a one-off transaction, and the consumer service perspectives and experiences received little consideration (Kruger, 2018). In order to move away from the traditional relationship and improve consumer satisfaction, Kruger (2018) suggests that dealerships should adapt their service offerings by:

- cultivating and nurturing consumer relationships to ensure they return to the establishment on a regular basis;

- welcoming consumers back to the dealership, and taking the time to get to know and understand them;
- ensuring consistency, routine and reliability, as consumers do not like surprises and being inconvenienced;
- attracting the best employees according to their talents, and limiting staff turnover; and
- being more agile and proactive, with regards to their online company reputation.

In accordance with Kruger's (2018) suggestions, COX Automotive (2018) suggests that dealerships should adopt the following strategies to improve consumer satisfaction and loyalty within automotive dealerships:

- pick up vehicles for repair and maintenance and return them to the consumer, or provide mobile services away from the dealership;
- provide sufficient information with regards to money spent in order to maintain the value of the vehicle;
- increase the ability and functionality for online service bookings on the dealership's website;
- provide comprehensive price ranges for dealership services on their website; and
- enable consumers to monitor their vehicle's service history from the dealership's website.

These suggested strategies could assist in increasing consumer satisfaction, which may lead to a possible increase in consumer compliments, and a decrease in complaints on online consumer advocacy platforms such as Hellopeter.com.

It is evident that dealerships play a vital role in the consumer decision-making process and after-sale services, when purchasing a motor vehicle.

This section of the chapter has provided a brief background discussion of the respective OEMs, and the dealerships and their services. The next section discusses the total domestic vehicle sales market, and the market share of the various South African OEMs.

3.4 TOTAL DOMESTIC VEHICLE MARKET SALES

The Automotive Industry Export Council (AIEC) (2019) describes the South African automotive industry as one of the most competitive environments in the world, producing a broad range of vehicles under several different brands. These include passenger cars, light commercial vehicles, medium commercial vehicles, heavy commercial vehicles, extra heavy commercial vehicles and buses. During the year 2018, consumers could choose from 55 brands and 2 872 passenger vehicle derivatives. South African consumers are therefore spoilt with the widest choice to market-size ratio anywhere in the world (AIEC, 2019).

According to the AIEC (2019), the overall new vehicle market share for 2018 can be represented as illustrated in Figure 3.4 below.

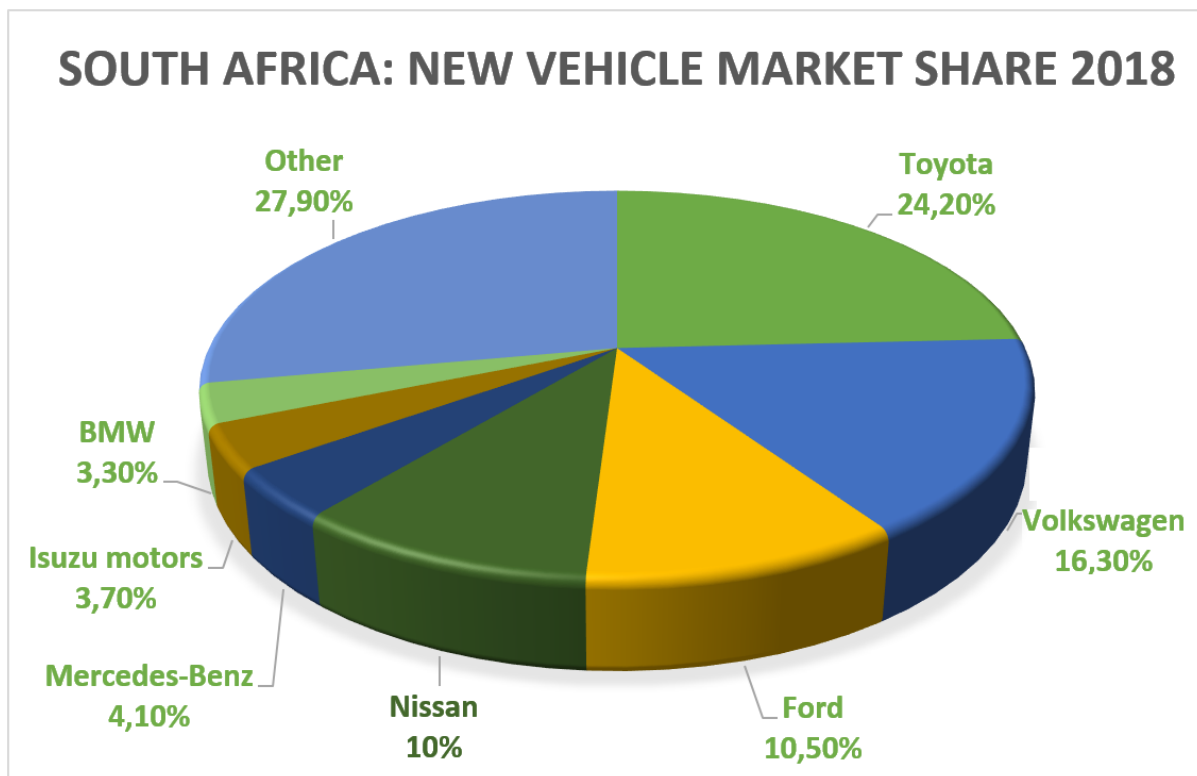


Figure 3.4: South African new vehicle market share

Source: Adapted from AIEC (2019:9).

From the information given above, Toyota South Africa is the market leader in terms of the new vehicle sales of local OEM brands. The AIEC (2019) describes Toyota South Africa Motors as the industry leader maintaining its overall market leadership in 2018 for the 39th year running. The component labelled as 'other' represents the sales of imported vehicles from other manufacturers, as well as the sales of new medium-,

heavy- and extra heavy vehicles. For the purpose of this study, however, the market share of only the seven OEM brands in South Africa is of importance and significance.

It is equally vital for government institutions, economists, OEMs, dealerships and the public to know what the new vehicle sales figures, and historical sales figures are, in order to assist with decision-making and policy formulation (AIEC, 2019).

The new vehicle market share for the seven OEMs for 2016 to 2018, is indicated in Table 3.5 below.

Table 3.5: OEM new vehicle market share 2016 - 2018

OEM	2018 New Vehicle Market Share	2017 New Vehicle Market Share	2016 New Vehicle Market Share
Toyota South Africa Motors	24,4%	22,9%	21,4%
Volkswagen Group of South Africa	16,3%	15,6%	15,8%
Ford Motor Company of South Africa	10,5%	12,8%	13,5%
Nissan South Africa	10%	9,3%	7,5%
Mercedes-Benz South Africa	4,1%	4,8%	5,4%
Isuzu Motors	3,7%	3,3%	7,5% (General Motors)
BMW Group South Africa	3,3%	3,3%	4,1%

Source: Researcher's own compilation based on: AIEC (2017; 2018; 2019).

From Table 3.5, it is interesting to note how the top three contenders for market leadership in South Africa have changed in the past three years. Toyota remains at the forefront, and their market share has steadily increased with 3% over the past three years. The Volkswagen Group of South Africa also experienced an increase in new vehicle sales and remained in second position. Although, maintaining its third position, Ford new vehicle sales have been on the decline, with a 3% decrease in new vehicle sales since 2016. The two luxury brands, Mercedes-Benz and BMW have also shown a decline in sales for the past three years, which is understandable due to the economic decline in South Africa.

Although consumers were faced with various choices of motor vehicles, a decline has been observed in domestic new vehicle sales for the past four years (NAAMSA, 2019).

New vehicle sales in South Africa have declined, with all the major role players reflecting either double digit or near double digit declines (AIEC, 2019). The downturn of these sales can be attributed to a number of factors or challenges, which will be discussed in detail in Section 3.5.

According to the TransUnion SA Vehicle Pricing Index (VPI) for Quarter 2 of 2019 (TransUnion, 2019) the used-to-new vehicle sales ratio in South Africa is 2,16:1. This ratio is based on finance deals that were registered for new and used vehicle sales for the second quarter of 2019. This indicates that for every new vehicle financed, a total of 2,16 used vehicles were financed. In total, 40 611 new vehicles were financed, while 87 538 used vehicles were financed for this period. The VPI for Quarter 2 of 2019 (TransUnion, 2019) also indicated that the purchasing power of consumers has not changed since the second quarter of 2013, and that the average loan amount applied for in 2019 was similar to that of the second quarter of 2013. This accentuates the pressure consumers are feeling in terms of disposable income, and increases the demand for less expensive entry-level cars or used vehicles (TransUnion, 2019). Crouth (2019) describes South Africa as a predominantly used vehicle car market, confirming the used-to-new vehicle ratio.

According to the eNatis (2019a), the total new vehicle registrations for self-propelled vehicles, recorded on the system for December 2019, was 21 881, compared to the 111 885 used vehicles registered on the system (eNatis, 2019b). This also confirms the ratio provided by TransUnion (2019) and indicates that there is a 3:1 ratio with regards to used-to-new vehicle registrations in South Africa.

From the information provided above, it is clear that used vehicles sales, specifically in South Africa, are on the increase, and new vehicle sales are steadily decreasing. These lower levels of new vehicle sales represent a reflection of the current difficult economic conditions in South Africa (NAAMSA, 2019). Based on the figures above, and the prevailing economic conditions in South Africa, new vehicle sales can be characterised by a continued decline due to low economic growth and increased pressure on consumers' disposable income. Figure 3.5 below provides an indication of how the total domestic vehicle sales have declined over the past six years.

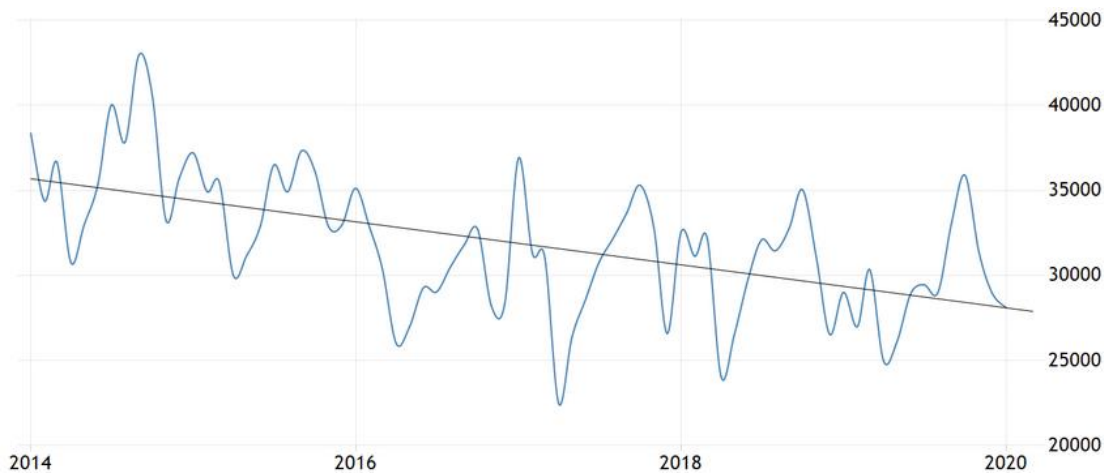


Figure 3.5: South Africa total vehicle sales 2014 - 2020

Source: Tradingeconomics.com (2019).

NAAMSA (2019) states that consumers will continue to delay big item purchasing decisions, like that of a motor vehicle, until there is more economic stability and growth in the economy of South Africa. Therefore, continuing to contribute to the decline in domestic vehicle sales.

The decline in vehicle sales can be attributed to various challenges. The challenges impacting on the sales of vehicles and the automotive industry in South Africa are discussed in the next section.

3.5 CHALLENGES WITHIN THE AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY IN SOUTH AFRICA

The automotive industry in South Africa is under severe pressure, and it faces several challenges due to the rapid evolvement of technological advancements, globalisation, high labour costs, and increasingly demanding customers (Naudé, 2013; NAAMSA, 2019). Several studies have concluded that the automotive industry is facing severe challenges that threaten the industry's continued performance, growth and existence (Lamprecht, 2009; Barnes, 2009; Naudé & Badenhorst-Weiss, 2012a; Tolmay, 2012; Naudé, 2013; Ambe, 2014; Mashigo *et al.*, 2015; Williamson, 2015; Innovation-group, 2016; Barnes, Black, Comrie & Hartogh, 2018; Kirkby, 2018).

The complex and ever-changing business environment brought about by globalisation indicated a dramatic shift in the dynamics of the global automotive industry (Henke, Parameswaran & Pisharodi, 2008). As a result, the consumer decision-making process and consumer buying patterns have changed from that of a transactional

orientation to a relationship orientation. Consumers are more knowledgeable and sophisticated, mainly due to the increased availability of information (Kruger, 2018). Consumers often resort to extreme measures to voice their frustrations or to search for information regarding specific service providers. As a result, online consumer complaints and compliments, specifically within the automotive industry, have been on the increase. Long-term valuable relationships are a crucial factor for staying competitive in this dynamic industry (Tolmay, 2012). Kirkby (2018) states that the South African automotive industry will experience the highest level of change with regards to technology disruptors, consumer behaviour, and the South African business environment.

According to Smith (2016), consumer affordability poses a major challenge for the local automotive industry. Simphiwe Nghona, the CEO of Wesbank's motor division, highlights that the South African automotive industry is not immune against the challenges being experienced in the economy. Consumers are struggling because of low levels of disposable income and high debt levels. As a result, affordability will drive consumers to rather buy pre-owned vehicles, and finance for used vehicles will be on the increase (Williams, 2015; Smith, 2016; Deloitte, 2016; Vermeulen, 2016; TransUnion, 2019).

Due to the lower levels of consumer disposable income, the majority of South African consumers purchase vehicles through a financing option (TransUnion, 2019). The challenge of affordability, therefore, poses a major threat to new and used vehicle sales in South Africa, and a steady decline can already be observed. The effect of these factors will only be observed in the medium term, and until then, the new vehicle industry will continue to depend on the vehicle manufacturers to provide financial assistance to new and used vehicle buyers.

Another major challenge facing the South African automotive industry, is competitiveness regarding size and scale (Vermeulen, 2016). The AIEC (2019) argues that the current domestic market is not large enough to generate the needed economies of scale, in order to compete in global production. There is thus an increased need for strong global linkages, together with supplier development, to improve growth opportunities of the South African automotive industry. This challenge is seen as a direct reflection of the difficult conditions that the global automotive industry is facing. Kirkby (2018) confirms this challenge by indicating that South

African based OEMs need to compete for new model-generation investments and export business against fierce global competitors. In order for the OEMs to become more globally competitive, they need to require a level playing field to be able to bid for investments. Naudé and Badenhorst-Weiss (2012a) add that the South African Automotive industry is under severe pressure to compete on a global level with regard to cost and quality perspectives, as consumers are becoming more demanding and are squeezing the suppliers on price and non-price factors.

A challenge that is not only evident in the automotive industry but affects operations of all industries in South Africa, is the occurrence of regular ongoing labour disputes (Ndweni, 2014; Innovation-group, 2016). Riots, striking actions and ongoing labour disputes have the potential to negatively affect South Africa's position as the automotive leader in Africa. According to David Powels, the CEO of VWSA, many days and billions of Rands were lost due to labour disputes in 2011, which has been considered as the worst strike record in the world (IOL, 2011). The ongoing industrial action resulted in OEMs not being able to ship vehicles for prolonged periods of time, causing major embarrassment, and losses of millions of Rands (Ndweni, 2014). In total, the strikes led to the South African industry losing revenues of about R20 billion. Employers, as well as unions, should find alternative and better ways of settling their differences, or the South African manufacturing industry may face the risk of permanently damaging their reputation (Furlonger, 2014).

Lamprecht (2009) identified another challenge to the automotive industry as the lack of sufficient government incentives. Government incentives and investments are crucial for the OEMs and OESs to upgrade, expand and sustain their operations within the South African automotive industry. South Africa is considered to be at a geographical disadvantage in relation to the other smaller manufacturing countries in the world, making the cost to manufacture in South Africa more expensive. It is for this reason that the government support, mentioned in Section 3.3 of this chapter, is needed.

In relation to global incentive initiatives, the scale of investments in South Africa is insignificant (Lamprecht, 2009). According to Steyn (2013), the South African automotive incentives are considered generous by some, but are nowhere near good enough to earn it the title of the preferred/desired investment destination. There is thus a substantial need for government to recognise that their support should be on par

with that of their global competitors within the developed and developing countries. Lamprecht (2009) recommends that continuous benchmarking against other global competitors should be undertaken by government. This will ensure that South Africa may be considered as a favourable investment destination.

The recent addition of the popular ride-sharing concept in South Africa may pose another challenge to the South African automotive industry. Organisations, such as Uber, CarTrip, Taxify and inDriver are assisting in connecting consumers with drivers in their area, to provide safe and convenient rides to their destinations, without having to use the traditional taxi services (Venter, 2019). Hughes (2017) states that ride-sharing may have a major impact on the profitability of new vehicle manufacturers and the viability of used vehicles. This will, in turn, have a major impact on the automotive industry in general. If ride-sharing concepts are proven to be successful in South Africa in the long run, it could possibly result in decreased demand from consumers to own a motor vehicle.

As part of the 2019 budget speech, the South African Minister of Finance announced the introduction of the Carbon Tax Act No 15 of 2019, which came into effect on 1 June 2019 (South African Government, 2019). Climate change has been described as one of the biggest challenges in the world, and the primary objective of the new Carbon Tax Act is to assist with the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the most sustainable and affordable way possible. According to Businessstech.co.za (2019), the new Act will impact consumers and businesses both directly and indirectly. The new tax will cause an increase in fuel prices, which in turn, will increase the prices of goods and services. The continuous fluctuation of fuel prices, as mentioned in previous budget speeches, poses a massive challenge for the South African automotive industry, as well as consumers. The new Carbon Tax Act no 15 of 2019, therefore presents another challenge to the industry.

Some other challenges facing the automotive industry in South Africa include the high costs of water and electricity, high costs related to operations, and the unstable interest rate (Ndweni, 2014). These challenges have an impact on the industry as well as consumer purchase intentions.

Kirkby (2018) concludes that the most prominent challenges the South African automotive value chain will need to overcome are:

- Responding to market changes;
- Optimising regional integration;
- Establishing infrastructure as an enabler;
- Achieving global competitiveness; and
- Developing an inclusive value chain.

It is evident that the South African automotive industry is facing some extremely demanding circumstances, and as a result, OEMs need to constantly look for ways to reduce production and manufacturing costs. In order to attract and maintain consumers, manufacturers are required to enhance product and service quality, increase organisational efficiencies, drive innovative features into their products, and establish long-term, valuable relationships with their consumers (Ambe, 2014; Tolmay, 2012).

As the aim of this study is to explore consumer complaint and compliment behaviour within the automotive industry, the above-mentioned are important components that will assist in establishing long-term relationships and increase sales. Meyer (2015) concludes that all local and national efforts should be collated to address these challenges that are hindering the sustainable job creation and global competitiveness of South Africa's automotive manufacturing industry.

These challenges are viewed as serious obstacles to building and growing a sustainable automotive industry in South Africa. These challenges may also pose some future threats for the industry, and it is therefore imperative that the future of the South African automotive industry be discussed.

3.6 FUTURE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

The track record and performance of the South African automotive industry has fluctuated over the past few years. Going forward, the automotive industry will need to learn how to cope with the above-mentioned challenges, and any other future challenges that may come their way (Vermeulen, 2016).

The growth potential of this industry, however, still remains above average, and Vermeulen (2016) argues that, with the right policies, interventions and goodwill, the industry can grow and make a positive contribution to the future development of the

South African economy. For the industry's continued growth and existence, role players need to understand that the only constant in the automotive industry is change (IOL, 2016).

The biggest future concern for the automotive industry role players in South Africa, is the rapid acceleration of change and the ability to quickly adapt to these changes. The Innovation Group (2016) identified the major areas of concern for the future of the South African automotive industry. The future challenges are discussed below.

The first major future challenge deals with the shrinking size of the market. As indicated in Section 3.5, this came about as a result of digitally disruptive trends, unpredictable exchange rates and a difficult economic environment (IOL, 2016). These unpredictable economic fluctuations will therefore always pose a massive threat to the existence of the South African automotive industry.

The second future challenge refers to connectivity. With the rapid advancements of technology, people rely heavily on electronic devices and applications to connect the different aspects of their lives (Innovation-group, 2016; Kruger, 2018). Computers, the Internet and mobile devices have changed the way people interact forever. It has also already changed the role of salespeople in the purchasing process. The Innovation Group (2016) suggests that a closer integration should be established between the brand image, the consumer decision-making process, and service and maintenance aspects. Consumers are more demanding, and the automotive industry should think of new ways of communicating directly with their connected customers.

Affordability will continue to emphasise the need of OEMs to produce much more basic automobiles that are relatively easy and cost-effective to repair. Consumer disposable income will continue to decline, and cost-effective alternatives will have to be developed for the industry to survive (Smith, 2016; Innovation Group, 2016, TransUnion, 2019).

The local automotive industry will face several cross-roads in the future, as there is no universal solution that will enable them to survive and prosper in the future. The challenges and complexities, together with the increase in competition for customers in a connected world, are perfect examples of the shrinking bottom line of the South African automotive industry (Innovation-group, 2016). Alternative solutions to overcome these complexities will become the norm when moving into the future. The

ultimate goal of the traditional automotive industry model and the OEMs would be to reduce costs and maximise brand loyalty. Naudé and Badenhorst-Weiss (2012b) indicate that the key to improve cost-effectiveness and customer loyalty in this globally competitive industry, is the efficient management of the automotive supply chain.

3.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The automotive industry in South Africa has been recognised as one of the most globalised industries which plays an integral role in the sustainability and growth of the South African economy. The importance of this industry within the South African economy has been highlighted and it is evident that automotive manufacturing contributes a substantial portion to the GDP of South Africa.

South Africa's automotive industry is concentrated in three clusters in Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape. Seven OEMs have been identified, that are positioned within the automotive clusters.

Although a decline has been observed in new vehicle sales within the domestic market, and certain challenges prohibit the OEMs from operating at optimal levels, the continued existence and growth possibilities of this sector hold endless opportunities for innovation in the future.

The research methodology chapter follows with an in-depth discussion of the research methods and research design employed in this study.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous three chapters offered the theoretical foundation upon which the primary research of this study is based. The literature review section of this study served as the backdrop to develop the research objectives and to determine the type of data that was needed for the empirical part of this study. This chapter focuses on the research methods that were used to investigate and obtain primary information on the user-generated content of the seven OEM brands in South Africa on Hellopeter.com.

This chapter provides a description of the methodology used and the empirical research done for this study. The main focus of this chapter is on the design of the research methodology. An in-depth discussion of the research process and research design that was utilised in the study is also provided.

To serve as a guideline for conducting the research and what issues should be addressed and tested in this study, the primary and secondary objectives are stated again as presented in Chapter 1. The primary objective of this study is to explore the nature of user-generated content, as found on Hellopeter.com, in terms of consumer complaining and complimenting behaviour related to the seven OEM brands in South Africa.

To achieve the primary objective, the following secondary objectives guided this study:

- To investigate the frequency of user-generated-content posted on Hellopeter.com related to the seven OEM brands in South Africa.
- To determine the compliment-to-complaint ratio on Hellopeter.com related to the seven OEM brands in South Africa.
- To report on the descriptive nature of the complaint themes on Hellopeter.com related to the seven OEM brands in South Africa.
- To report on the descriptive nature of the compliment themes on Hellopeter.com related to the seven OEM brands in South Africa.
- To determine the most prominent reasons why consumers of the seven OEM brands in South Africa complain on Hellopeter.com.

- To determine the main reasons why consumers of the seven OEM brands in South Africa, leave a compliment on Hellopeter.com.

4.2 MARKETING RESEARCH DEFINED

Organisations constantly face challenges as a result of changes in their business environment, and it is imperative for these organisations to have a better understanding of their consumers, employees and stakeholders. To gain such an understanding, and to be able to adapt to the changes in the business environment, marketing research can be conducted.

Marketing research can be defined as the systematic and objective collection, analysis and reporting of information, with the purpose of solving specific problems, or taking advantage of opportunities (Tustin, Ligthelm, Martins & Van Wyk, 2005; Pride & Ferrell, 2012; Zikmund *et al.*, 2013; Kumar, 2014). Marketing research has been described as a beneficial aid to assist with organisational decision-making by linking the consumer to the organisation by means of information. According to Pride and Ferrel (2012), the information collected from marketing research could increase an organisation's ability to address consumer needs, and in turn improve organisational performance.

In order to conduct marketing research, one should follow a specific research process to be able to solve the specific problems mentioned above. The subsequent section deals with a detailed description of the research process followed in this study.

4.3 THE RESEARCH PROCESS

The research process is defined as a systematic, planned approach for the development and interpretation of research studies (Tustin *et al.*, 2005; Cooper & Schindler, 2014). Although the research process is seen as a systematic, sequential process, Cooper and Schindler (2014) highlight the fact that the research process does not require the completion of each step before moving on to the next. It is often also the case that recycling, circumventing and skipping occurs, and some steps may be carried out simultaneously, out of sequence, or be completely omitted from the process. The sequential research process is, however, a useful tool for developing a study and keeping it as orderly as possible while the research unfolds (Cooper & Schindler, 2014).

The research process followed during this study is illustrated in Figure 4.1 below. The research process starts where the researcher identifies the basic research problem or management dilemma. The research problem is then scrutinised to develop specific research questions and/or objectives that are essential to solving the research problem or management dilemma (Cooper & Schindler, 2014).

The researcher thereafter gathers secondary data from literature in order to familiarise him or herself with the problem at hand. The data-collection process commences after this step. The above steps were followed in the first four chapters of this dissertation.

The process then continues with the processing and analysis of the data, all of which are discussed in Chapter 5 of this dissertation. The final stage of the research process is the research reporting stage, where the results and conclusions are written up. This reporting stage can be found in Chapter 6 of this dissertation. From there, recommendations are made as well.

The section to follow will describe, in greater detail, the research design applicable to this study, starting with Figure 4.1 detailing the research process and the associated chapters in this dissertation.

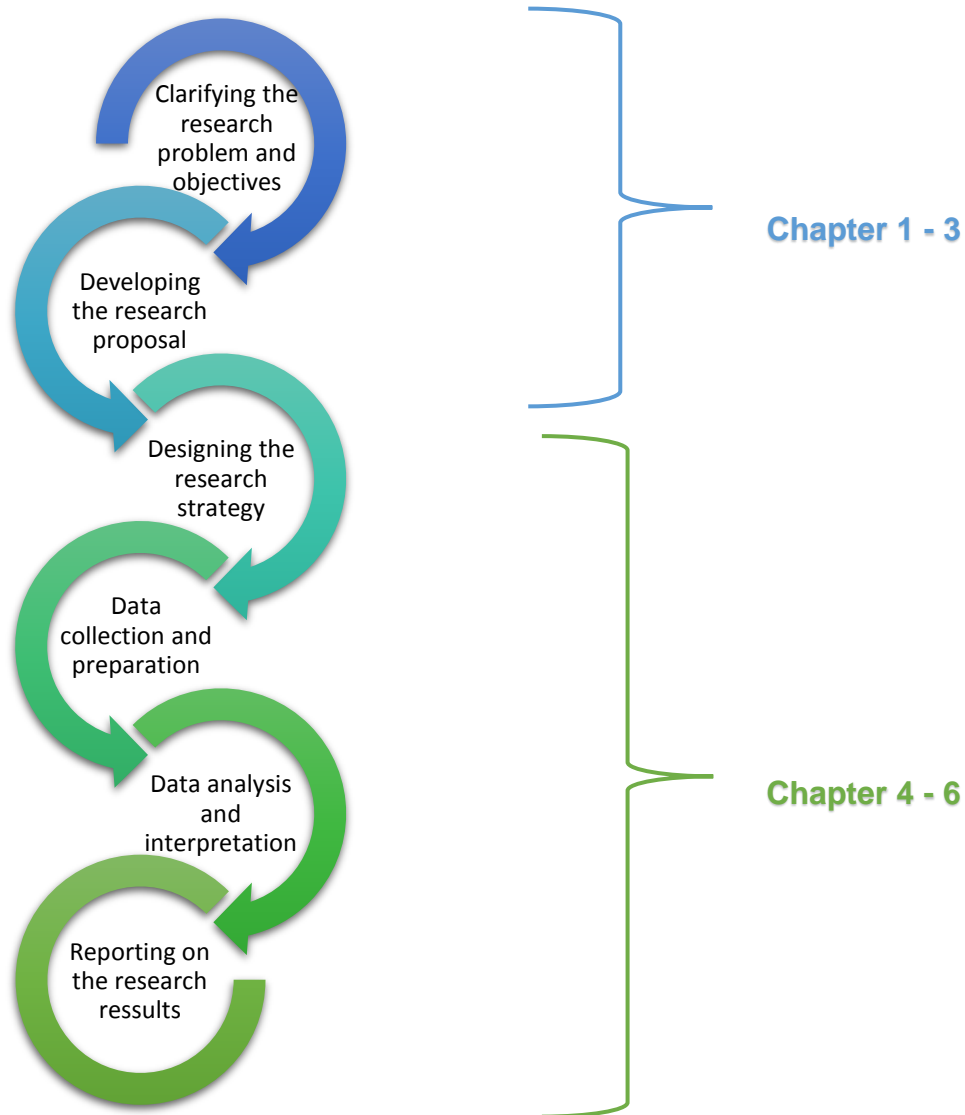


Figure 4.1: The research process

Source: Researcher’s own compilation based on: Cooper & Schindler (2014:14).

4.4 THE RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design serves as the master plan or blueprint of the investigation in order to fulfil the research objectives and/or answer the research question/s (Aaker, Kumar Leone & Day, 2011; Saunders *et al.* 2012; Cooper & Schindler, 2014). The research design is further described by Zikmund *et al.* (2013) as specifying the methods and procedures that will be used for collecting and analysing the data. It can, therefore, be said that the research design is the appropriate strategy that should be followed to ensure that the correct primary data is collected to solve the research problem and answer the research question/s and objectives.

Cooper and Schindler (2014:125) further highlight the most essential components of the research design as:

- An activity and time-based plan.
- A plan that is always based on the research question.
- A guide for selecting the sources and types of information.
- A framework for specifying the relationships among the variables of the study.
- A procedural outline for each of the research activities.

The research design can therefore be considered as one of the most important stages in the research project, as the researcher will determine what data must be collected, in order to make valuable recommendations and contributions regarding the management dilemma (Cooper & Schindler, 2014).

There are various descriptors that are used to describe the design of the research. The section below provides the outline of the descriptors employed during the research design process of the current study.

4.5 DESCRIPTORS OF THE OVERALL RESEARCH DESIGN OF THE STUDY

All the descriptors used in the research design process of the current study are discussed in detail in the sections that follow.

4.5.1 Type of study

The first step of the research design is to determine the type of study that will be conducted by distinguishing between empirical and non-empirical research. Snyman (2014) highlights the major difference between empirical and non-empirical research as the collection of new data versus the utilisation of existing data. Dan (2017) however, indicates that empirical research involves the collection of new data, as well as the re-analyses of existing data. For their part, Cooper and Schindler (2014), indicate that a researcher will attempt to describe, explain, and make predictions at the hand of information that has been gained through observation. Quinlan, Babin, Carr, Griffin and Zikmund (2015) argue that empirical testing indicates that something has been examined against reality, using new data.

Empirical and non-empirical research can be classified, as indicated in Figure 4.2 below.

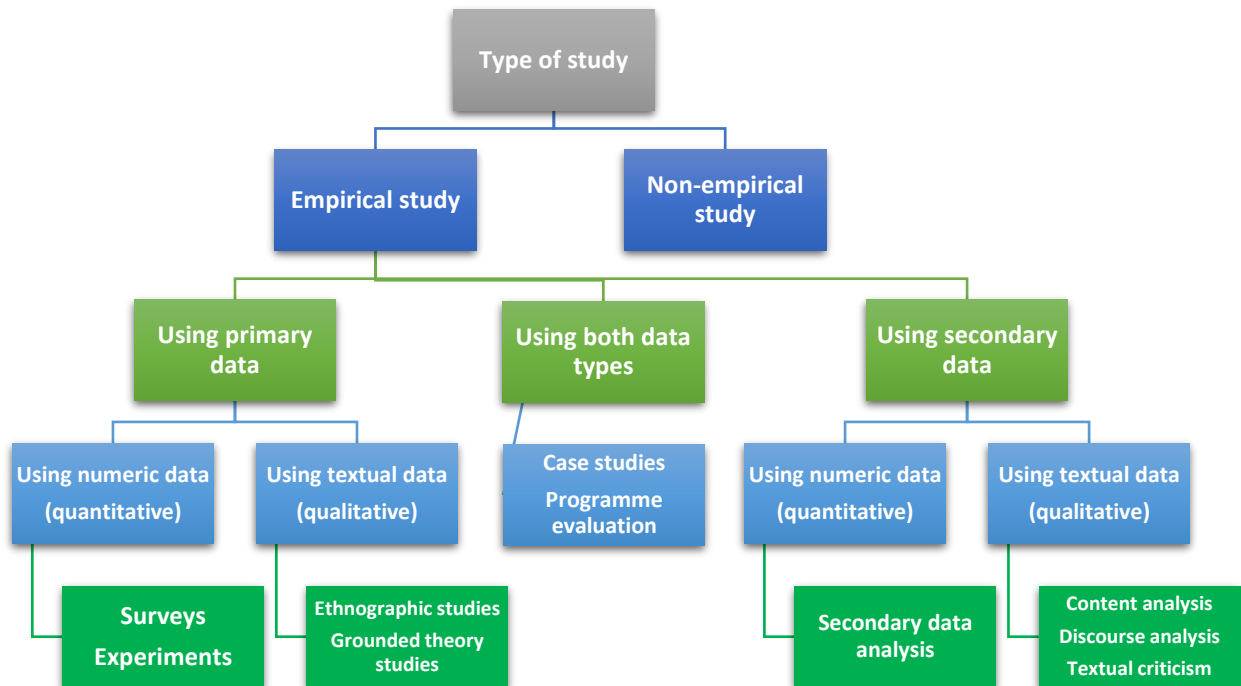


Figure 4.2: Classification of the research design

Source: Adapted from Babbie & Mouton (2001); Snyman (2014); and Dan (2017).

From the classification provided in Figure 4.2 above, it is evident that empirical research can further be classified as primary and secondary data. Primary data is known as data that is collected by the researcher specifically for the purpose of the study. Secondary data refers to data which has been collected by someone other than the researcher, for a different purpose than the current study, but which may be relevant to the problem at hand (Saunders *et al.*, 2012; Bryman & Bell, 2014; Cooper & Schindler, 2014). From Figure 4.2 above, primary and secondary data can further be classified into numeric and textual data, which each have their own specific data-collection methods. Braun and Clarke (2013) highlight the importance that the researcher has no influence in the production of secondary data. Secondary sources have also been described as valuable as consumer experiences and perspectives can be observed without shaping their responses (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

It can therefore be concluded that empirical research was used for this study, as secondary textual data was collected from Hellopeter.com by means of content

analysis. The collected data and analysis thereof are described in further detail in Chapter 5.

4.5.2 The research reasoning approach

Researchers are involved in reasoning on a daily basis, with varying degrees of success, in attempts to communicate meaning. Meaning can be conveyed using expositions or arguments. Expositions are known as statements that aim to describe, instead of explain, whereas, arguments allow people to explain, defend, interpret, challenge and explore meaning (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). Traditionally two types of arguments have been identified to define the research reasoning approach, namely, deduction and induction (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). Saunders *et al.* (2012), however, added a third approach known as abduction. These approaches will now be discussed.

- ***Deduction***

Deduction is known as the development of hypotheses or research questions by collecting data, and subjecting data to a number of tests through a series of propositions (Saunders *et al.*, 2012; Cooper & Schindler, 2014). Deductive reasoning is known to move from the general to the specific (Babbie, 2016). Deduction has also been described as a process of testing established theories through the formulation of hypotheses, rather than developing a new theory (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Deductive reasoning approaches to research are usually associated with quantitative research (Saunders *et al.*, 2012).

- ***Induction***

Induction on the contrary is defined as “the logical process of establishing a general proposition on the basis of observation of particular facts” (Zikmund *et al.*, 2013:44). When following an inductive approach, conclusions are drawn from one or more particular facts or pieces of evidence (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). Babbie (2016) defines induction as moving from the particular to the general from a set of specific observations, in order to discover a pattern that could represent some degree of order among all the evidence. Halland and Britz (2008) conclude that the inductive reasoning approach is a form of inconclusive reasoning that is used to make generalisations based on observations. When following the inductive approach to research, conclusions are drawn from particular facts or evidence.

These conclusions are then used to provide a credible explanation of the observations made (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). Inductive reasoning approaches are typically associated with qualitative research (Saunders *et al.*, 2012; Bryman & Bell, 2014).

- **Abduction**

The third approach is that of abduction. This research reasoning approach is in effect a combination of the inductive and deductive approach. When following the abduction approach, observations are made based on surprising facts, and a plausible theory is then developed to determine how it could have occurred (Saunders *et al.*, 2012; Bryman & Bell, 2014).

Table 4.1 below provides a summary of the three different reasoning approaches.

Table 4.1: Research reasoning approaches

	Deduction	Induction	Abduction
Logic	When the premises are true, the conclusion must also be true.	Known premises are used to generate untested conclusions.	Known premises are used to generate testable conclusions.
Generalisability	Generalising from the general to the specific.	Generalising from the specific to the general.	Generalising from the interactions between the specific and the general.
Use of data	Data collection is used to evaluate propositions or hypotheses related to an existing theory.	Data collection is used to explore a phenomenon, identify themes and patterns and create a conceptual framework.	Data collection is used to explore a phenomenon, identify themes and patterns, locate these in a conceptual framework and test this through subsequent data collection.
Theory	Theory falsification or verification.	Theory generation or building.	Theory generation or modification; incorporating existing theory where appropriate, to build a new theory or modify existing theories.

Source: Adapted from Saunders *et al.* (2012:144).

Based on the information given above, it is thus obvious that this study followed the inductive research reasoning approach. Secondary data was collected from Hellopeter.com. Broad themes and categories were identified, and conclusions were drawn based on the textual data. The conclusions provide a clear explanation of the observations that were made, and patterns and themes were discovered that represent some degree of order among all the evidence. A deductive approach was not followed, as the premises were not known, given that pioneer research was conducted.

4.5.3 The method of data collection

The method of data collection can be done in two ways, namely, communication or monitoring. Communication as a data-collection method is described as questioning subjects and collecting their responses by personal or impersonal means. Monitoring, however, is referred to as the collection of data through observations (Cooper & Schindler, 2014).

For the purpose of this study, secondary data gathered from Hellopeter.com, was collected by means of content analysis. This implies that data was observed, and subjects were not questioned to receive responses. As a result, the monitoring method of data collection is applicable for this study. More detail and information on the data-collection method employed in this study, will be discussed in Section 4.7 of this chapter.

4.5.4 The ability of the researcher to manipulate the variables in the study

One can differentiate between experimental designs and ex post facto designs, in terms of a researchers' ability to manipulate the variables of a study. In an experimental design, the researcher attempts to manipulate or control the variables of the study and attempts to determine if one variable has an influence on the other (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). An ex post facto design, however, indicates that the researcher has no control over the variables and will not be able to manipulate the variables of the study. The researcher was therefore only in the position to report on the findings of the study (Cooper & Schindler, 2014).

This study followed an ex post facto design, as the researcher was not able to manipulate the variables of the study, but merely reported on the findings. It was not needed to determine if one variable had an influence on another.

4.5.5 The purpose of the study

The purpose of a study can be classified as either exploratory, descriptive or causal in nature, as briefly discussed below.

4.5.5.1 Exploratory studies

An exploratory study is defined as research that is conducted to clarify ambiguous situations, or to discover new ideas that may serve as potential business opportunities (Zikmund *et al.*, 2013). Saunders *et al.* (2012) describe exploratory research as a valuable means to gain insight about a topic by making use of open-ended questions. The various ways that are used to conduct exploratory research include: interviewing experts in the field, conducting in-depth interviews, conducting focus groups, the discovery and analysis of secondary sources, document analysis, and content analysis (Saunders *et al.*, 2012; Zikmund *et al.*, 2013).

4.5.5.2 Descriptive studies

Descriptive research is used to gain an accurate picture of a particular phenomenon by identifying certain patterns and trends, and describing the characteristics of objects, people and organisations within that particular situation (Saunders *et al.*, 2012). Descriptive studies are employed in order to answer who, what, when, where, and how questions, without manipulating or changing the environment (Saunders *et al.*, 2012; Zikmund *et al.*, 2013; Cooper & Schindler, 2014). Descriptive studies can be done by means of interviews, surveys, observational studies and secondary data collection (Zikmund *et al.*, 2013; Mayring, 2014). Vaismoradi *et al.* (2016) also indicate that qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis can be classified as descriptive research studies, when textual data is analysed in order to generate themes.

4.5.5.3 Causal studies

Causal research, which is also referred to as explanatory research, seeks to identify cause-and-effect relationships between the different variables of the study (Saunders *et al.*, 2012; Zikmund *et al.*, 2013; Cooper & Schindler, 2014). Cooper and Schindler (2014) also highlight that causal studies attempt to explain the details and underlying

reasons of the phenomenon, which could only be observed when following a descriptive study.

After careful consideration of the above-mentioned definitions, this study needed to follow a combination of both an exploratory and a descriptive study. A causal study was not employed as a cause-and-effect relationship was not established. An exploratory study was followed due to the inductive reasoning approach, whereby new categories and themes were created out of the textual data. The study was also descriptive in nature, as the identification of patterns and trends, in the form of themes, were identified from the textual data, to describe the phenomenon.

4.5.6 The time dimension

The time dimension of a study can be either cross-sectional or longitudinal. Cross-sectional studies represent a snapshot of a situation at a particular point in time (Saunders *et al.*, 2012; Cooper & Schindler, 2014). Zikmund *et al.* (2013) add that various segments of a population are sampled, and that data is collected at a single point in time.

The purpose of a longitudinal study, however, is to examine the continuity of responses and to observe any changes that may occur over a longer period of time (Saunders *et al.*, 2012; Zikmund *et al.*, 2013). Data is therefore collected more than once to track changes over time.

This study was only carried out once, at a particular time. Secondary data was not observed more than once, as it was not necessary to track changes over time. Due to the time constraints of this study, the researcher, therefore, followed a cross-sectional study.

4.5.7 The research environment

According to Cooper and Schindler (2014), research can occur under actual environmental conditions (field conditions) or manipulated conditions (laboratory conditions). The research for this study was not conducted under manipulated conditions, as the variables could not be controlled. This study therefore occurred under actual environmental conditions.

The descriptors, explained in the preceding sections, for this study can therefore be summarised as in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2: Descriptors of the research design for this study

Category	Descriptor
Type of study	Empirical research making use of secondary data
The research reasoning approach	Inductive reasoning
The data-collection method	Monitoring
The ability of the researcher to manipulate the variables in the study	Ex post facto design
The purpose of the study	Exploratory and descriptive in nature
The time dimension	Cross-sectional
The research environment	Field conditions

Source: Researcher's own compilation.

Now that the descriptors for this specific study have been identified, it is imperative that the specific research approach that was followed, be explained in greater detail.

4.6 THE RESEARCH APPROACH

Creswell and Creswell (2018:8) define the research approach as the “plans and procedures for research that span the steps from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation”. Creswell and Creswell (2018) further state that the selection of a specific research approach is based on the nature of the research problem. Bryman and Bell (2014) indicate that the research process is simply the general orientation to the conduct of the research.

Researchers have three different research approaches to choose from, namely, quantitative research, qualitative research and mixed methods. Before a decision was made on the specific data-collection method for this study, all three these possibilities had to be considered. These three approaches are briefly explained in the sections below.

4.6.1 Quantitative research

Quantitative research is described as an approach that aims to test objective theories by examining the relationship between different variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Bryman and Bell (2014) describe quantitative research as an approach for collecting

numerical data to establish a relationship between variables. Quantitative research can therefore be summarised as a data-collection method that generates or makes use of numerical data, in order to test objective theories, which can be analysed through statistical means. Some of the methods that are used to collect quantitative data include surveys and experimental research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

4.6.2 Qualitative research

Qualitative research is described as an approach that is used to explore and understand the meaning of individuals or groups that is not subject to quantification (Saunders *et al.*, 2012; Bryman & Bell, 2014; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Qualitative research therefore involves the collection of data in the form of words, images and open-ended questions, with the aim of discovering meaning to achieve an in-depth understanding of a particular phenomenon (Zikmund *et al.*, 2013; Cooper & Schindler, 2014).

Snyman (2014) argues that there is a substantial increase and encouragement for the use of qualitative research, as it provides richer data than that of quantitative research.

The various methods used to collect qualitative data include in-depth interviewing, focus groups, observation, case studies, and content analysis, to name a few (Zikmund *et al.*, 2013; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

4.6.3 Mixed-method research

Mixed-method research involves the integration of both quantitative and qualitative research into one single project (Bryman & Bell, 2014). When following a mixed-method approach, more than one data-collection technique is used to answer the research problem at hand (Saunders *et al.*, 2012).

Table 4.3 below provides a summary of the main differences between the three approaches to research.

Table 4.3: Characteristics of the research approaches

	Quantitative research	Qualitative research	Multiple methods research
Data collection	Entails the collection of numerical data in order to test hypotheses or answer research questions.	Entails the collection of data that is based on meaning in the form of words, language and narratives.	Entails a combination of the collection of quantitative data and qualitative data.
Research design	Generally associated with exploratory research designs.	Associated with causal and descriptive research designs.	Associated with a combination of various research designs.
Research approach	Mostly associated with a deductive research approach.	Mostly associated with an inductive research approach.	Associated with both an inductive and deductive research approach.
Characteristics	Examines relationships between variables that can be measured numerically. Data collection results in numerical and standardised data.	Examines meaning and the relationship between participants' meanings. Data collection results in non-standardised data, that is classified into themes and categories.	Can be in the following forms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Multi-method - Mixed methods
Research strategies	Mostly associated with survey research strategies.	Associated with a variety of strategies including: case study research, grounded theory and content analysis.	Associated with a combination of strategies for quantitative and qualitative research.
Data analysis	Statistical and mathematical analysis using diagrams and statistics.	Analysis conducted by conceptualisation and human or computerised coding.	Includes a combination of both statistical analysis and coding and conceptualisation of the qualitative data.

Source: Researcher's own compilation based on: Saunders *et al.* (2012); Zikmund *et al.* (2012); Bryman & Bell (2014); Cooper & Schindler (2014); and Creswell & Creswell (2018).

Given the above information, this study draws on qualitative research methods for data collection. The most important reason being that there is no information, specifically within the automotive industry of South Africa, about the nature of user-generated content on HelloPeter.com.

Qualitative data-collection methods have proved to be more valuable in gaining a better understanding in terms of pioneer research, and have provided richer data to

enable the researcher to draw meaningful conclusions and answer the research objectives. For the purpose of the current study, no numerical or statistical analysis was possible, as data was collected in the form of text.

The qualitative data-collection method employed in this study was that of a content analysis. The specific qualitative data-collection plan is discussed in the next section.

4.7 DATA-COLLECTION PLAN

Vithal and Jansen (2019) propose that the researcher should prepare a data-collection plan that provides in-depth details about the strategy to be followed to obtain the data for the specific study. Table 1.1 in Chapter 1 provided a summary of the data-collection plan for this specific study, which is discussed in more detail in the sections below.

4.7.1 Why was the data collected?

Data is collected in order to answer the research question/s and/or objectives, and to solve the research problem identified in the beginning of the research process. The data for this specific study was collected to answer the primary research question identified in Chapter 1: What is the nature of consumer complaints and compliments within the automotive industry of South Africa?

4.7.2 What was the research strategy?

As previously indicated in the list of descriptors of this study (Table 4.2), the data-collection method used in this study is monitoring, by making use of content analysis.

Krippendorff (2019:24) defines content analysis as “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts to the contexts of their use”. According to Schreier (2012), qualitative content analysis is a research method used to describe the meaning of texts in a systematic way. Zikmund *et al.* (2013) describe content analysis as a qualitative method of obtaining data by observing and analysing the contents of messages, articles, letters, advertisements and other text rich sources. Babbie (2016:323) defines content analysis as “the study of recorded human communications”. Content analysis has been described as a research method used to collect descriptive data on content variables, which allows the researcher to gain more precise and reliable observations about the given content (Krippendorff, 2019).

According to Snyman (2014), content analysis is more qualitative in nature because no statistical analysis is possible. This is strengthened by the work of Bengtsson (2016), which indicates that statistical analysis cannot be employed to develop meaning from the qualitative data. The focus of a content analysis is therefore to understand the meaning of human communication and to categorise the content into significant themes (Bryman & Bell, 2014).

The interpretation and analysis of text and documents, with the use of a qualitative content analysis, can be conducted in one of three ways: conventional content analysis, directed content analysis, and summative content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Bryman & Bell, 2014). Table 4.4 below describes each of the different content analysis approaches.

Table 4.4: Approaches to qualitative content analysis

Qualitative Content Analysis Approach	Description
Conventional content analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coding categories are derived directly from the text data. • Texts are read repeatedly to gain sense of the data set as a whole. • Words are highlighted to capture key concepts. • Codes are developed based on the key concepts identified in the texts. • Codes are grouped into categories which are then further classified into subcategories. • New insights emerge from the data when following this approach
Directed content analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A deductive process used to validate or extend an existing theory. • Follows a structured analytical process by using an existing theory to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify key concepts as initial coding categories - Predict the relationship between variables - Guide operational definitions used. - Results of this approach offer supportive and non-supportive evidence of an existing theory.
Summative content analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focuses on interpreting and analysing hidden content from the data in order to explore the usage of words and ranges of meaning. • Method used to report on the frequency of codes and categories to determine the importance of the codes.

Source: Researcher's own compilation based on: Hsieh & Shannon (2005) and Bryman & Bell (2014).

From the information given in Table 4.4 above, it could be noted that a combination of the conventional and summative approach to content analysis was followed during this

study. The conventional approach was followed as pioneer work was done, the analysis was not based on an existing theory, and little is currently known about the phenomenon. The summative approach was also followed, as the researcher explored the usage of words during the reading and re-reading of the data, as well as to determine the frequency of codes and categories in the data. It should, however, be noted that that the researcher did not attempt to determine the underlying meanings of the content.

Using content analysis as a qualitative research method, also poses certain advantages and disadvantages to the researcher. Table 4.5 below indicates the major advantages and disadvantages of making use of content analysis as a data-collection method.

Table 4.5: Advantages and disadvantages of content analysis

Advantages	Disadvantages
Considered a transparent research method and an objective method of data analysis.	The analysis is only as good as the documents/information source the researcher works from.
It can allow a certain amount of longitudinal analysis with relative ease.	Almost impossible to devise coding manuals that do not draw upon the researcher's own knowledge.
Favourably described as an unobtrusive method, as the participants are not aware of the fact that they are being studied and this does not affect their response or behaviour.	Particular problems, such as invalid inferences, might occur during the analysis.
Highly flexible method that can be applied to a wide variety of information sources.	Although it succeeds in answering 'What?' questions, it may not necessarily be able to answer the 'Why?'
Can be used to interpret texts for the purpose of developing expert systems.	Problems with regards to fragmentation of data, as well as losing vital chunks of information and losing the context.
Looks openly at texts or transcripts, gathering all the essential aspects of social interaction.	May be considered a-theoretical, as the emphasis may be placed on what is measurable, rather than what is significant, and often tends to consist of word counts.

Source: Researcher's own compilation based on: Bryman & Bell (2014:305) and Snyman (2014; 99).

Before discussing the specific data collection and analysis thereof, in terms of the present study, the researcher deemed it important to look at how similar studies have been conducted in the past.

Table 4.6 on the next page lists some of the most applicable studies that made use of content analysis as a research strategy. From the information provided below, it is evident that content analysis has been widely used as a method to collect and analyse various types of user-generated content, across various different industries and research fields. It is for this reason that the researcher chose this as a fitting method for the specific study.

Table 4.6: Previous studies using content analysis as a research strategy

Title of the study	Authors	Published	Brief description	Purpose
Negative Word of Mouth in the Hotel Industry: A Content Analysis of Online Reviews on Luxury Hotels in Jordan	Dinçer, M.Z. & Alrawadeih, Z.	2017	A content analysis was conducted on 424 negative reviews posted on TripAdvisor for luxury hotels in Jordan.	The main purpose of this study was to identify the nature of online complaints (e-complaints) that are directed at the luxury hotels in Jordan.
Handling complaints on social network sites – An analysis of complaints and complaint responses on Facebook and Twitter pages of large US companies	Einwiller, S.A. & Steilen, S.	2015	A content analysis was applied to scrutinise 15 045 complaints and responses on the Facebook and Twitter accounts of large US companies.	The purpose of this study was to examine the complaining behaviour and complaint management of large US companies on social media.
An analysis of user-generated content for hotel experiences	Barreda, A. & Bilgihan, A.	2013	Content analysis techniques were applied to analyse 17 3575 travel reviews (both positive and negative travel experiences) from TripAdvisor.	The purpose of this study was to determine how people communicate in the cyberspace in relation to the positive and negative travel experiences they had when staying in a particular hotel.
Driver anger on the information superhighway: A content analysis of online complaints of offensive driver behaviour	Wickens, C.M., Wiesenthal, D.L., Hall, A. & Roseborough, J.E.W.	2012	Content analysis of 5 624 complaints posted to RoadRagers.com between 1999 and 2007.	The purpose of the study was to assess the research value of the data source, demonstrate the value of content analysis, validate an existing coding scheme, and determine whether the data source would replicate previous research.
Electronic Meal Experience: A Content Analysis of Online Restaurant Comments	Pantelidis, I.S.	2010	2 471 customer comments regarding 300 London	The main purpose of this study was to identify the most

Title of the study	Authors	Published	Brief description	Purpose
			restaurants were analysed with the use of content analysis.	significant factors of guests' evaluations of a restaurant.
Online service quality dimensions and their relationships with satisfaction: A content analysis of customer reviews of securities brokerage services	Yang, Z. & Fang, X.	2004	740 Customer reviews were content analysed and 52 items across 16 major service quality dimensions were uncovered.	This research aimed to increase the understanding of service quality and customer satisfaction within the setting of online securities brokerage services.
A content analysis of complaints and compliments, Managing Service Quality	Firman, M. & Edvardsson, B.	2003	236 Complaints and 69 compliments were collected by a public transport company. The complaint and compliments were analysed by means of the critical incident technique.	The purpose of this study was to empirically examine whether some service quality attributes primarily cause customer dissatisfaction, while other attributes primarily cause customer satisfaction.
A content analysis of outcomes and responsibilities for consumer complaints to third-party organizations	McAlister, D.B. & Erffmeyer, R.C.	2003	Using a content analysis of complaints made against insurance salespeople and companies, to explore the factors that lead to third-party complaints, including an analysis of the specific practices and roles involved in sales and marketing strategy and implementation.	This study aimed to investigate outcomes and responsibilities for consumer complaints made to a governmental third-party organisation.
E-complaining: a content analysis of an Internet complaint forum	Harrison-Walker, L.J.	2001	Data was collected from one complaint forum and analysed by means of content analysis in order to identify the nature of the complaints.	The primary purpose of this study was to empirically investigate the content posted to an Internet complaint forum.

Source: Researcher's own compilation.

Given the definition, advantages and disadvantages, and the indication from previous research that it is an appropriate method for analysing user-generated content, content analysis was considered a fitting and appropriate data-collection method for this study. It should, however, be noted that the analysis of the data will be discussed in detail in Section 4.8 of this chapter.

4.7.3 Where was the data collected?

This step forms an integral part of what is described as the selection of the communication content, or sampling media, for content analysis (Bryman & Bell, 2014).

Sampling is described as the process of selecting observations for a study in order to draw conclusions, based on the measurements of only a portion of the total population (Zikmund *et al.*, 2013; Babbie, 2016). The target population of a study is known as the combination of elements from which a sample will be selected (Babbie, 2016). Due to the qualitative nature of this study, the traditional target population and sample cannot be defined. Bryman and Bell (2014) indicate that the selection of a sample for a qualitative content analysis requires that the researcher should decide what media to sample, and over what period the sample will be drawn.

An important component of the content analysis process is to locate the relevant communication content (also known as the sampling media) to answer the research question/s and/or objectives (Mayring, 2014). For this specific study, the chosen communication media for the collection of data was Hellopeter.com. Hellopeter.com is an online consumer advocacy and business reputation management platform, which aims to help increase service levels of their suppliers by welcoming criticism, as well as compliments (Hellopeter.com, 2018a).

Hellopeter.com is considered to be the most popular online consumer advocacy platform in South Africa (Hellopeter.com, 2018a). This site allows customers to post content about their positive and negative service experiences, and which are available for the broad public to read. When consumers post their content, they also indicate the star rating of their service experience. The star rating is based on a 5-point scale, where 1 indicates terrible service and 5 great service. Consumers can all read the content and need not pay any fee to read the reports or search for a specific industry/company report (Hellopeter.com, 2018a). Although companies in the past had

to pay an annual subscription fee to respond to the content on Hellopeter.com, companies can now choose to utilise the free package available on Hellopeter.com, to respond to consumer reports (Hellopeter.com, 2018).

Given the above as background, Hellopeter.com was chosen as the sampling media for the following reasons:

- It is an extremely popular site, with over 22 000-page views per day, and is listed as one of the top 100 000 most popular websites in the world (Siteworthtraffic.com, 2020).
- It has a long history of user-generated-content activity, being active for the last 19 years, preceding other complaint-specific sites that have only been active for 8 to 10 years (Maunder, 2013).
- The data is well organised and presented according to broad industries such as: banking, education, legal, motor, computer, medical aid, travel, and many other (Hellopeter.com, 2019).
- Published content remains on the website for a period of at least 12 months (Hellopeter.com, 2019).
- 48 225 user-generated content items were posted on Hellopeter.com in 2019, related to the automotive industry in South Africa (Hellopeter.com, 2019).
- The data is easily accessible and available to the broad public.
- Hellopeter.com provides consumers with the option to add a star rating based on their service experience.
- Hellopeter.com provides companies and consumers with a Trustindex rating, as a way for consumers to determine the credibility of the organisation.

Hellopeter.com was therefore considered a fitting website to use as the sampling media for the content analysis of this study.

4.7.4 What was the source/s of data?

From the information provided earlier in Figure 4.2, this study is categorised as empirical research, by making use of secondary textual data, which is in turn analysed by making use of content analysis. Bryman and Bell (2014) argue that secondary sources are considered a suitable alternative to primary sources, as the data is easily

accessible and readily available. Braun and Clarke (2013) describe this as the analysis of pre-existing textual data.

This study made use of secondary sources in the form of user-generated content on Hellopeter.com. The user-generated content is classified as complaints and compliments on Hellopeter.com. The sources of data can further be demarcated to complaints and compliments specifically directed at the seven OEM brands of South Africa on Hellopeter.com. These complaints and compliments are in the form of text, which strengthens the use of the qualitative content analysis strategy of this study.

4.7.5 How was the data collected?

The data-collection method employed in this study is that of a content analysis, as described in Section 4.7.2 above. In order to gather the primary sources of data, the researcher searched for each OEM brand by name within the search function of Hellopeter.com (for example, Toyota South Africa, Volkswagen South Africa and Nissan South Africa). The researcher did not search for individual dealerships, as the purpose of the study was to report on the seven OEM brands as a whole, and not contents related to individual dealerships. Once each OEM brand's reports were populated on Hellopeter.com, the researcher located all the complaints and compliments for the specific time period, indicated in Section 4.7.6 below. Each individual complaint and compliment directed at the specific OEM brand was captured on a separate word document, and saved for later analysis (this step will be elaborated on in Section 4.8.1).

4.7.6 How often was data collected?

In order to reduce the amount of content to be analysed for such a big sampling media, a time-frame for the data collection had to be selected (Bryman & Bell, 2014). The amount of content and time associated with collecting the content for qualitative research, is usually difficult to define.

With qualitative research, it is the norm that one stops collecting data at a point where saturation occurs. Saturation has been described as the point where no new information emerges from the data, further coding is not feasible, and enough information has been gathered in order to replicate a study (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

For this specific study, it was impossible to reach a point of saturation, as the data is constantly changing, and user-generated content is updated on a daily basis. Due to the ever-changing data, it is impossible to analyse all user-generated content on a continuous basis, as the data collection and analysis will never reach an end. This is strengthened by the amount of single codes that were identified from the data in this study, indicating that new data will emerge, no matter what time period or amount of user-generated content that is analysed. However, there was still a significant indication that the nature of the user-generated content could be classified according to broad themes and categories.

The researcher, therefore, decided to select a time-frame that was convenient to collect the data. The time-frame that was selected to analyse the user-generated content related to the seven OEM brands was two months (September and October 2017). This period of two months allowed for the collection of conclusive data on the different types of complaints and compliments related to the seven OEM brands in South Africa.

This step of the data-collection plan ties in with the time dimension of the study, as discussed in Section 4.5.6 earlier in this chapter, where the time dimension can either be longitudinal or cross-sectional. For this specific study, the time dimension utilised was a cross-sectional study, as data was only collected once for a period of two months.

4.7.7 How many of the data sources were accessed?

During the period of two months, a total number of 185 user-generated content was analysed. The user-generated content can further be delineated to 176 complaints and nine compliments related to the OEM brands in South Africa.

The next section elaborates on the data analysis procedure. It should, however, be highlighted that qualitative research is an iterative process, constantly moving between the collection of data and the analysis thereof. For this reason, some of the steps may overlap those already discussed in this section.

4.8 DATA ANALYSIS

The purpose of qualitative data analysis is to make sense of rich text by building patterns, themes and categories from within the data, into more abstract units of information to draw certain conclusions (Snyman, 2014; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Babbie (2016) describes qualitative data analysis as the non-numerical examination and interpretation of observations, content analysis and in-depth interviews, with the purpose to discover underlying meanings, themes, categories or patterns of relationships. Qualitative content analysis therefore involves the close reading of a relatively small amount of textual matters, and the interpretation of those given texts into specific categories and themes (Krippendorf, 2019).

Creswell and Creswell (2018) highlight that the analysis of qualitative data works simultaneously with the data-collection procedure, and writing of the findings. Fusch and Ness (2015) conclude that rich and thick data that is gathered through the correct data-collection methods and analysed with a suitable research strategy, is more likely to answer the research questions and objectives.

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), the qualitative data analysis process follows a series of steps, as indicated in Figure 4.3 below. The subsequent sections elaborate on the process followed for the analysis of the data for this study. It should, however, be noted that the results from the data analysis are provided and discussed in Chapter 5 of this dissertation.

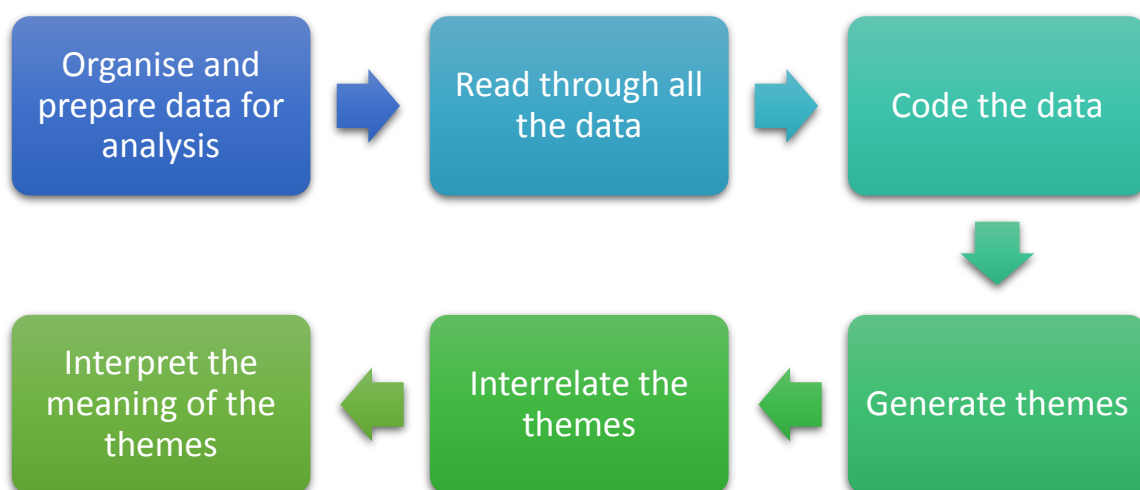


Figure 4.3: Qualitative data analysis process

Source: Adapted from Creswell & Creswell (2018:374).

4.8.1 Step 1: Organise and prepare the data for analysis

This step involves finding the data and preparing the data in such a way that the analysis thereof is possible (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). During this step, the researcher located all the complaints and compliments addressed to the specific OEM brand in South Africa on Hellopeter.com. Each OEM brand was searched for by name within the search function of Hellopeter.com (for example, Ford South Africa, Mercedes-Benz South Africa and BMW South Africa). The researcher began monitoring and collecting the data for each OEM brand from September 2017 to October 2017. A total number of 185 items of user-generated content was gathered during this time.

Initially, data was collected and recorded in Microsoft Word. Each complaint and compliment was saved as a separate Microsoft Word document, and a unique identifier was given to each document, for example, BMW 1, Ford 18, Nissan 6, and so forth. In order to organise the data in such a way that the analysis thereof was easier, the researcher created seven different data sets labelled as: Volkswagen SA, Ford SA, Toyota SA, Nissan SA, BMW SA, Mercedes-Benz SA and General Motors SA. Each data set therefore contained the Microsoft Word documents with all the complaints and compliments recorded for the specific OEM brand, for the period of September and October 2017.

Once all the data was recorded on separate documents, and saved under the specific data set, the researcher had to ensure that no names or dealership information could be identified in the content. All references made to specific dealerships and/or people were blocked out for the purpose of anonymity (which is also discussed in Section 4.10 of this chapter).

After collecting, organising, sorting and blocking out names, the researcher had to upload each data set to Atlas.Ti to facilitate the analysis process. Atlas.Ti is an integrated statistical programme that supports the analysis of written texts, audio, video and graphic data. This program helps to manage, explore, compare and extract meaningful segments of large amounts of data in a systematic, yet flexible way (Atlasti.com, 2020). Each data set was uploaded using the following labels: Volkswagen SA, Ford SA, Toyota SA, Nissan SA, BMW SA, Mercedes-Benz SA and General Motors SA.

Once all the data sets were created, and documents uploaded to each data set on Atlas.Ti, the data was now in a suitable format to be able to do the analysis.

4.8.2 Step 2: Read through all the data

The second step of the process involves reading through all the data. Maguire and Delahunt (2017) suggest that the researcher should become familiar with all the data, before commencing with the analysis. During this step, a general sense of the information contained in the data is gained, to get an overall picture of the data. Researchers tend to write general rough notes and thoughts about the data during this step, which could assist with the coding of the data later on (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

In order to gain a better idea of what was contained in the data, the researcher started by reading through each data set. During the reading of the data, the researcher made several significant observations, and a reflection journal was created to write down general notes and observations whilst reading through the data. These general notes and observations were made and kept up until the analysis, as several of the observations made, cannot be deduced by only looking at the complaints and compliments in isolation. These notes also served as a starting point for coding the data as discussed in the next step.

4.8.3 Step 3: Code the data

The third step in the analysis process entails the coding of the data collected. Coding is described as a method of organising data in a meaningful and systematic way, by reducing the bulk of the rich text into smaller, more meaningful units (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Neuendorf (2019) describes coding as a process whereby the content of certain textual, audio and visual messages is represented with the use of smaller, convenient symbols/codes. According to Saldaña (2016), a code is a construct created by the researcher, which represents the interpreted meaning of each individual data unit that can be used to generate themes, categories and patterns, for later analysis. Saldaña (2016) also argues that coding is an exploratory problem-solving technique, and the first step towards developing rigorous and evocative analysis for the interpretation and writing of the final research report.

Before discussing the coding process, it is imperative that the type of coding a researcher can follow, be discussed. As with the research reasoning approach, discussed earlier in Section 4.5.2, the coding of data can follow an inductive or deductive approach (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Vaismoradi, Turunen & Bondas, 2013; Bengtsson, 2016; Neuendorf, 2019).

- Deductive coding involves using existing studies and previous knowledge to test a theory, which means that the researcher can therefore use the codes generated by a previous study to apply to the current study (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).
- Inductive coding relates to generating codes directly from the text to establish some sense of unity, patterns or themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Codes are therefore generated as one goes along the coding process (Archer, 2015).

The coding process followed for the specific study, was an inductive approach. Although previous research has been done within the service industry on the nature of user-generated content, no such studies have been conducted specifically within the South African automotive industry. For this reason, the inductive research reasoning and coding process was followed.

The coding of the data can further be done following two specific approaches, known as the manifest and latent approaches. The manifest approach to coding focuses on describing exactly what was said in the data, and is directly observable from the data (Cash & Snider, 2014). Manifest coding keeps very close to the original words and texts from the data. For this reason, it has also been described as data-derived coding (Braun & Clarke, 2013). In contrast, the latent approach focuses on the interpretive level in which the underlying meaning of the texts are determined (Cash & Snider, 2014).

For the purpose of this study, a manifest approach to coding was followed, as the research did not aim to determine the underlying meaning of the complaints and compliments, but rather to report on the descriptive nature as closely as possible to the original content posted on Hellopeter.com.

Saldaña (2016) indicates that coding for qualitative data happens during a two-cycle coding process. First-cycle coding involves the initial coding of the data, whereas, second-cycle coding is used to refine the initial codes generated in the first cycle to

create patterns. There are various methods that can be used to conduct first-cycle and second-cycle coding, as explained below.

The following are the four major generic coding methods that can be employed during first-cycle coding (Saldaña, 2016):

- **Attribute coding** – described as the initial basic and descriptive note-taking of the data, not necessarily rooted within the deeper meaning of the data. This coding method is mostly used where the researcher is faced with multiple participants and a wide variety of data forms.
- **Structural coding** – also referred to as utilitarian coding, whereby initial codes are categorised to determine some structure or relationship between the various categories. This coding method is more suitable for interview transcripts and open-ended survey responses.
- **Descriptive coding** – this method summarises the data into a word or a phrase that provides the basic description or topic of the data. This coding method is mostly appropriate for researchers beginning with qualitative research and learning how to code. It is particularly useful for document analysis, journals and field notes.
- **In vivo coding** – also described as literal or inductive coding, where a code refers to an actual word or phrase that can be found in the data content. This coding method is mostly appropriate for researchers beginning with qualitative research and learning how to code, and allows them to keep as true to the original text as possible, and is closely related to the manifest approach described earlier.

The second-cycle coding methods used when coding the data are (Saldaña, 2016):

- **Eclectic coding** – this coding method is used to refine the codes generated during the first cycle coding.
- **Pattern coding** – as the name suggests, using the codes generated during the first cycle coding to create patterns, categories or themes.

Creswell and Creswell (2018:374) highlight that the codes developed from the data generally fall within three categories, namely:

- **Expected codes** – These codes are developed on what the researcher expected to find within the data, based on previous literature.

- **Surprising codes** -These codes are described as codes that could not have been anticipated by the researcher before the study took place.
- **Codes of unusual or of conceptual interest** – These codes may not be the usual code to be found within the data, but ultimately forms an important code of interest for the study.

Based on the information provided above, this study followed a combination of descriptive coding, in vivo coding, eclectic coding and pattern coding. Descriptive coding was used as the initial first-cycle data coding method.

During this process, each one of the 185 user-generated content items was coded by summarising the content into a phrase that presented the major topic of each data unit. For example, no answer of phones, consumer demanding action, rude staff, and no feedback, to name a few. As part of the first-cycle coding, in vivo coding was also employed. Based on the inductive and manifest approach to coding, certain words or phrases used within the data were used as specific codes. For example, bad experience, worst service, and exorbitant prices, to name a few.

Once the first-cycle coding methods were completed, the researcher was left with a list of more than 300 codes across the seven data sets. It was impossible to report on all these codes, and for this reason, the second-cycle coding had to commence in order to refine and reduce the codes. Eclectic coding was applied, to revisit the existing lists of codes to refine them and ensure that the initial coding process was done correctly. Pattern coding was also employed as a means to cluster the codes together to create meaningful units that can be represented within certain themes and categories.

After the second-cycle coding process, the list of codes was reduced to 110 codes. Various expected codes were identified, and a few surprising codes emerged from the data, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

It should, however, also be mentioned that coding can also be done manually or with the use of a computer program or computer-aided text analysis (Neuendorf, 2019). The researcher made use of a combination of manual and computer aided coding. Manual coding was applied when codes were generated from the text and interpreted by the researcher. Computer-aided coding was used in AtlasTi to search for various words and/or phrases within the data sets, as a means of triangulation, which is

discussed in Section 4.9.1 of this chapter. AtlasTi was also used as a means to classify the data according to broad themes and categories.

Coding, in short, was therefore done to summarise the content into smaller meaningful units to create themes that can be reported on at a later stage.

4.8.4 Step 4: Use the codes to start generating themes

During this phase of the process the researcher starts to generate initial themes or content categories. Archer (2015) describes codes as being very specific, and in order to create some meaning, codes are clustered together to form certain themes or categories. A category is formed when codes that are similar in nature, are merged together to get a broader sense of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Saldaña, 2016). Vaismoradi *et al.* (2016) argue that a category is descriptive and explicit in nature and the primary product of the process of data analysis. These categories assist in the final development of the themes and may also be described as sub-themes.

A theme is described as an outcome of the coding process where certain patterns or trends are identified from within the data, as a result of the data analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Saldaña, 2016). Snyman (2014:131) states that “a theme captures something significant about the data in relation to the research question and embodies some level of patterned responses or denotations within the data set”. According to Vaismoradi *et al.* (2016), the purpose of a theme is to capture the essence of the data within a central concept. Various scholars have suggested that a researcher should experiment with several different themes before a set of themes can be finalised for the study (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

The difference between codes, categories and themes is summarised in Table 4.7 below.

Table 4.7: Difference between codes, categories and themes

Codes	Categories	Themes
Reducing bulk text into meaningful units.	Similar codes that cannot be merged together as one code, are merged together as a category.	Grouping of codes and categories under one central concept.
Ascribing a code (unit) to a piece of text to describe the situation.	Explicit and descriptive in nature, keeping true to the nature of the data.	More general and abstract with more depth of meaning.

	Codes are similar but cannot be merged to one code.	
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Source: Researcher's own compilation based on: Braun & Clarke (2013); Saldaña, (2016) and Vaismoradi *et al.* (2016).

For the purpose of the present study, during this step, the researcher created a set of categories, based on the codes generated in the previous step. Categories were scrutinised to develop an initial set of themes. Themes were created by analysing the codes and categories to determine the overarching similarities amongst the various different codes and categories. Certain codes, however, were grouped to more than one theme at this stage, as they had a significant impact in more than one particular grouping.

Some of the themes identified during this stage included dealership related problems, no feedback, and damage to vehicles. These themes were, however, only the first draft, and they were refined during step 5.

4.8.5 Step 5: Interrelate the themes

Once themes are created they need to be reviewed, refined and finalised. This step involves the finalisation of the themes identified to provide some form of structure to how the research report will be delivered.

Snyman (2014) argues that the codes that are represented within a theme should all be closely related, although each theme should be clearly differentiated. Merriam and Tisdell (2015:212) suggest that a theme should meet the following criteria:

- Themes should be responsive to the purpose of the research – therefore answering the research questions and objectives.
- Themes should be exhaustive – indicating that there should be enough categories to encompass all the relevant data.
- Themes should be mutually exclusive – a relevant unit of data/code can only be placed in one theme.
- Themes should be sensitising – the naming of a theme should be sensitive to the nature of the data.
- Themes should be conceptually congruent – all themes should be on the same level of abstraction.

During this step the researcher had to ensure that the themes created, and codes grouped to the specific theme, were appropriate. For this reason, various codes were moved around to ensure that the theme and corresponding codes formed a cohesive unit, in order to meet the criteria suggested by Merriam & Tisdell (2015). Codes that appeared in more than one theme, were refined and scrutinised to only be applied to one central theme. Themes were also reworded to be more descriptive and specific, and the meaning thereof was clear. As a result, a final set of themes was created.

Once the themes were finalised, the researcher had to develop the structure for the research report that is provided in Chapter 5. These themes form the headings of the report.

4.8.6 Step 6: Interpret the meaning of the themes

During the final step of the analysis process, the researcher now faces the task of interpreting the meaning of the themes, writing the report, and reporting on the findings. The purpose of this specific step is to provide the reader with an in-depth, rich discussion of the meaning of the data. These will all be discussed in Chapter 5 of this dissertation.

It is, however, imperative that the researcher takes measures to ensure the reliability, validity and trustworthiness of the data. This will increase the strength of the methodology employed in the study, as discussed in the next section.

4.9 RELIABILITY, VALIDITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

When conducting qualitative research, it is important to assess the accuracy of the study which, in essence, is more difficult and elusive than that of quantitative research. The quality of quantitative research can easily be evaluated, as there are often clear guidelines for the evaluation for this type of research. However, only a few general guidelines are known to evaluate the quality of qualitative studies (Babbie, 2016).

Quantitative studies are usually concerned with validity and reliability, and there has been some discussion regarding the relevance of reliability and validity for qualitative research (Bryman & Bell, 2014). LeCompte and Goetz (1982), however, proposed that reliability and validity in qualitative research could be evaluated as outlined in Table 4.8 below.

Table 4.8: Reliability and validity in qualitative research

External reliability	Describes the degree to which a study can be replicated. Although difficult, it is suggested that researchers that replicate qualitative studies, should adopt a social role similar to that of the original researcher.
Internal reliability	Refers to the agreement or disagreement of the collection of data, when more than one observer is involved.
External validity	Describes the degree to which the findings of the study can be generalised across other social settings.
Internal validity	Argued as the strength of qualitative research, internal validity refers to the match between the researcher's observations and the theoretical ideas that are developed.

Source: Researcher's own compilation based on: Lecompte & Goetz (1982).

The main alternative criterion, however, used for evaluating qualitative research, is known as trustworthiness. Trustworthiness is made up of four criteria, all of which have an equivalent criterion used in quantitative research, as indicated in Table 4.9 below (Bryman & Bell, 2014:44). The criteria will be discussed in detail in the sections that follow.

Table 4.9: Trustworthiness criteria and equivalent quantitative criteria

	Equivalent quantitative criterion
Credibility	Internal validity
Transferability	External validity
Dependability	Reliability
Confirmability	Objectivity

Source: Researcher's own compilation based on: Bryman & Bell (2014:44).

4.9.1 Credibility

Credibility deals with the way in which researchers seek to ensure that their study measures or tests what was intended, as well as the confidence in the truth of the findings (Shenton, 2004). Credibility has also been described as the most important factor in establishing the trustworthiness of a qualitative study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The establishment of the credibility of the findings of a qualitative research study entails:

- ensuring that research is carried out according to good research practice;

- submitting research findings to the people involved in the study to confirm that the researcher understood their social world (Bryman & Bell, 2014).

There are various methods to increase the credibility of a qualitative research study, which include, triangulation, random sampling, peer scrutiny, persistent observation, reflective commentary, and examination of previous research findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004; Bryman & Bell, 2014).

Credibility of this study was increased by means of the following:

- Persistent observation was applied by identifying the characteristics and elements that are most relevant to the problem and focusing on them in detail.
- The researcher did a continuous examination of previous research findings in similar fields throughout the duration of the study.
- Peer scrutiny was applied to ensure that the data collected, code generation and findings are a true reflection of what the research aimed to achieve. This involved a peer viewing and reviewing the codes and themes generated, to ensure that the researcher understood the contents of the data, and that they are an accurate reflection of the data.
- Reflective commentary and reflection reports, in the form of researcher notes, were kept throughout the coding and analysis process.

Although multiple sources were not consulted, some form of triangulation was done when comparing word counts and frequencies to codes and themes generated from the data analysis.

4.9.2 Transferability

As the equivalent of external validity, the researcher attempts to demonstrate that the findings and conclusions of the study are applicable to other situations and populations. However, the findings of qualitative research are specific to a particular environment and usually, only a small number of individuals (Shenton, 2004). Qualitative research therefore involves contextual uniqueness and the findings should be treated differently to ensure transferability (Bryman & Bell, 2014).

Transferability of the findings can be increased by providing a thick, rich description of the methods followed to conduct the research (Shenton, 2004; Wagner, Kawulich &

Garner, 2012; Snyman, 2014; Bryman & Bell, 2014). By doing this, other researchers will be able to make judgements and conclusions based on the database, to determine if the study was reliable in relation to other cases.

Transferability of this study was increased by providing a thick rich description of the methods followed to conduct the research. Transferability was also increased by keeping a paper record of all the user-generated content that was analysed for the purposes of this study. Although this study was conducted in a specific industry, it could be argued that the findings could be applied to similar service industries, as the themes created are general in nature, and not industry-specific. This in turn, increases the transferability aspect of this study.

4.9.3 Dependability

The dependability criterion focuses on following an auditing process to establish the merits of the research, to show that the findings are consistent, and that the findings could be repeated (Bryman & Bell, 2014). Snyman (2014) suggests that the dependability of a study can be increased by discussing, in detail, the methodology applied, data gathering process, data analysis and interpretation thereof. By discussing the above-mentioned processes in detail, future researchers will be able to replicate the work, or even obtain the same results (Shenton, 2004). It is suggested that the auditing process be done through the use of peer examinations or code-recode procedures (Bryman & Bell, 2014; Snyman. 2014).

The dependability of the present research study was increased by using the above-mentioned methods, and ensuring that an appropriate audit process was followed by providing in-depth discussions on the descriptions of the case. The researcher also ensured that the coding and re-coding process was scrutinised by peers, as indicated in Section 4.9.2.

4.9.4 Confirmability

The last criterion is concerned with the neutrality and objectivity of the research findings. Confirmability is concerned with ensuring that the research findings are grounded in data and that the researcher has not in any way let bias, motivation or personal values influence the research findings (Shenton, 2004; Wagner *et al.*, 2012; Bryman & Bell, 2014). It can therefore be referred to as the audit trail of the research.

The credibility of the audit trail will be enhanced with raw data, field notes and pilot studies (Snyman, 2014). The various techniques that are used to establish confirmability include: audit trails, triangulation and reflexivity. Reflexivity is defined as the attitude of systematic attendance to the context of knowledge construction, within every step of the research process (Malterud, 2001). This can be achieved by developing a reflective journal and reporting on perspectives, positions, values and beliefs (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The confirmability of the present study was increased by keeping all the raw data collected from Hellopeter.com, thus creating an audit trail, to ensure that researcher bias did not occur. Reflexivity was ensured by keeping a reflective journal or researcher notes throughout the coding and analysis process, to report on certain findings that cannot be deduced by directly looking at the user-generated content in isolation.

These four methods of increasing trustworthiness were implemented throughout the entire research process (where possible), to ensure that the final data collection would be reliable and valid in terms of a qualitative study.

This concludes the overview of the measures to ensure the trustworthiness of the study. The next section highlights the most important ethical considerations of the research study.

4.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Zikmund *et al.* (2012:88) define business ethics as “the application of morals to behaviour, related to the business environment or context”. According to Cooper and Schindler (2014:28), ethics are the “standards of behaviour that guide the moral choices of behaviour and the relationships with others”. The ultimate goal of ethics is, therefore, to ensure that no harm is done, or adverse consequences arise as a result of the research activities that are carried out (Cooper & Schindler, 2014).

Ethical standards need to be consistently applied throughout the entire research process. This research study was guided by the ethical standards set by the University of South Africa. Ethical clearance for this study was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of the Business Management Department at the University of South Africa, prior to the data collection (the ethical clearance certificate is included as Appendix A).

The secondary data collected from Hellopeter.com, is available in the public domain. Individual consumers who post the user-generated-content on the online forum, are aware that their content is publicly available. Personal information of individuals is not available to the public and harm cannot be caused to any individuals. As a result, all participants' information was confidential, and remained anonymous during the entire research process. The researcher did not have any access to the personal information of the respondents. The privacy of the respondents was also not revoked, as user-generated-content was posted with the knowledge that these are not private conversations. No information concerning specific dealerships of the OEM brands or specific names were included in the data analysis. The researcher blocked out such information during the data-collection phase. No informed consent form was necessary, as the information is publicly available. The safety of the researcher was also considered, and no personal information was ever required to harvest data from Hellopeter.com.

Owing to the nature of this study, Saunders *et al.* (2012:233) identified the following ethical issues that need to be considered when using secondary data from an online source. The appropriate steps taken by the researcher to ensure that these ethical considerations have been met, has been included in the Table 4.10 below.

Table 4.10: Ethical issues with the use of online secondary data

Ethical issue	Explanation	Application for specific study
Scope for deception	When researchers join online communities with the intent to collect data but not participate in the forum, it might be seen as a form of deception. Researchers should declare their intention to join an online community.	Due to Hellopeter.com being an online consumer advocacy platform, the researcher did not have to join a specific online community, and complaints and compliments could be observed as it would be observed in the public domain.
Lacking respect and causing harm	Researchers could cause harm and mistrust to online communities when they collect data from online communities without the knowledge and permission of those involved.	Consumers who post complaints and compliments on Hellopeter.com are aware that the information is in the public domain, and that once the comments are posted, they should take responsibility for their own actions.
Respecting privacy	Certain online communities are in the public domain, but individuals might still feel that their privacy is revoked as the content should be regarded as private conversations.	Complaints and compliments posted on Hellopeter.com are in no shape or form part of a private conversation and individuals cannot feel that privacy has been revoked as information is available in the public domain.
Nature of participation and scope to withdraw	The harvesting of data from online communities may be seen as violating the principle of voluntary participation.	Although complaints and compliments posted on Hellopeter.com were not posted for research purposes, consumers know that public information can be used for research purposes. Due to no names being published, voluntary participation will also have no impact.
Informed consent	Informed consent might need to be obtained in certain instances where individuals will be asked to complete web questionnaires or online interviews.	As no interviews or online questionnaires were completed, no informed consent form was necessary.
Confidentiality of data and anonymity of participants identities	The personal information of individuals involved in the research may not be shared.	Personal information of individuals is not available to the public or the researcher. The confidentiality and anonymity of the participants have therefore been guaranteed.

Ethical issue	Explanation	Application for specific study
Analysis of data and reporting of findings	When analysing the data harvested from an online community, the researcher must determine how the findings will be reported and if the findings will still be reported anonymously.	The researcher established how the findings will be reported. All findings were reported in general and no mention of dealerships or names of individuals were included in the analysis and reporting of the data.
Management of data	Researchers need to comply with certain data protection legislation and legal requirements.	Due to the information being available in the public domain, and none of the content re-used for any other purpose than that stated for the research, there are no legal requirements that need to be adhered to.
Safety of the researcher	Researchers need to protect their own personal information when harvesting data from online communities.	The safety of the researcher was guaranteed, as no personal information had to be provided to harvest the data.

Source: Researcher's own compilation based on: Saunders *et al.* (2012:233).

For the purpose of this study, the above-mentioned issues were observed and considered throughout the entire research process.

Although it may seem that there are no prominent ethical considerations to consider, it still constitutes as an ethical process that should be followed. For this reason, ethical considerations had to be addressed in this dissertation to obtain ethical clearance from the University of South Africa.

4.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter provided an in-depth discussion of the research methodology applied in this study. The discussion started with a broad description of all the possible approaches to research, as well as the specific research design and methodology used in this study.

Qualitative research, as employed in this study, was further described in detail. The type of qualitative data-collection methods a researcher could employ when conducting qualitative research, were also discussed. This chapter then went on to describe the specific details for the content analysis as the primary data-collection method for this study.

This chapter further mentioned methods taken to increase the trustworthiness and reliability of the research. Specific mention was made to the criteria used to increase the trustworthiness of qualitative studies including: credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability. The chapter concluded with a discussion on ethical considerations. The next chapter will present the analysed data and research results.

CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to present an analysis of the results of the empirical study. The previous chapter described the detailed process followed to conduct the content analysis, as part of the research methodology section. Content analysis was described as a qualitative research method used to analyse the content of text rich sources and then categorising the content into significant themes. This study followed the inductive content analysis approach, analysing the manifest content related to the seven OEM brands in South Africa found on Hellopeter.com. In this chapter, the data is presented, analysed, described and interpreted as the next step in the research process.

In order to report on the analysis of the qualitative data, it is imperative that the primary and secondary research objectives be restated.

The primary objective of this study is to explore the nature of user-generated content, as found on Hellopeter.com, in terms of consumer complaint and compliment behaviour related to the seven OEM brands in South Africa.

The secondary objectives of this study were formulated as follows:

- To investigate the frequency of user-generated-content posted on Hellopeter.com related to the seven OEM brands in South Africa.
- To determine the compliment-to-complaint ratio on Hellopeter.com related to the seven OEM brands in South Africa.
- To report on the descriptive nature of the complaint themes on Hellopeter.com related to the seven OEM brands in South Africa.
- To report on the descriptive nature of the compliment themes on Hellopeter.com related to the seven OEM brands in South Africa.
- To determine the most prominent reasons why consumers of the seven OEM brands in South Africa complain on Hellopeter.com.

- To determine the main reasons why consumers of the seven OEM brands in South Africa leave a compliment on Hellopeter.com.

It is clear that the majority of the objectives of the study will be addresses in this chapter and will be discussed in later sections of this chapter. The section below, however, provides a presentation of the collected data and analysis which allowed the researcher to draw meaningful conclusions.

5.2 BACKGROUND TO ANALYSING AND INTERPRETING THE DATA

Given the background to the methodology provided in Chapter 4, this study followed a qualitative research approach, where content analysis was used to gather the data, as well as to organise the data according to broad themes by making use of an inductive research approach. The steps followed in the analysis of the data were explained in detail in Section 4.8 of the previous chapter. For the purpose of the analysis, however, these steps are again listed below (Creswell & Creswell, 2018):

- Step 1: Organise and prepare the data for analysis;
- Step 2: Read through all the data;
- Step 3: Code the data;
- Step 4: Use the codes to start generating themes;
- Step 5: Interrelate the themes; and
- Step 6: Interpret the meaning of the themes.

Creswell and Creswell (2018) describe the interpretation of qualitative data as several procedures that are used to summarise the findings, compare the findings to the literature, discuss the researcher's view of the findings, and indicate the limitations and future research suggestions of the study.

The subsequent sections will provide an explanation and in-depth understanding of the information, codes, categories and themes that emerged from the data. Some degree of personal analysis is also included in the form of a reflection report containing general observations made throughout the collection and analysis of the data. In order to support the discussion of the themes and codes, the researcher will provide

verbatim quotes from the specific content analysed. Before the discussion of the themes and codes, the frequency reports are presented in the next section.

5.3 FREQUENCY REPORTS

Although qualitative research data cannot be statistically analysed, like that of quantitative research data, there is some degree of quantification applicable with the use of a content analysis (Neuendorf, 2019). It is for this reason that the researcher decided to include the frequency reports at the beginning of the analysis, in order to support the textual analysis discussed in later sections of this chapter. These frequency reports provide the needed background to the data collected.

5.3.1 User-generated content per OEM brand

As discussed in Section 4.7.7 of the previous chapter, 185 user-generated content items were collected over a period of two months. This equates to 3,03 reports posted per day for the data collection period. Figure 5.1 below is a graphical representation of the total number of user-generated content that was collected for each individual OEM brand during the allocated time period. Although the aim of the study is not to report on individual brand content, it is important to provide these figures as a means of contextualisation.

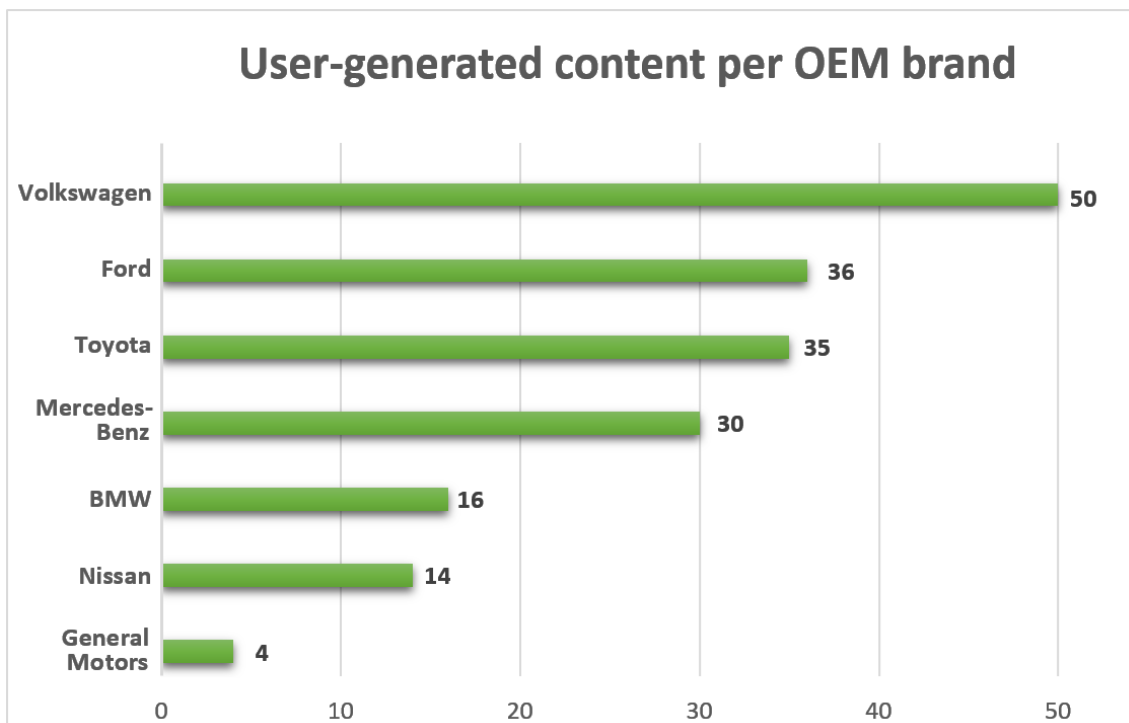


Figure 5.1: User-generated content collected per OEM brand

It should be noted that the amount of user-generated content that was collected for the study, somewhat correlated with the market share of the OEMs in South Africa. In 2018, the OEM market share was as follows (AIEC, 2019):

- Toyota 24,2%
- Volkswagen 16,3%
- Ford Motor Company 10,5%
- Nissan 10,0%
- Mercedes-Benz 4,1%
- General motors/Isuzu motors 3,7%
- BMW 3,3 %

Although BMW had the lowest market share, it elicited more user-generated content than those OEM brands with a higher market share. As was established in the literature (Section 3.3.3), BMW and Mercedes-Benz are considered to be the two luxury vehicle brands available in South Africa (Branquinho, 2019). The amount of user-generated content related to these brands may be attributed to the vehicles being higher-priced, and a greater involvement in the consumer decision-making process, than occurs in the competing OEM brands.

The top three contenders in the market still take up the top three places for user-generated content published during the data-collection period. Volkswagen had the most published content with 50 reports, whereas General Motors had the least amount of user-generated content published, with only four reports. The small amount of user-generated content related to General Motors can be directly associated with the fact that they divested out of South Africa at the end of 2017.

These figures, however, indicate the total number of user-generated content, including both complaints and compliments for the OEM brands. The user-generated content is delineated into complaints and compliments in the sections below.

5.3.2 Complaints per OEM brand

In total, 176 complaints related to the seven OEM brands were collected and analysed over the course of two months. This equates to 2,89 complaints being posted per day

for the data-collection period. It was predicted, based on the literature discussed in Section 2.4.3, that the majority of the user-generated content would be complaints.

It is evident from Figure 5.2 below that the majority of the user-generated content published on Hellopeter.com for the data-collection period were complaints. Volkswagen had the most complaints (48 complaints) and General Motors had the least complaints (4 complaints) in the two months. It is quite interesting, however, to note that Toyota, who is the leader in terms of market share, appears fourth on the list, with 29 complaints for the period of the study.

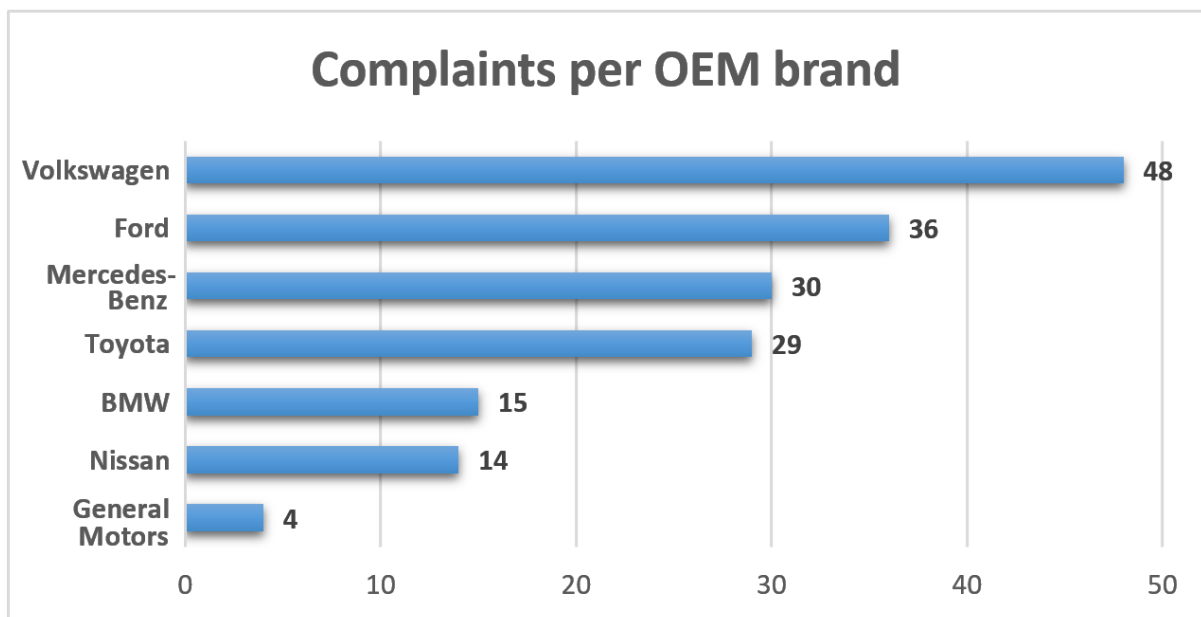


Figure 5.2: Complaints analysed per OEM brand

5.3.3 Compliments per OEM brand

In contrast to complaints, it was predicted that there would not be as many compliments per OEM brand, and as suggested by the literature discussed in Section 2.4.2.

Figure 5.3 below presents the total number of compliments collected per OEM brand for the period of the study. In total, only 9 compliments were published during this time.

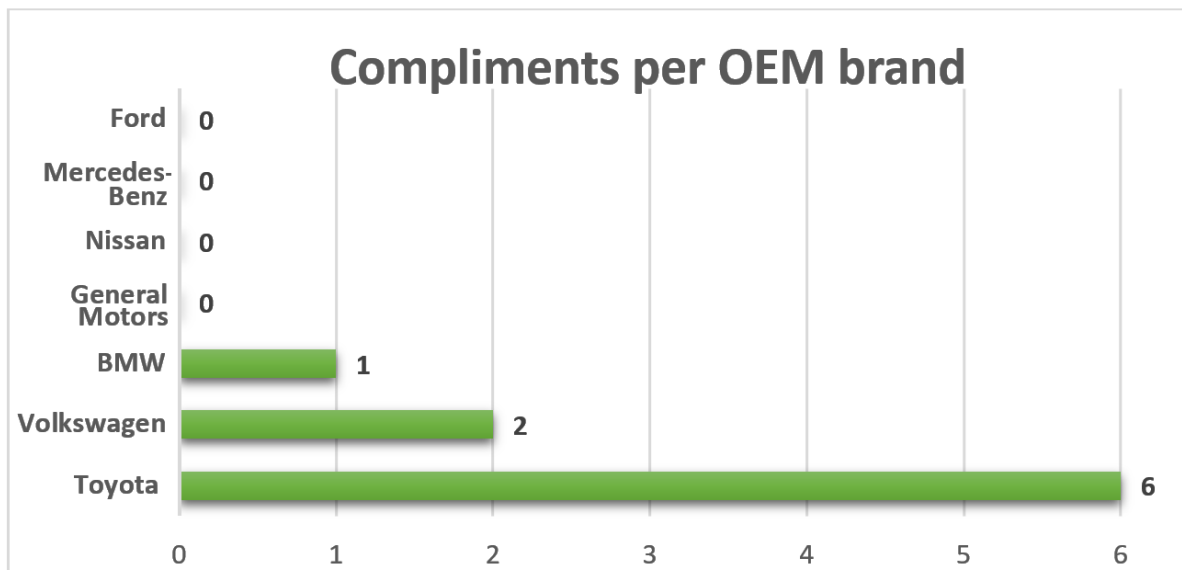


Figure 5.3: Compliments analysed per OEM brand

Figure 5.3 indicates that compliments were only published for 3 of the 7 OEM brands. Once again, it is important to note that Toyota, which holds the leading position in terms of market share, now also holds the leading position in terms of compliments per OEM brand published for the data-collection period. BMW, with the lowest market share of the 7 OEMs, had at least one compliment, compared to Ford, Mercedes-Benz, Nissan and General Motors that had no compliments.

Although only 9 compliments were published, it confirms the results from Thomas (2018) where it was found that only one in every ten satisfied consumers are likely to leave a compliment (as discussed in Section 2.4.2). It should, however, be noted that this may not be an accurate reflection and fair representation of the overall situation, as data was only gathered for a period of two months and may differ over longer periods.

5.3.4 Compliment-to-complaint ratio

Given the above-mentioned information as background, the pie chart given in Figure 5.4 below, graphically illustrates the compliments versus complaints collected for all the OEM brands during the data-collection period.



Figure 5.4: Compliments versus complaints for all OEM brands

It is clear that the number of complaints far exceeded the number of compliments collected and analysed for this study. The compliment-to-complaint ratio, based on the percentages given in Figure 5.4, can be given as 1:19. Therefore, for every compliment given in the two-month data-collection period, there were 19 complaints.

According to Bronkhorst (2012), the average compliment-to-complaint ratio on Hellopeter.com is usually 1:4 (as determined in Section 2.4.2). This ratio, however, is based on the total amount of user-generated content on Hellopeter.com related to all industries, and not only the automotive industry, let alone just the OEM brands.

When looking at the individual OEM brand compliment-to-complaint ratios, of those brands who did have compliments, the following was found, as given in Table 5.1 below:

Table 5.1: Compliment-to-complaint ratio per OEM brand

OEM brand	Compliment-to-complaint ratio
Toyota	1:5
Volkswagen	1:24
BMW	1:15

Source: Researcher's own compilation.

The compliment-to-complaint ratio for Toyota is more in line with Bronkhorst's (2012) findings, indicating that for every compliment, there were 5 complaints. The ratio for Volkswagen, however, was more skew, with a 1:24 ratio, and BMW had a ratio of 1:15. Once again, Toyota follows the norm, with a ratio of 1:5, putting the brand in the leading position with regards to the compliment-to-complaint ratio. This brand had more compliments to counteract the amount of complaints received, when compared to the other brands.

Given the above-mentioned frequencies and ratios, it is evident that consumers are more likely to complain, than to compliment a company on a job well done. The overall compliment-to-complaint ratio of 1:19 is a good indication that consumers are experiencing various service failures, to such an extent that they feel they need to voice their negative experiences on Hellopeter.com. The literature is confirmed, and further shows that the amount of complaints, specifically within the automotive industry in South Africa, are on the rise.

Companies (the OEM brands) need to monitor these complaints in order to improve consumer satisfaction. It should also be noted at this stage, that none of the OEM brands respond or responded to the user-generated content published on Hellopeter.com.

The themes and codes that were developed from the data will be discussed in the sections that follow.

5.4 THEMES AND CODES DEVELOPED FROM THE DATA

In order to achieve the primary objective of this research study, the researcher had to develop and generate codes, as described in Section 4.8.3 of the previous chapter. Coding the data was the third step in the qualitative data analysis procedure. Due to the inductive nature of the research approach, no coding manual was utilised, as

codes were developed directly from the data, and categories and themes were then created based on the codes.

This study followed the manifest approach to coding in terms of a content analysis, as explained in Section 4.8.3. This indicates that the codes and analysis describe the actual content of the data (data-derived coding) and kept very close to the original text, without needing to seek underlying meanings from the data. From the initial first-cycle coding process, the coding list yielded more than 300 codes. After refinement and the second-cycle coding process, the coding list was refined to 110 individual codes (which is included in Appendix B). It is not possible to report on all these codes individually, and for this reason, the codes had to be presented in the form of broad themes.

Themes are created by identifying similarities and overlap between codes (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Braun and Clarke (2013) argue that certain codes will not fit in anywhere, and as a result need to be discarded. The analysis process needs to be more selective to include only the codes that will assist in answering the research objectives. As a result, only the most significant codes that could be categorised according to the broad themes, and assisted in answering the research objectives were included in this analysis.

At this stage, it is important to reiterate the criteria that a theme should meet. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2015:212), a theme should meet specific criteria, as indicated in Table 5.2 below (see Section 4.8.5).

Table 5.2: Theme creation criteria

Criteria	Explanation
Responsive to the purpose of the research	Should answer the research questions and objectives.
Exhaustive	There should be enough categories to encompass all the relevant data.
Mutually exclusive	A code can only be placed in one theme.
Sensitising	The naming of a theme should be sensitive to the nature of the data.
Conceptually congruent	All themes should be on the same level of abstraction.

Source: Adapted from Merriam & Tisdell (2015:212).

The above-mentioned criteria were taken into consideration, and each theme was scrutinised to ensure that it met the minimum criteria for the final themes developed from the data.

The sections below describe the most prominent themes and codes that emerged from the data, as identified by the researcher.

5.4.1 Theme: Poor communication

The first theme that emerged from the data, related to consumer complaints on Hellopeter.com, was that of poor communication. According to Kokemuller (2017), poor communication with consumers limits the company in optimising its performance and reduces consumer loyalty. Poor communication can also be described as a breakdown in communication, with a lack of information being exchanged (CollinsDictionary.com, 2020).

As such, poor communication, lack of communication, feedback and company responses were identified as popular categories of consumer complaints (Jugwanth & Vigar-Ellis, 2013; Carinfo.co.za, 2015; Business Queensland, 2017). Root (2019) believes that proactive consumer communication will assist in creating satisfied and loyal consumers. There are various aspects that contribute to poor communication. The aspects identified from the data that led to the development of this theme are indicated in Figure 5.5 below and discussed in detail in the section that follows.

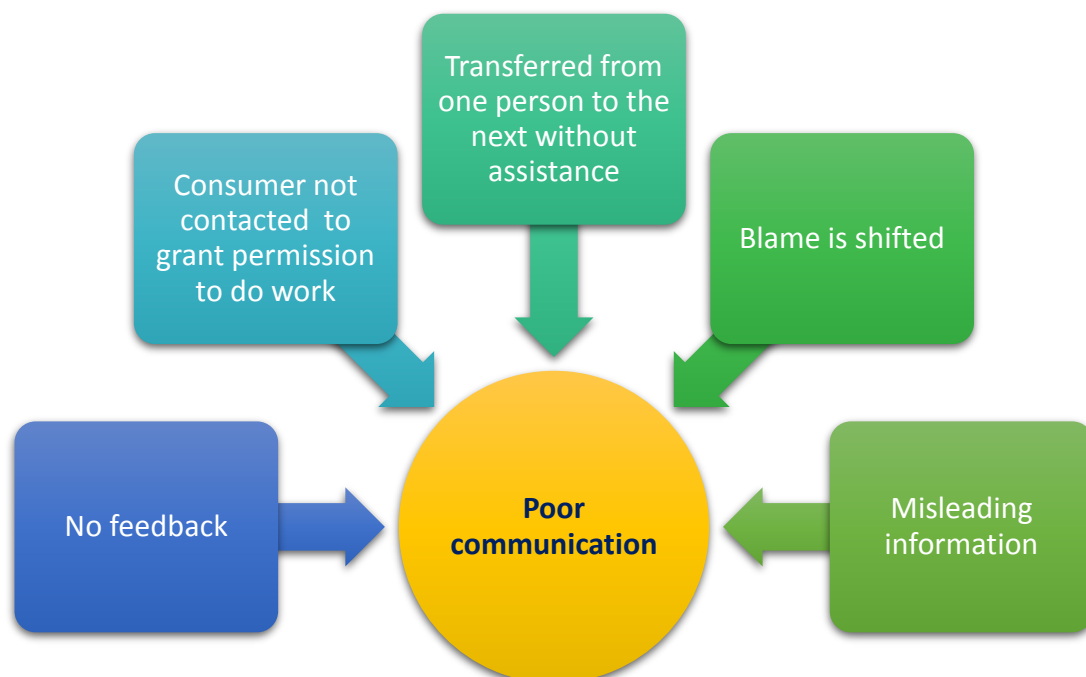


Figure 5.5: Poor communication theme

5.4.1.1 No feedback

Feedback within the service industry is of utmost importance. Feedback is defined as the “reaction or response to a particular process or activity” (Dictionary.com, 2020). Without proper feedback, consumers will not be able to make objective decisions, and cannot assess the situation without being given the necessary information. Several consumers were frustrated with the fact that poor/no feedback was provided from the company with regards to their motor vehicles and/or service, and little to no communication, such as e-mails and phone calls, took place.

As a result, no feedback emerged as the most prominent category from the consumer complaints on Hellopeter.com. As was explained in Section 4.8.4, a category/sub-theme is formed when similar codes are merged together that cannot be combined into one single code. A category/sub-theme is formed when codes of similarity are grouped together but still relate to a bigger overarching theme. For this reason, no feedback was identified as a sub-theme/category of poor communication. This specific category consists of three codes, namely, feedback, answering and returning of phone calls and response to e-mails.

This category appeared 76 times within the data, representing 43% of the total percentage of consumer complaints. As the definition suggests, consumers expect some form of reaction or response from the company, and as a result, terms such as no resolutions, no answers, no feedback, no response and no follow-up were used in consumer complaints related to feedback. The first code that contributed to this category was **feedback**. Consumers did not hide the fact that they received poor feedback or no feedback from the companies. Quotations taken from the data, to support this code included:

- *“Very poor feedback...”*
- *“After various communications, without their response...”*
- *“First I do not get proper feedback...”*
- *“Now they not responding and keeping quiet...”*
- *“NO FEEDBACK, NO ANSWER.”*
- *“A response is still outstanding...”*

Responses and reactions, however, can take various forms, and the word feedback will not always appear in the data. It is for this reason that various codes contributed to the category. The second code identified was the lack of **response to e-mails**, which closely relates to feedback.

Due to consumers' busy lifestyles, e-mails have become one of the most preferred communication tools, and consumers expect written response within a reasonable time (Tanase, 2018). E-mails are also vital, as they provide a paper trail of communication between the consumer and the company. It is for these reasons that consumers are quick to complain should e-mails not be responded to. Statements that were made to support this code included:

- *“Have sent thousands of emails to head office...”*
- *“Why are emails not responded to...”*
- *“I sent various emails to your office and got no reply.”*
- *“I then sent another email requesting to know about the deduction. She never responded.”*
- *“I sent this email to ***¹, even today as I write this complaint I haven't received any response from them.”*

Several consumers also complained about feedback related, specifically, to phone calls. As a result, the next code of this category was labelled as the **answering and returning of phone calls**.

Nestor-Harper and Thompson (2019) describe telephone communication as a vital component of the business transaction. Even with numerous other communication methods available, phone calls can still benefit the company as it is the best way to get an immediate personal response, without meeting face-to-face (Nestor-Harper & Thompson, 2019). Various consumers voiced their frustrations due to not getting through to the correct person, or phone calls not being answered. Statements included the following:

¹ Any reference to a person's name or dealership has been removed and *** inserted to ensure anonymity of this study.

- *“I tried calling the client service and there was no answer to lay a complaint.”*
- *“I have tried to reach out to the head of Service there several times, but he is never available when I call.”*
- *“I was told to call *** which is the dealer and their phone is ringing with no answer...”*
- *“Attempts to get hold of anyone at *** have been unsuccessful.”*
- *“The following day I called *** and couldn’t get hold of him.”*

Complaints related to phone calls also indicated that various consumers were promised that they would be phoned back, but never received any calls. Quotations from the data to support this included:

- *“I call and call and call and all I get from them is they will call me back, but it never happens.”*
- *“Calling and asking for the workshop manager on the 18th of October to inform and resolve this issue, I still haven’t heard anything.”*
- *“I have called on numerous occasions since last week but no one came back to me.”*
- *“... to the service department who can’t return calls.”*
- *“I would leave my phone number every time so he can call me back, no call was received.”*

Given the breakdown of the codes that contributed to this category, feedback was identified as the major contributor to consumer frustrations across all the OEM brands. Hellopeter.com (2018b) defines this as inaccessibility, and indicates that it is one of the main reasons consumers complain on Hellopeter.com.

For the purpose of this study, feedback can therefore be described as the most significant issue related to online complaints within the automotive industry of South Africa. The prominence of this category is strengthened by the fact that none of the OEM brands that complaints were directed to responded on Hellopeter.com.

5.4.1.2 Consumer not contacted for permission to do work

The next code that led to the development of the poor communication theme is related to consumers not being contacted to authorise work to be done on their motor vehicles. When a motor vehicle is booked in for a service or repairs, the consumer must first be

contacted when additional work needs to be done on the vehicle. Consumers can then indicate whether the work may be done, and if they can afford it. If consumers are not contacted for permission to do the work, it may lead to frustrations and dissatisfaction.

This forms another important component of the failure to exchange information with consumers and contributes to poor communication. These consumers expressed their experiences as follows:

- *“I believe I could have been warned first if there was an issue with the SUMP and so I can grant permission before it was touched.”*
- *“I was never informed of this nor did I give them permission to do it.”*
- *“They fixed the car without asking or authorisation...”*

5.4.1.3 Consumer transferred from one person to the next without assistance

Several consumers indicated that they were sent from one person/department to the next without being assisted. Some of the consumers' complaints specifically related to calls being transferred from one person to the next:

- *“... after I hold on for hours and people transferring me one department to another!!!!”*
- *“For more than half an hour I was put on hold and transferred around at both these dealers...”*
- *“I called in to the dealership today to ask if they could assist me as I had my new lock nut. I was transferred between departments...”*
- *“We’ve called them about 6 times now and still nothing has been done.”*

Other consumers were given the run-around at dealerships, without proper assistance:

- *“I got a run-around when my car was taken for service...”*
- *“...they are giving me the run around in fixing this bonnet...”*

From this code, specifically, it is clear that consumers were annoyed by people not being able to assist them, but rather sending them from one person to the next without being assisted at all. There are various reasons why consumers could be given the run-around, but these reasons did not emerge from the data.

The finding from this code, however, correlates with one of the main reasons consumers complain on Hellopeter.com, namely, that they are passed around from one employee to next (Hellopeter.com, 2018).

5.4.1.4 Misleading information

The last component of the poor communication theme was identified as misleading information. The Cambridge Dictionary (Cambridge University Press, 2019a) defines misleading as “causing someone to believe something that is not true”. During the first-cycle coding process, codes such as false advertising, wrong information, information withheld, and incorrect information led to the development of the final code of misleading information. This code ties in with the failure to exchange information, as some information may have been withheld, and the consumer may have been told an untruth.

Of the complaints, 10,2% are related to misleading information. The various ways in which consumers chose to voice their negative experiences regarding misleading information included:

- *“This is false advertising in the least...”*
- *“Everything the Dealer told us about the car was a lie from the start...”*
- *“I took my car for the service and it did not go well at all because *** confirmed that my car has never been for service before and I was shocked because as a sale person you need to insure that all is in order before selling the car to the next person.”*
- *“Sales man *** was so quick to make a sale and took advantage of my excitement for a knew that he didn’t bother explaining the rear doors had fake speakers.”*

Providing misleading information to consumers can lead to various frustrations as can be seen from the information provided above. According to the Consumer Protection Act No 68 of 2008, any and all known faults in vehicles and reconditioning to the vehicle must be disclosed to the consumer (Roberts, 2018). This indicates that all information provided about the vehicle must be true and disclosed to the consumer. Providing consumers with misleading information contributes to poor communication, as a certain level of the exchange of information has been compromised.

This concludes the discussion on the poor communication theme. The findings of this theme confirm the work done by Jugwanth and Vigar-Ellis (2013), Carinfo.co.za (2015), and Business Queensland (2017). Poor communication has, therefore, been identified as the largest theme of consumer complaints within the South African automotive industry on Hellopeter.com.

5.4.2 Theme: Unsatisfactory dealership service

One of the largest themes identified from the data was related specifically to the unsatisfactory service that was received from the automotive dealership/s. This theme was identified as the most unique theme related to the automotive industry, and specifically, complaints related to the OEM brands of South Africa on Hellopeter.com.

Dealerships were defined in Section 3.3.4, as the total enterprise which encompasses the actual property of the dealership as well as the business operation, and act as the representative of the OEM for the motor vehicle buyer (Carter, 2015). The main functions of a dealership include new vehicle sales, used vehicles sales, fixed operations (services), parts and finance and insurance (Carter, 2015:196). As the point of contact for consumers, dealerships play a vital role in the consumer decision-making process and consumer service experiences (Nyadzayo & Khajehzadeh, 2016).

Although the focus of this study was not specifically on individual dealerships, this theme was quite prominent within the data. Various consumers voiced that they were not satisfied with the specific way in which the dealership performed during their service encounter.

There were several codes that led to the development of this theme, but only the most significant codes are indicated in Figure 5.6 below and will be discussed in detail in the sections that follow.

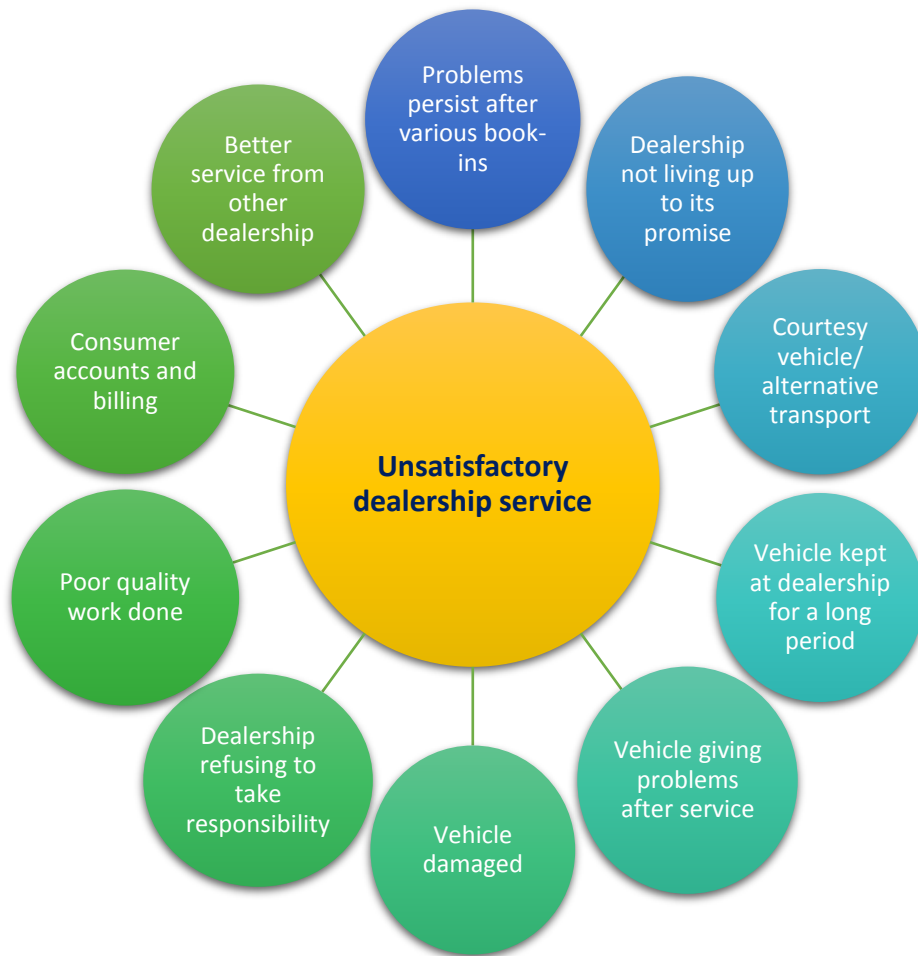


Figure 5.6: Unsatisfactory dealership service theme

5.4.2.1 *Problems persist after various book-ins at the dealership*

The most significant code within the unsatisfactory dealership service theme is related to problems that persist after various book-ins at the dealership. The development of this code was based on the fact that various consumers indicated that there was some problem with the motor vehicle. They would then take the vehicle to the dealership for repairs, only to get the vehicle back without it being repaired. They would then return the vehicle to the dealership again to get the same problem fixed, which in most cases, still did not get fixed, or the problem kept returning. Statements to support this code included:

- *“We sent it back 3 times on the same job repair card... It’s subsequently been back TWELVE TIMES according to our records.”*
- *“They said they sorted it out. This was in August. Since then I have been taking my car back 6 times. Tomorrow will be the seventh time for the same error.”*

- *“... since then I’ve had a issue with a knocking noise which ive taken up with the dealer, car taken in twice before for the same noise...”*
- *“Today I had to take it back again for the 3rd time for the same problem, 2 days after they claimed to have fixed the problem.”*
- *“... we have returned the car more than 4 times still no help.”*
- *“I have taken my car to the *** branch so many times but the problem can’t be fixed.”*

Consumers expect problems to be fixed after the initial book-in at the dealership, and consequently they feel frustrated when their expectations are not met, and the problem is still not fixed after taking the vehicle back again. This specific problem represented 21% of the consumer complaints on Hellopeter.com, indicating that it was quite a significant problem associated with the automotive dealerships.

5.4.2.2 Dealership not living up to its promise/empty promises

This code is related to specific dealerships not living up to their promises. Deming (2019) states that various companies attract consumers with promises that no one can resist, and then leave the consumers feeling dissatisfied with their experience when their expectations are not met. In order to create loyal consumers, companies, and more specifically dealerships, need to keep their promises and exceed consumer expectations (Deming, 2019).

From within the data, it was evident that certain dealerships would make empty promises. Consumers would indicate in their complaints that the dealership made promises that they could not keep. This led to the development of the code of dealerships not living up to their promise, as part of the unsatisfactory dealership services theme. This code represented 11% of the total complaints, and included statements such as:

- *“... they promised to fix it, after a day we left our car there we found that the car has not been touched they promised to secure all pipes, do overall check of all wiring and clamps ... when we got there not everything was done.”*
- *“I was then promised that I would receive my car after 3 days. That was not the case.”*
- *“Don’t promise customers what you can’t deliver.”*

- *“Now they came up with stories when they must honor they side of the agreement...”*
- *“They will promise you the moon, stars, and everything but you will get nothing.”*
- *“Even the promises that they made they not willing to keep.”*

This specific problem is highly related to unsatisfactory dealership service, as consumers expect promises from the dealership to be kept and for the dealership to deliver on these promises. Instead, consumer expectations were not met, and consumers were left feeling disappointed in the dealership for not delivering on their promises. As a major component of consumer loyalty, this problem should be addressed within the automotive industry.

5.4.2.3 No courtesy vehicle or alternative transport provided

An interesting finding from the data was that 14% of the consumers complained about the fact that dealerships did not provide a courtesy vehicle or alternative transport when in need of one. A courtesy car is defined as a vehicle that is loaned to the consumer for the period that the consumer’s vehicle is kept at the dealership for repairs (Roberts, 2016). There are certain times when consumers need to book in their car at the dealership for repairs and it is kept there for a long period, and consumers expect the dealership to provide a loan car, or for the dealership to make alternative transport arrangements to assist them.

Roberts (2016) states that the provision of a courtesy car is usually the responsibility of the consumers’ insurance, but consumers expect the dealership to provide them with a loan vehicle during this period. In these instances, the consumers voiced their expectations not being met in the following ways:

- *“I don’t even get a courtesy car while they seem to have ZERO sense of urgency and ZERO sense of accountability.”*
- *“They have to send the bakkie to a 3rd party for repair and it will leave me for 5 days without a vehicle: which brings me to my first problem, as my bakkie is my working vehicle, the dealer nor head office could help me with a courtesy car.”*
- *“I also requested a courtesy car with no luck.”*
- *“My request for a courtesy car has fallen on def ears.”*

- *“There is no provision that has been made for me to be able to go to work, not even a courtesy car has been made available yet my car is within warranty.”*

According to the 2018 COX Automotive Service Industry Study, one of the main reasons consumers were frustrated with dealerships, was because they did not provide a loan car to the consumer (COX Automotive, 2018:16). This specific issue also emerged as one of the main reasons for the unsatisfactory service received from dealerships in terms of this study, and formed another major component of consumers’ expectations from dealerships not being met.

5.4.2.4 Vehicle kept at the dealership for a long period

This code closely is related to the previous code of the courtesy car, as the two codes mostly appeared within the same complaint, and represented 13% of the total complaints. Various consumers complained about the fact that their vehicle was kept at the dealership for a very long time. Consumers expect their vehicles to be fixed within a reasonable time, without having to be inconvenienced for too long.

The reasons for the vehicles being kept at the dealership for a longer time varied, but the idea of being without a vehicle for that amount of time caused major frustrations among the consumers. Statements supporting this code included:

- *“My car was gone for more than seven days...”*
- *“My vehicle has been with the dealer for over a month.”*
- *“... if I’m not mistaken it took them 2 if not more weeks for repairs.”*
- *“This car was with *** for over 2 months, and still not fixed properly.”*
- *“The vehicle just came back from *** after more than a 2 week period of tests.”*
- *“Day 3 now car-less and they will only be getting the part on Thursday.”*

According to the 2018 COX Automotive Service Industry Study (2018), a main reason for consumers’ frustrations with automotive dealerships, was because the service took longer than expected. It may therefore imply that the vehicle was kept at the dealership longer than the consumer expected. Although this code did not specifically relate only to services taking too long, the code correlates with the above-mentioned finding, as the vehicle was kept at the dealership longer than expected. Consumers were left

without their cars for longer than expected and, as a result, were drawn towards Hellopeter.com to complain.

5.4.2.5 Vehicle giving problems after service

Representing 12% of the consumer complaints on Hellopeter.com, consumers voiced their experiences with regards to their vehicle giving problems after being serviced. Services are seen as part of the fixed operations of an automotive dealership (Carter, 2015). Consumers expect their vehicle to be in a perfect, if not better, working condition on receiving it back after a service. However, this was not the case according to 21 of the complaints related to this study. These consumers indicated that after receiving their vehicle back, after it was serviced, they experienced additional problems with the vehicle; problems which were not experienced before the vehicle went in for a service. Some consumers found that not all parts were put back in the vehicle, while others experienced other mechanical problems after the service. The way in which consumers voiced their concerns included:

- *“Two weeks after the service the vehicle failed to start.”*
- *“... after my first service it started giving me problems a week after that the engine light was on...”*
- *“I took my car for a normal service in December. Three to five days later there was smoke coming out of my car.”*
- *“... we signed for the car and we left, but on the way home we heard funny noise coming from the car, when we got to check we found pipes not connected, some wired not clamped properly, windscreen now had a crack, the air-con was not working.”*
- *“It was just serviced and then it just stopped working.”*

5.4.2.6 Damage to vehicle

After being serviced, 11,3% of the complaints were related to vehicles being damaged while at the dealership. Although this code may seem to be closely related to that of vehicles giving problems after a service, this specifically focused on physical damage to the vehicle while kept at the dealership.

According to Redinger (2016), consumers trust dealerships to do standard repairs, maintenance and services without damaging their vehicles. Unfortunately, this is not

always the case. Redinger (2016) describes the most common occurrence of damage to a vehicle, as the vehicle arriving at the dealership undamaged, and the vehicle being returned to the consumer damaged by staff members. As a result, consumers are upset, even though the damage was not intentional (Redinger, 2016). Consumers who experienced this problem, expressed their concerns as indicated in the following quotes:

- *“My car went in for repair of drive shaft and it ends up getting bumped.”*
- *“... when I finally received the vehicle back the USB ports were physically broken.”*
- *“I was told that my car had been dented at ***.”*
- *“After receiving the car back, we found that the bonnet holder clip was broken as well as the air intake pipe.”*
- *“My driver seat got TORN, it wasn’t when I left there in the morning.”*

As with any other service offering, there will always be a human element involved in dealerships. Undoubtedly human errors will always occur, and damage to vehicles might be the result. In these situations, however, if the dealership is at fault, the damage to the vehicle should be fixed at the dealership’s expense, as they have an internal policy dealing with these situations (Redinger, 2016). The problem arises when dealerships don’t always take the responsibility and admit that they were at fault, which led to the development of the next code.

5.4.2.7 Dealership refusing to take responsibility

Sixteen of the consumer complaints were related to dealerships refusing to take responsibility.

Qukula (2019) states that the Consumer Protection Act No 68 of 2008 maintains that the dealership is liable for anything that happens to the consumer’s vehicle, once the keys are handed over. Redinger (2016) argues that dealerships need to take responsibility when they are at fault. By law, dealerships can be held liable when they refuse to take responsibility for their faulty actions while in possession of the consumers’ vehicle. Various consumers voiced their negative experiences in the following ways:

- *“... they must own up to the damage that they caused.”*

- *“I send the vehicle back where they deny any promises and send me a quote...”*
- *“When I got there the so called manager of service came to me and told me that they don’t take responsibility because the car left the premises.”*
- *“... they want me to pay for it again saying they no responsible for it.”*
- *“When they were waking out the spark plugs they broke one of them inside the engine and they told me that I will have to pay the damages of fixing that problem...”*

The number of complaints related to dealerships refusing to take responsibility for their actions was quite alarming. By law, if the dealership is at fault, they should be held liable and take accountability for their faulty actions. It should, however, be highlighted again that these findings are based on the consumers’ version of the events and do not give any detail of the dealerships’ version of the events.

5.4.2.8 Poor quality work done

Some complaints on Hellopeter.com indicated that consumers were not satisfied with the quality of work done on their vehicles. Consumers who take their vehicle to a dealership and pay for a service, whether to fit parts or to repair problems, expect a high standard of work for the money they paid. Unfortunately, the quality of work done was not always up to standard. The way in which consumers indicated that the work done was of poor quality, included:

- *“They did a bad fitment with my car...”*
- *“... poor shocks and bearings with a falsified diagnostic report.”*
- *“I bought a car by them with smash and grab fitted by them and they did a terrible job...”*
- *“When I fetch the car from them the battery cover was not replaced back as well as the clip where they hook it if the car is being towed.”*

According to Hellopeter.com (2018b), the most common customer complaints within the general service industry are related to bad quality, where the quality of service expected by the consumer was not met. The finding of this code of the current study, is in line with the findings of Hellopeter.com (2018b) and forms an important component of this theme. Consumers who expect high quality products/services/work,

and do not receive this in return for the money paid, are more likely to complain on Hellopeter.com.

5.4.2.9 Consumer accounts and billing

Consumer accounts and billing was identified as a sub-theme of the unsatisfactory dealership service theme. This sub-theme included aspects related to consumer accounts and billing at the dealership. It was determined in Section 2.3.1 that the purchase of a motor vehicle involves an expensive and complex decision-making process. When consumers receive even higher accounts, it causes frustrations with the dealership.

The first code that led to the development of this sub-theme indicated that consumers were **charged additional fees**. When purchasing a motor vehicle, or taking a vehicle in for a service, one would expect to pay for certain products and services. However, sometimes consumers are charged additional costs that were either not agreed upon beforehand, or that the consumer was not informed about. Various consumers complained about being charged additional fees by the dealership:

- *“I was charged about R1400 more...”*
- *“... now they say I must pay on top of the amount I paid which was R40 000 now they say I must pay R68,000...”*
- *“Why am I having to pay for an inspection...”*
- *“I will have to pay an additional +-R15000...”*
- *“They need me pay extra R2 000.00 to diagnose the car...”*

Not only did consumers complain about being charged additional fees, over and above the normal expected fees, but some consumers were concerned about the dealership **charging excessively high fees** for services rendered. This code ties in with the principle of value for money, and consumers feel a sense of dissatisfaction when they need to pay such high fees, given that they have already paid a big amount for the vehicle itself. These consumers specifically indicated that they had to pay unreasonable amounts for their vehicles to be fixed or serviced, thus, leaving them dissatisfied with the service received from the dealership. Quotes taken from the data to support this code include:

- *“I eventually paid R15 000.00 to have the car fixed. Just like last time the bill will be just as high.”*
- *“... where in the world do you pay a repair bill of R70 000.00 for a vehicle that is only 2,5 years old...Insanity!”*
- *“... they are charging R2 000 for a diagnostic and almost R15 000 for repairs... They are thieves and a rip off.”*
- *“This service was R9 500! Beyond the inconvenience of not having a car days, who has another 10 grand to spend after taking a 10 grand precaution of servicing your car for things like this NOT to happen.”*

Consumer accounts and billing is an important component of dealership services, and if consumers feel that they have been let down by the dealership with regards to their finances, it leaves them feeling dissatisfied with the service received from the dealership. When purchasing a motor vehicle, consumers are involved in a long-term commitment purchase, and cannot always afford to be charged additional costs or exorbitant fees.

The finding of this sub-theme confirms the work done by Carinfo.co.za (2015) and Hellopeter.com (2018b), where hidden costs, billing and accounts were identified as one of the top reasons consumers complained on Hellopeter.com.

5.4.2.10 Better service received at another dealership

The final code that contributed to this theme indicated that consumers had received better service from another dealership. They have, therefore, had the opportunity to compare the service delivery to that of another dealership, and were not satisfied with the service received from the specific dealership. The way in which consumers indicated their dissatisfaction, in relation to service received from another dealership, included:

- *“... my other experiences at the service centres at the *** is so pleasant, here in *** they seem to be bringing the *** name down...”*
- *“I realized this dealership is a bunch of clowns with no intention of delivering customer service. I took the battery and drove to *** and the service manager quickly asked one of his technicians to replace the battery. An exercise that took a whole 2 minutes.”*

- *“I forwarded my docs for an application at *** and it was approved within 3 hours which brings me to my question what is taking *** so long to process an application.”*

This is the end of the in-depth discussion of the codes that contributed to the development of the unsatisfactory dealership service theme. As established within the consumer decision-making process in Chapter 2, consumers have certain expectations when it comes to any purchase decision. If these expectations are not met or exceeded, they are left feeling unsatisfied. Consumers therefore have certain expectations when it comes to products and services offered at the automotive dealerships, and given the above-mentioned complaints, their expectations were not met. Unsatisfactory dealership service was therefore developed as the most unique theme in relation to the complaints about the automotive industry on Hellopeter.com for this study.

According to the 2018 COX Automotive Service Industry Study, the top five reasons consumers were frustrated with automotive dealerships were because of services taking longer than expected, the dealership trying to push additional services, consumers having to wait in line after making an appointment, consumers needing to enquire about costs, and the dealership not providing a loan car (COX Automotive, 2018:16). These findings were discussed in Section 3.3.4. The findings of this theme of the study confirm the findings of the 2018 COX Automotive Service Industry study and added further dimensions that are related specifically to the services of dealerships of the South African automotive industry.

5.4.3 Theme: Poor customer service

Customer service has been described as all the services and efforts aimed at managing, meeting and exceeding consumer wants and needs (Erasmus, Rudansky-Kloppers & Strydom, 2019; Sherman, 2019). Poor customer service is evident when consumer expectations, wants and needs are not met. Penafloida (2019) is of the opinion that effective customer service, specifically in the automotive industry, can be the difference between a company's success and failure.

The previous theme and this theme are very closely related, however, the previous theme was developed, as the codes and complaints related specifically to

unsatisfactory service from the dealership/s, which cannot necessarily be applied to other industries. This theme, however, is more general in nature, as the complaints and codes are related to general aspects that contribute to poor customer service, and which may be related to other industries as well.

There are various aspects that contribute to poor customer service, but the most prominent contributors identified from within the data, are indicated in Figure 5.7 below, and discussed in detail in the sections that follow.



Figure 5.7: Poor customer service theme

5.4.3.1 Unacceptable customer service

The first code that lead to the development of the poor customer service theme represented 34,6% of the consumer complaints, forming the second-largest code identified from the data. These consumers specifically complained about customer service, and included the words unacceptable, shocking, terrible, disappointing, bad or poor service within their complaints. Even though this code and the theme seem to be the same, this code included the specific words, and contributed to the final development of the theme. Consumers who complained about unacceptable customer service, indicated their experience as follows:

- *“... the terrible customer service I will not tolerate at all.”*
- *“You really need some customer service...”*
- *“I am not happy with the service received from your customer care...”*
- *“... just very, very disappointing in their customer service.”*
- *“This service is totally unacceptable!”*

A large proportion of the consumer complaints were directly related to unacceptable customer service, and included the specific words, as in the quotations above.

Penaflorida (2019) believes that the automotive industry needs to be more aware of, and proactive about addressing negative customer service, as it could result in more satisfied consumers, who may be more willing to leave a compliment online.

However, as was explained in the previous section, there are various aspects that contribute to customer service, and more specifically, to poor customer service, and consumers will not always use those exact words within their complaints. For these reasons, there are various other codes that contributed to the poor customer service theme of this study, which are discussed in the remaining sections below.

5.4.3.2 No assistance

When purchasing any product or service, consumers expect assistance. Be it with their purchase decision, the actual purchase, when entering the premises, or when calling for specific help. Unfortunately, 11,3% of the consumers indicated that they received no assistance. These consumers indicated their frustrations as follows:

- *“... they won’t even lift a finger to try and help me.”*
- *“I stood by your reception area for almost half an hour and nobody asked if I need help.”*
- *“I have called *** to assist but they have failed to do so.”*
- *“I have gone back and forth trying to get these issues resolved, I am now tired of their service and have given up trying to get assistance.”*
- *“... dealership no help.”*

Being assisted, in whichever way, can be considered a basic expectation of good customer service. When the required help and support are not forthcoming, the

consumers' expectations are not met, and this creates a negative service experience, contributing to consumer complaint behaviour.

5.4.3.3 Staff incompetency

Ashe-Edmunds (2019) describes incompetence as the lack of ability to do a job to a satisfactory standard. Ashe-Edmunds (2019) further describes the causes of incompetence as laziness, lack of people skills, poor communication and a lack of training. As a result, staff incompetency was created as a sub-theme within the poor customer service theme. The codes identified from the data included in this category, were incompetent staff, staff not trained adequately, rude staff, and consumer being disrespected.

Various consumers felt that staff were not competent to do their jobs, and explicitly described the **incompetent staff** as follows:

- *“I cannot understand for a company your size you have this calibre of people...”*
- *“The company is occupied by tired old people who do not have any clue what a good service is or how it is supposed to be like.”*
- *“*** clear incompetence.”*
- *“Why do I have to call a call centre to deal with such an urgent matter only to have to deal such incompetent call centre consultants?”*
- *“I also refuse to pay the pro rata because of someone’s negligence.”*

Other consumers, however, felt that staff members either did not receive the necessary training, or required additional training for them to become competent in their position/s. As a result, the code **staff members not trained adequately**, was developed from the data. Quotes taken from the data to support this code included:

- *“I do not think the guys are even trained.”*
- *“I suggest a basic client service course is needed by all staff as it seems to be a trend through your staff compliment...”*
- *“I found the staff is not properly trained to deal with customer...”*
- *“Train that *** person, I don’t even know how he is in the position he’s in...”*
- *“... send them ALL for proper training on how to speak to and deal with customer.”*

Twenty of the consumer complaints included some section indicating how **rude staff members** were. The Cambridge Dictionary (Cambridge University Press, 2019b) defines rude as being “not polite, offensive or embarrassing.” It is common courtesy to be friendly to others, and when staff members fail to do so, consumers are quick to complain about this online. The following quotes were taken from the data to support this code:

- *“The attitude and tone that comes across in their emails is disgusting.”*
- *“Very rotten attitude from *** in general.”*
- *“I arrived and the greeting received by the staff was actually shocking...”*
- *“... when we complained about it, the manager became rude...”*
- *“He was arrogant with a bad attitude...”*
- *“... she started shouting at me saying that I was incorrect...”*

The finding of this code is in line with the findings of Hellopeter.com (2018b), where rudeness was identified as one of the top three reasons why consumers complain on Hellopeter.com.

Disrespect and rudeness may often be described as the same concept, but in this situation, complaints explicitly indicated how **consumers were disrespected** by staff members. Disrespect involves a lack of respect in the treatment of others, and may very often result in rudeness (Leonard & Seidel, 2019). Consumers who felt that they were disrespected, indicated their experiences in the following ways:

- *“... they are only interested in reaching they monthly targets not respect for customers.”*
- *“Well, the message is loud and clear - *** just do not care! This is utterly deplorable for such a big corporation like them to treat customers with such disrespect.”*
- *“I’ve never in my life feel so discriminated and disrespected...”*
- *“I demand to be treated with respect as a paying customer...”*
- *“... you do not value customers and telling me that MY MOTHER DID NOT TEACH ME GOOD MANNER is totally UNCALLED for.”*

Leonard and Seidel (2019) argue that policies should be in place to deal with disrespect and rudeness within the workplace. By treating consumers with respect,

there is a better chance that their expectations would be met and could assist in increasing consumer satisfaction.

Staff members who behave in an impolite, offensive or embarrassing manner towards consumers may harm a company's reputation and brand. If these issues are not addressed, it could result in matters escalating even further. Staff incompetency, as a sub-theme, is therefore considered an important contributor to the poor customer service theme.

5.4.3.4 Consumer inconvenienced

Consumers often voice their frustrations about being inconvenienced. The current analysis found that 12,5% of the consumer complaints indicated that the consumers were inconvenienced in some way. These consumers specifically indicated to what extent they had been inconvenienced. The consumer complaints related to inconvenience, included:

- *“*** has inconvenienced since June this year I have not been able to enjoy my ***.”*
- *“I have had to travel into work, be inconvenienced using Uber...”*
- *“I have a transport business transporting people to the mines and my vehicle has been with *** for over a month.”*
- *“I am basically stranded due to a car they sold me...”*
- *“I needed to be at work yesterday, no arrangements were made...”*

5.4.3.5 Consumer's health and safety compromised

Some of the consumer complaints indicated that their health and safety were compromised as a result of poor service. Although this code appeared in only 5,1% of the complaints, it was still considered as a significant finding from the data. Quotes taken from the data to support this code include:

- *“I have been driving around without a head rest since June which is unsafe. *** just does not care about their customers and their safety.”*
- *“It is not only illegal but very dangerous to drive without functional wipers.”*
- *“... you playing with my life here.”*

- *“I am from the doctor to complain about the pain in my hands. I am now taking pain medication every night.”*
- *“My problem is I no longer feel safe to drive it because I am not sure what else will break.”*
- *“... they do not care about my life, my safety is compromised...”*

5.4.3.6 Repeat disappointing service

The last code that assisted with the development of the poor customer service theme, indicated that consumers received repeat disappointing service, be it from the dealership, only a specific person, or from the brand. These consumers may have given the company the benefit of the doubt to return after a previous disappointing service experience, and yet again, they were let down. When consumers receive the same poor level of customer service, the likelihood of them returning to the establishment, or becoming loyal, is very low.

The ways in which consumers voiced their disappointment included:

- *“Poor service and attitude yet again ***.”*
- *“The service I keep on getting from *** is very disappointing.”*
- *“*** has disappointed us not once but many times.”*
- *“This is the second time my car has been for repairs and both occasions I experienced the same experience, the service is slacked and slow...”*

This concludes the discussion on the poor customer service theme. It is evident that there are various aspects that contributed to the poor customer service dimension within the automotive industry on Hellopeter.com. Several of these findings also confirmed the findings of previous work done within the general service industry (Jugwanth & Vigar-Ellis, 2013; Hellopeter.com, 2018).

There are various consequences that result from poor customer service, such as loss of income, reputational loss, loss of future business, unhappy employees and increased consumer complaints (Erasmus *et al.*, 2019). The automotive industry should therefore strive to address these issues in an effort to improve customer service, retain existing consumers and attract new consumers.

5.4.4 Theme: Consumers demanding action

Representing 26,7% of the complaints, consumers demanding action emerged as another major theme of this study. The majority of the consumer complaints published on Hellopeter.com were multi-faceted, indicating that consumers were not only complaining about one specific issue. Many of the consumers complained about various issues, and after stating their complaint they demanded that some sort of action should be taken in order to achieve a certain result. Consumers demanding action comprises all the ways in which consumers expressed the need for something to be done to alleviate the problems experienced and voiced in the complaint.

This specific theme emerged as a sense of the consumers expecting an outcome as a result of the complaint. The ways in which consumers demanded action is indicated in Figure 5.8 below and discussed in the sections that follow.



Figure 5.8: Consumers demanding action theme

5.4.4.1 Requesting urgent assistance

The first code that assisted in the development of this theme was related to consumers requesting urgent assistance. Of the 46 consumers demanding action, 35% thereof requested urgent assistance. These consumers voiced their demands as a final plea to beg for any form of assistance, as they did not know what else to do. The way in which these consumers voiced their demands included:

- *“I beg you, can I please get assistance please.”*
- *“... please, please help me it’s been too long now...”*
- *“I would seriously request for your intervention...”*
- *“I need help and need help now.”*
- *“Please I need assistance.”*

The urgency of these consumer demands is a clear indication that consumers need assistance and, by complaining on Hellopeter.com, feel that they would get the necessary assistance as soon as possible. Unfortunately, due to no company responses to consumer complaints, the researcher had no way of knowing if assistance was given and if the matters were resolved.

5.4.4.2 Fix the problem immediately

Not only did consumers request urgent assistance, but they also requested that the problem/s be fixed immediately. Consumers who indicated that they need the problem fixed immediately, indicated in their complaints that they have experienced certain problems with their motor vehicle/ services, and as a result, expect the problem to be fixed immediately. These consumers indicated that they have been inconvenienced, and voiced their demands in the following ways:

- *“Again, I really need my car in working condition today please.”*
- *“THEY MUST FIX MAY CAR OR GIVE ME ANOTHER ONE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!”*
- *“Really now, fix up your mess now...”*
- *“... all I want is for my car to be fixed...”*
- *“I just need *** to fix my car.”*

5.4.4.3 Seeking solution/s

Some consumers sought some form of resolution, as a result of various different reasons. Consumers who were seeking for solutions indicated this in the following ways:

- *“I am hoping *** comes up with a solution...”*
- *“Please advise ASAP on how to resolve this matter...”*
- *“I hope the Ombudsman will sort this out quickly!!”*

- *“I will be waiting to hear from you as soon as possible with a solution to the predicament.”*

5.4.4.4 Requesting a refund

Some consumers indicated that they wanted their money back, as they were either not happy with the work done, or their accounts were debited for unauthorised amounts. The way in which the consumers requested a refund included:

- *“I want my money back”*
- *“I want my money back because the fault was on their side...”*
- *“It’s either I get my parts or my money back.”*

This specific code also ties in with the code related to the dealerships refusing to take responsibility, as with all three these cases, according to the consumers, the dealerships were at fault, and that is why they were requesting to get their money back.

5.4.4.5 Demanding compensation

Although this specific code is also related to money, these consumers specifically indicated that they should be compensated because of being inconvenienced and not being at fault. Consumers did not indicate that they want to receive money back, but rather, that they be compensated as a result of being inconvenienced. These consumers expressed their demands as follows:

- *“I feel we need compensation on this as this is a *** issue and not ours as the customer.”*
- *“I WANT A COMPENSATION FOR ALL OF THIS *** I HAD TO GO THROUGH IMMEDIATELY.”*

5.4.4.6 Insisting on a new vehicle

The last code that contributed to the development of this theme is related to consumers who insisted that a new vehicle be given to them. These consumers have reached such a point of disappointment that they feel the only solution is to receive a new vehicle:

- *“I have reached the point where I am insisting on a NEW vehicle.”*

- *“I honestly feel that *** should give me a new car.”*

The finding of this theme confirms Day and Landon’s Taxonomy of consumer complaint behaviour, as indicated in Figure 2.6. One of the public actions consumers choose to take includes seeking redress, which involves the act of setting right an unjust situation to reach satisfaction. The findings of this theme show a correlation with the results of Nimako and Mensah (2012), which indicate that the main reasons consumers complained, specifically about telecommunication services, were because they were seeking corrective actions, seeking explanations, seeking redress, seeking apologies, expressing emotions of anger, and seeking compensation for damages. These categories were identified in Section 2.4.3.1.

Although the above-mentioned findings were obtained in a study based on the telecommunications industry, there is some overlap with the findings of this study in the automotive industry in South Africa. Consumers demanding action was therefore developed as the overarching theme, as it encapsulates the ways in which consumers voiced their expectations with regards to the outcome of their complaints on Hellopeter.com.

5.4.5 Theme: Disappointing OEM brand experience

This theme was also unique to the automotive industry and was labelled as disappointing OEM brand experience. This theme is related to codes that were specifically aimed and directed at the brand and their services, and not at a specific dealership or person. An OEM was defined in Section 3.3.3 as “the original producer of complete vehicle components, sub-assembly vehicle components and fully assembled vehicles, for both passenger and commercial use, within South Africa”. The OEM brands in South Africa were identified as Toyota, Volkswagen, Ford, Nissan, Mercedes-Benz, BMW and Isuzu Motors (previously General Motors). It was established in Section 3.3.3, that each of the seven OEM brands provides motor vehicle owners with the following when purchasing a new vehicle: maintenance and service plans, warranties and road-side assistance. All of the above-mentioned can be purchased at extra cost when buying a second-hand motor vehicle, or the plans can be extended at an extra cost, whichever the consumer needs.

This theme, therefore, incorporated the above-mentioned aspects, as well as any other aspects directly involving and including the OEM brand as part of the complaint.

The codes were specifically related to consumers' disappointment with their service experience with the brand and their expectations not being met. The codes that led to the development of this theme are indicated in Figure 5.9 below and discussed in detail in the sections that follow.

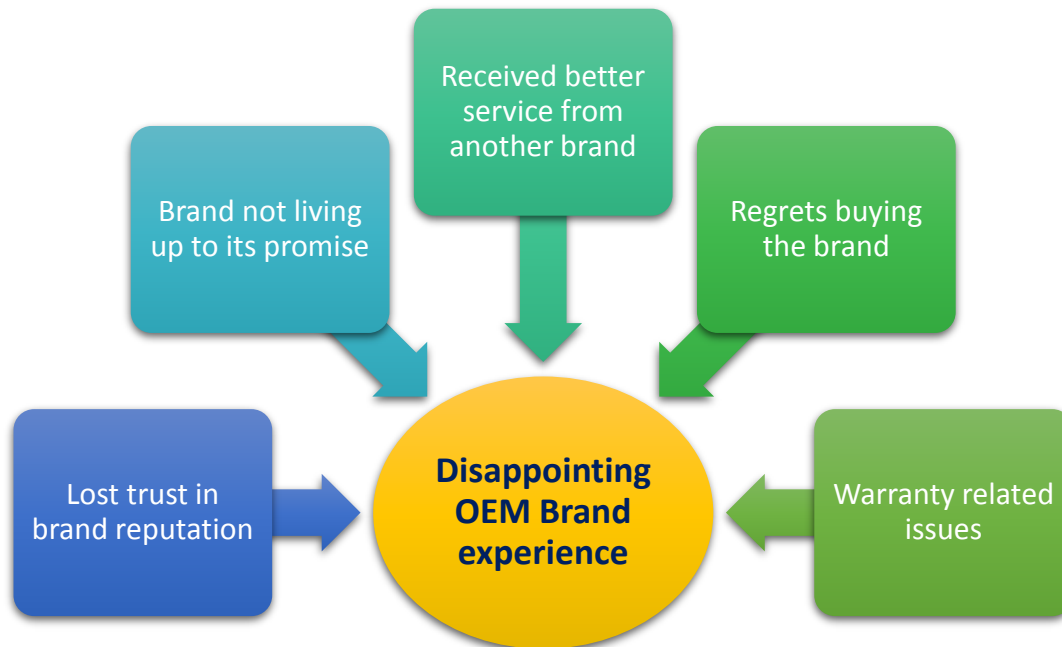


Figure 5.9: Disappointing OEM brand experience

5.4.5.1 Lost trust in reputation of the brand

First, and foremost, consumers indicated how they have lost trust in the reputation of the brand. This code was strongly related to the fact that certain expectations were created based on past experiences, and the reputation of the brand that has been built up over the years.

Trust has been described as an important social component of a successful relationship and long-term consumer loyalty (Roberts-Lombard & Brijball Parumasur, 2017). Without trust, the relationship with the consumer may be ruined, which in turn may lead to consumer dissatisfaction. Consumers who have lost trust in the reputation of the brand indicated their concerns in the following ways:

- “... my view on this brand that I used to trust and love has changed, it will never be the same...”
- “I trusted *** to deliver best quality but now I am getting excuses...”
- “I was trusting them as professionals and my trust made me not doubt them.”

- *“I do not trust it anymore...”*
- *“I have been driving *** since 1984 and never have I been disappointed in the brand as I am now.”*

5.4.5.2 Brand not living up to its promise

Following on the trust relationship and reputation, brands have built a legacy based on delivering what they have promised. However, certain consumers felt that the brand/s did not live up to what they have promised, and as a result, consumers felt disappointed with their brand experience. This code strongly relates to a previous code, where the dealership did not live up to their promise, but these complaints were not directed at a specific dealership, but rather at the brand. Quotes taken from the data to support this code included:

- *“I think *** should have a good hard look at this statement from their website. Don’t promise customers what you can’t deliver.”*
- *“Guys, if you are not going to deliver on a promise that you have made, then do not make promises at all.”*
- *“I am sick and tired of empty promises I get from this people...”*
- *“... expose me to this sheer driving pleasure you keep on talking about that I have not yet experienced.”*
- *“... despite the promises to get back to you are made, you can be assured no one will call you back.”*

5.4.5.3 Better service received from another brand

Some consumer complaints indicated that they received better service from another brand. These specific consumers have had previous experience with other brands, and compared the service received from the brand to that of another. As a result, the consumers were not satisfied with the level of service received in comparison to another brand, leaving them feeling disappointed.

Although this code is very closely related to losing trust in the reputation of the brand, this specific code focused on complaints explicitly stating that they have received better service elsewhere. The way in which consumers complained about this issue included:

- *“Is not like is my first car I have another car with another brand for over 7 years but I have never seen such drama.”*
- *“... a huge gap between how they present themselves when compared to *** and that also translates to their service.”*
- *“I had a *** that broke down in Mozambique and *** sent a breakdown with a new vehicle for me and brought the broken down one back. That is service! I will be ordering my *** this afternoon.”*
- *“I have had 5 other vehicles form different brands but never ever have I been so disappointed in a brand...”*

5.4.5.4 Regrets buying the brand

Consumer regret forms a major component of cognitive dissonance, as explained in Section 2.3.3.9. The feeling of doubt, anxiety, regret and discomfort after the purchase is described as cognitive dissonance (Mpinganjira & Dos Santos, 2013; Schiffman *et al.*, 2014; Belch & Belch, 2015; Roberts-Lombard & Brijball Parumasur, 2017).

Various consumers therefore indicated that they regret purchasing a vehicle from the brand. These consumers voiced their regret as follows:

- *“... clearly buying a *** was a BIG, BIG MISTAKE.”*
- *“I so regret trusting and being a family member of ***.”*
- *“I bought a ***, to my regret.”*
- *“I am starting to have regrets about ***.”*

Other consumers explicitly indicated that they had feelings of regret for leaving one brand for another. Quotes taken from the data to support this include:

- *“I should have never left ***... Service sucks.”*
- *“Worst mistake I have ever done was to leave *** for ***.”*
- *“... since I moved from *** I have been going in and out of ***...”*

Due to the regret that came from purchasing the brand, consumers felt that they needed to attempt to reduce or eliminate the level of anxiety, and as a result, complained about the matter on Hellopeter.com (Roberts-Lombard & Brijball Parumasur, 2017).

5.4.5.5 Warranty-related issues

It was established in Section 3.3.3 that the purchase of any new vehicle includes a standard service, maintenance and warranty plan. When purchasing a second-hand vehicle, these plans can also be purchased at extra cost. This specific code contributed to this theme, as the warranties form part of the brands' service offerings.

Fifteen of the consumer complaints were related to warranties. Consumers complained about various warranty-related problems, ranging from warranties being cancelled without notification, to dealerships and brands refusing to pay for repairs while the vehicle is still under warranty, or waiting for the warranty to run out before doing repairs. Consumers complained about warranties as indicated in the quotes below:

- *“... like all these years they are waiting for the warranty to run over and tell me that.”*
- *“I made my booking on 100 000 now they refuse to pay as they say as soon as the car is on 100 000 the warranty expires.”*
- *“... have sent thousands of emails to head office with the warrant enquiry as it as cancelled one year after purchase but when I purchased the car in March 2017 *** still confirmed it was active.”*
- *“I was told that the warranty wouldn't cover for the damage since this was recognised as an unknown accident.”*
- *“... no one can tell me why this is happening to a vehicle still under warranty.”*

This concludes the discussion on the codes that led to the development of the disappointing OEM brand experience theme. This theme is unique, in the sense that it is only applicable to the automotive industry. This is an indication that not all the findings of the themes can be applied to any general service industry, and that the consumer complaints are not always general in nature but aimed more specifically at the automotive industry.

5.4.6 Theme: Motor vehicle manufacturing and assembly

Yet another unique theme related to the automotive industry emerged as motor vehicle manufacturing and assembly. Motor vehicle manufacturing and assembly involves the production and assembly of various parts to produce the final motor vehicle for use by the consumer. As a result, this theme encompasses all the aspects that relate to the production, assembly and parts causing problems to the consumer.

Although this theme only consists of three codes, it is still a significant finding, specifically in terms of complaints related to the automotive industry in South Africa. The codes that led to the development of this theme are indicated in Figure 5.10 and discussed in detail in the sections that follow.

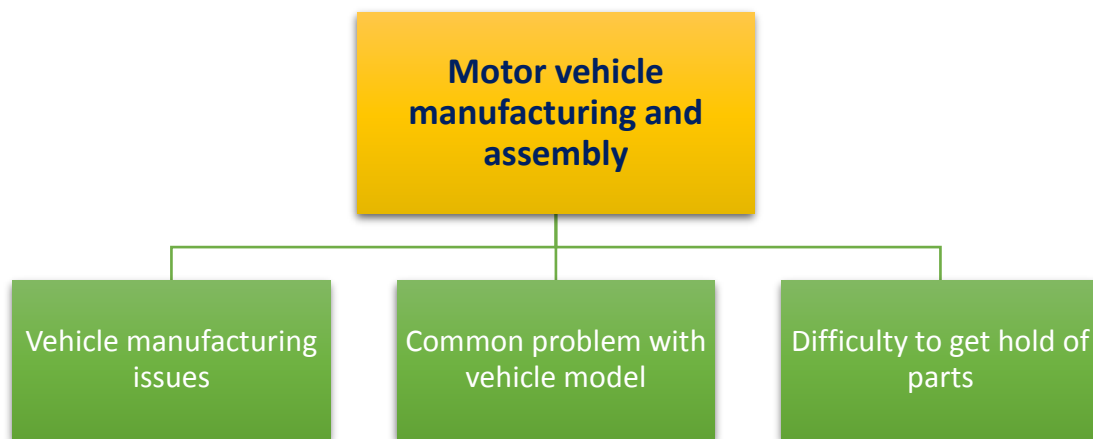


Figure 5.10: Motor vehicle manufacturing and assembly theme

5.4.6.1 Vehicle manufacturing issues

Of the complaints on Hellopeter.com, 25% indicated that consumers experienced manufacturing issues with their vehicles. These problems were specifically related to manufacturing, assembly and design errors on vehicle components. In simpler and broader terms, it can be described as being sold a faulty product. When purchasing a vehicle, consumers expect the vehicle to be in full working order, and for parts not to fail after the purchase, as a motor vehicle is a long-term commitment purchase.

Consumers who experienced manufacturing issues indicated the technical and mechanical problems that they have experienced with the vehicle. Quotes taken from the data to support this code included:

- *“These particular parts failing are not due to poor driving but rather poor quality of manufactured goods.”*
- *“We bought a new ***. On 18300km all four injectors failed and a valve regulating.”*
- *“We bought a brand new *** in March 2017. Within 6 hours the first dashboard rattle started.”*
- *“... the engine started over-revving without her having her foot near the accelerator.”*
- *“Bought a new *** from *** 3 years ago. Started to have break problems shortly after buying it...”*

It was interesting to note that 47,7% of the complaints about manufacturing issues were specifically related to new vehicles. These consumers clearly indicated that they purchased a brand-new vehicle, and that the new vehicle started to give problems or parts started failing after the purchase. When new vehicles start failing on consumers, it raises major levels of concern and may impact consumer trust in the brand and quality of the vehicles manufactured.

The finding of this theme is closely related to the findings from Jugwanth and Vigar-Ellis (2013) and Hellopeter.com (2018b), as discussed in Section 2.4.3.1, where bad quality and defective products were identified as some of the main reasons consumers complain on Hellopeter.com. Vehicle manufacturing issues can, therefore, be linked to faulty or defective products within the general automotive supply chain and service industry.

5.4.6.2 Common problem with vehicle model

The second code that contributed to the manufacturing and assembly theme, indicated that the problems that were being experienced with the vehicle, were common problems and that other consumers were having the same experience with the specific model. Consumers who experience manufacturing issues search for information about these issues, and may ask others if they have heard of the specific problems with the vehicle. As a result, consumers know that other people have experienced the same problem, and complain about it on Hellopeter.com, as indicated in the quotes taken from the data below:

- *“If it is a known fault on these bakkies why doesn't *** fix it?”*

- *“Phone *** and I am told it is a known problem but nothing I can do about it.”*
- *“She has spoken to other *** owners who have had the same problem...”*
- *“... my friend just told me his father in law’s *** bought same time with mine is also doing the same thing.”*
- *“I was then told by one of the staff members that they are familiar with the problem as almost all cars bought in 2015 of the same model has that problem.”*
- *“There are plenty of complaints regarding the *** engine failing...”*

From the data, it is evident that consumers are frustrated because the specific problem they were complaining about, was a known and common problem with the vehicle model. Consumers indicated that if it is a known problem, why has the problem not been addressed?

In these situations, consumers expect the manufacturer to do a vehicle recall. Louw (2017) states that a vehicle recall will be announced when a defect and the same flaw is found in a group of motor vehicles of the same model. The level of risk is then immediately attended to, and the vehicle is repaired to ensure that the vehicle is in a safe working order. Consumers who have found that the problems being experienced were common problems with the vehicle took to Hellopeter.com to share their experiences in the hope that something would be done to resolve the matters, and to let other owners know to be on the lookout for similar problems.

5.4.6.3 Difficulty to get hold of parts

The last code contributing to this theme indicated that consumers were struggling to find parts for their vehicle. This code formed part of the manufacturing and assembly theme, as parts need to be ordered by the manufacturers, and therefore it becomes a manufacturing issue. The various ways in which consumers complained about getting hold of parts included:

- *“The part was ordered more than four times and each time the part gets to SA it was found to be the wrong part.”*
- *“In a week from now I will be without my car for a month because *** does not stock injectors for my ***.”*
- *“... other parts are on back order or at the warehouse I don’t even know what to believe anymore...”*

- *“The head rest was ordered in May 2017 and to this day I have still not received it.”*
- *“I received sms that the part would arrive 02/09/2017, then when it did not arrive & my husband went in to enquire, they said the part would arrive 29/09/2017. Part still has not arrived & told today part would arrive 04/10/2017.....!”*

When consumers struggle to get hold of parts for their vehicles, they may be inconvenienced, as they may not have full use of their vehicle. Manufacturers need to, therefore, ensure that parts are available, as and when the need arises, to minimise consumer complaints, and as a means to increase consumer satisfaction and loyalty.

This concludes the discussion on the manufacturing and assembly theme. The three codes that led to the development of this theme broadly touch on the manufacturing-related problems consumers complained about during the data-collection period.

Motor vehicle manufacturing is an important component of the South African automotive industry, and the above-mentioned problems should be addressed in an attempt to decrease consumer complaints. This will ultimately assist in creating satisfied and loyal consumers.

5.4.7 Theme: Consumers instigating harmful consequences

The final theme that emerged from the consumer complaints on Hellopeter.com was labelled as consumers instigating harmful consequences. This theme dealt specifically with the fact that consumers have reached a point where the intent of the complaint was to cause harm to the brand or dealership. As a result, dealers and brands are faced with consequences, such as losing consumers and losing profit. These consumers made it clear that they want to warn other consumers about their service experience and threatened to take other drastic steps.

The codes that led to the development of this theme are indicated in Figure 5.11 below and discussed in the sections that follow.



Figure 5.11: Consumers instigating harmful consequences theme

5.4.7.1 Threatening to leave the brand

Of the complaints, 13,6% indicated that consumers threatened to leave the brand, and never purchase a vehicle from the brand again. Due to the disappointing and unsatisfactory service, consumers indicated that further steps need to be taken, and as a result, they threatened to leave the brand. When consumers threaten to leave the brand, it may result in the relationship being destroyed which will have a major impact on consumer loyalty. Quotes taken from the data to support this code include:

- *“I don’t think I will ever buy a car from ***.”*
- *“I’m really thinking of crossing floors...”*
- *“You might just be loosing a relationship that was going to last a lifetime.”*
- *“I think it is about time I change this brand now...”*
- *“I think its time to change brands, no more *** for me...”*
- *“Enough for me to migrate to *** who at least give good service...”*

5.4.7.2 Advises everyone against the dealership

Various consumers decided to use Hellopeter.com as a platform to advise other consumers against a specific dealership. The aim of advising other consumers against

the dealership was to ensure that consumers do not go through the same experience, or to ensure that the dealership loses business based on the negative reviews.

This forms an important component of the consumer decision-making process, specifically with regards to the pre-purchase information search. Fourteen of the consumer complaints advised other consumers against the dealership, and included statements such as:

- *“So people don’t refer anyone to buy a vehicle from *** because they won’t come to the table.”*
- *“Needless to say, I will never do business with *** again, nor recommend anyone to do so.”*
- *“DO NOT TAKE YOUR VEHICLE TO THIS DEALER...”*
- *“For anyone looking to buy a vehicle please don’t waste your time at this dealership.”*
- *“... please do not buy a car at *** they have the worst service ever.”*

5.4.7.3 Advises everyone against the brand

Eleven of the consumer complaints indicated that they will never recommend the brand to anyone, and as a result advised everyone against the brand. This code ties in with the previous code, but complaints were specifically aimed at advising consumers against the brand, and influencing other consumers’ decisions. Quotes taken from the data to support this code included:

- *“Do not buy this brand if you want to keep it longer than the duration of the maintenance plan or as your only vehicle.”*
- *“Please reconsider before signing with them.”*
- *“I will never recommend nor buy a *** again.”*
- *“I am not happy about *** anymore and wouldn’t recommend to anyone.”*
- *“... one wouldn’t even advise someone to *** or to even buy ***...”*

5.4.7.4 Threatening to escalate the matter

Other consumer complaints indicated they want to escalate the matter to resolve the problem. For this reason, the code threatening to escalate the matter was created.

Eleven of the consumers threatened to take the matter further to achieve the desired results. These consumer complaints included statements such as:

- *“I think this situation should be reported to some motor board...”*
- *“So now I will take this further.”*
- *“I am also going to escalate this...”*
- *“... even take this matter on Hello Peter or even further.”*
- *“... before I escalate the matter to RMI.”*
- *“If I do not hear from you before the close of business today; I will file complaints with the appropriate consumer agencies and consider my legal alternatives.”*
- *“I will go to the motor ombudsman if this is not sorted”.*

5.4.7.5 Threatening to leave the dealership

The last code that contributed to this theme involved consumers who threatened to leave the dealership and refusing to do business with the dealership again. Once consumers experienced disappointing service from the dealership, they felt the need to indicate that they do not want to go back to the dealership again. As a result, consumers decided to include this in their complaints, as a means to solve the problem, and as a means to express their frustrations. Quotes taken from the data to support this code included:

- *“I will never go their dealership and would like people to know about their bad service.”*
- *“I will NEVER take my car to this dealership again...”*
- *“The attitude I got there was enough for me to just get the hell away from the dealer.”*
- *“I’ll take my business to another dealer who understands customer service.”*
- *“... will move me never to entrust my vehicle to *** in the future, nor do business with them.”*

This concludes the discussion on the consumers instigating harmful consequences theme. The finding of this theme is unique to this study and it was not found in any of the previous literature. Consumers complained about specific issues and indicated

that they will be taking further action to solve the problem, and also wanted to ensure that other consumers do not experience the same problems.

This also concludes the discussion on the themes related to consumer complaints. The next section includes the discussion on the theme related to the compliments on Hellopeter.com for the data-collection period of this study.

5.4.8 Theme: Customer service excellence

The purpose of the study was to explore the nature of online user-generated content, with regards to complimenting and complaining behaviour. It was established in Section 5.3.4 of this chapter that the compliment-to-complaint ratio was 1:19. The number of complaints, therefore, far exceeded the number of compliments analysed for this study. It is for this reason that only one theme, customer service excellence, emerged as the major positive theme related to **consumer complimenting behaviour** on Hellopeter.com.

Johnston (2004:131) defines customer service excellence as “being easy to do business with”. This implies that the organisation delivers on its promises and if things do go wrong, there is a contingency plan in place to deal with them. Sparker (2016) believes that consumer experience and service excellence are the key to creating long-term value in the automotive industry. Johnston (2004) further suggests that providing a more personalised approach and going the extra mile might contribute to achieving customer service excellence.

As customer service excellence has been identified as an appropriate strategy to improve consumer satisfaction and consumer loyalty (Wirtz & Zeithaml, 2018), this theme carries a high level of significance to this study. As the definition suggests, there are certain aspects that contribute to customer service excellence. These aspects were identified in the form of the following codes, as indicated in Figure 5.12 below.



Figure 5.12: Customer service excellence theme

5.4.8.1 Outstanding service received

The most prominent code that emerged from this theme indicated that consumers received outstanding service from the respective dealership/s. All the compliments included a section on the outstanding service received and were mostly directed to a specific dealership. This is a good indication that consumer expectations were exceeded, and they were more than satisfied with their service experience, resulting in complimenting the brand/dealership on Hellopeter.com. Consumers voiced their positive reactions with regards to outstanding service in the following ways:

- *“They were committed and driven with a passion to assist the customer at all costs.”*
- *“A big thank you from the bottom of my heart to *** from *** for his exceptional service and help.”*
- *“I would just like to thank *** for his outstanding service.”*
- *“Exceptional service from a great bunch of people at ***. Their service is impeccable from when one arrives.”*
- *“I have never had such incredible after sale service.”*

5.4.8.2 Staff going the extra mile

Not only did consumers receive outstanding service, but they also commended staff members for going the extra mile. This has been identified by Johnston (2004) as one of the dimensions of increasing customer service excellence. Various consumers directed the comments to a specific staff member who went out of their way to assist them. This code is related specifically to those staff members who acted and assisted over and above what was expected of them, therefore exceeding consumer expectations. The way in which consumers voiced this specific aspect included:

- *“*** you are a star and thank you for going the extra mile.”*
- *“The staff went a extra mile in trying to get me to the right vehicle of my choice.”*
- *“He was really professional and really went out of his way to make me happy.”*
- *“... and has gone above and beyond in assisting me with this vehicle.”*

5.4.8.3 Helpful staff

Even though not all the reports related to staff going the extra mile, helpful staff members were given credit where credit was due. These two codes are very similar but differ in terms of the degree of service received from the staff members. Helpful staff members were complimented for doing what was expected of them. Consumers voiced their opinions in the following ways:

- *“... staff at *** was very helpful”*
- *“A special thanks to *** who took such good care of me and my vehicle.”*
- *“*** has been more than helpful during this process.”*
- *“To *** and *** a special thank you from day one for all the assistance given.”*

5.4.8.4 Dealership feels like a friend

One of the compliments even went as far as to say that the dealership and their staff have become like friends. *“To be honest he’s like a friend to me and always makes me feel like an old friend.”* This is a very important component in striving for customer service excellence. As suggested by Johnston (2004), and Kruger (2018), companies should strive to add a personal touch and take the time to get to know and understand their consumers to improve customer service excellence. This will ultimately assist in creating a loyal customer, which is of invaluable importance to any company.

5.4.8.5 Recommends dealership

In order to achieve customer service excellence, one should strive to get consumers to recommend the company/brand/dealership to others. A recommendation for a company forms an important component of the consumer decision-making process, and it may trigger the decision to purchase a motor vehicle for some consumers (Mpinganjira & Dos Santos, 2013). This form of positive word-of-mouth contributes to the consumers' willingness to return, referrals and customer loyalty (Andersen, 2018).

As an important component of the data analysed, consumers would write a compliment to the company/brand/dealership, and at the end of the comment indicate that they would recommend the dealership to other people. Although not all the comments explicitly stated that they would recommend the dealership, it is implied by the positive review placed on Hellopeter.com. The way in which consumers recommended the dealership to other consumers included:

- *"I would recommend *** to anyone looking to purchase a vehicle from ***."*
- *"... if you are looking for a trade in or a new car I would highly recommend you use ***."*

5.4.8.6 Loyal consumer

Consumer loyalty is an important component of the ultimate goal of customer service excellence. Consumer loyalty ensures repeat business and ensures the company's growth and profitability. It is imperative for companies to keep loyal consumers, as it is easier to retain existing loyal consumers than prospecting for new consumers. Various consumers indicated that they have been loyal consumers:

- *"I've been dealing with *** for many years."*
- *"This is the second car I bought from and they always make me happy."*
- *"I have been a loyal customer of *** since early 2006."*
- *"I have had *** product for the last 18 years."*
- *"I purchased my vehicle in 2014. I have been servicing it at the *** branch since then."*

This concludes the discussion on the findings from the customer service excellence theme. The customer service excellence theme is an indication that consumer needs,

based on the evoked set identified in the decision-making process (as described in Section 2.3.3.3), were met and exceeded. All of the aspects identified from within the data provide a clear indication of that which contributes to consumer excellence, specifically within the automotive industry of South Africa. These aspects can be regarded as the cornerstone of striving to achieve customer excellence within the automotive industry, and act as a guide to assist in improving customer service. In turn, this may lead to a decrease in consumer complaints and an increase in consumer compliments, specifically on Hellopeter.com.

It should, once again, be highlighted that not all codes developed from the data were reported on. Only the codes that made a significant contribution to this study and assisted in answering the research questions and objectives, were reported on. As a result, there are various codes that have been assigned to pieces of text, without being classified to a specific theme. This highlights the fact that saturation will not be reached, as the data is ever changing, and the majority of the complaints and compliments are related to the above-mentioned themes.

The main themes and codes identified from the data in this study are summarised in Table 5.3 below.

Table 5.3: Summary of themes

	Theme	Categories and Codes
Complaint themes	Poor communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No feedback <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Feedback - Response to mails - Answering and returning of phone calls • Consumer transferred from one person to the next without assistance • Consumer not contacted for permission to do work • Blame is shifted • Misleading information
	Unsatisfactory dealership services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problems persist after various book-ins at the dealership • Dealership not living up to its promise • Courtesy vehicle/ alternative transport arrangements • Vehicle kept at dealership for a long period • Vehicle giving problems after service • Damage to vehicle • Dealership refusing to take responsibility • Poor quality work done • Consumer accounts and billing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Charged exorbitant fees - Charged additional fees • Received better service from another dealership
	Poor customer service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unacceptable customer service • No assistance • Staff incompetency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Incompetent staff - Staff not trained adequately - Rude staff - Consumer disrespected • Consumer inconvenienced • Consumer's health and safety compromised

	Theme	Categories and Codes
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeat disappointing service
	Consumers demanding action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requesting urgent assistance • Fix the problem immediately • Seeking solution/s • Requesting a refund • Demanding compensation • Insisting on new vehicle
	Disappointing OEM brand experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lost trust in reputation of the brand • Brand not living up to its promise • Better service received from another brand • Regrets buying the brand • Warranty-related issues
	Manufacturing/ assembly-related problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vehicle manufacturing issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New car giving problems • Common problem with car model • Difficulty to get hold of parts
	Consumers instigating harmful consequences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advises everyone against the dealership • Advises everyone against the brand • Threatening to leave the brand • Threatening to escalate the matter • Threatening to go to another dealership
Compliment theme	Customer service excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outstanding service received • Staff going the extra mile • Helpful staff • Dealership feels like a friend • Recommends dealership • Loyal consumer

Source: Researcher's own compilation.

5.5 REPORTING ON CODING CATEGORIES

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018:374), when codes are developed from the data, they usually fall into three categories, namely, expected codes, surprising codes and codes of unusual interest (as discussed in Section 4.8.3). The sections below will elaborate on the three categories of codes that were identified from the data.

5.5.1 Expected codes

As with any other research undertaking, one would expect to find certain results. This is particularly true for coding and qualitative data analysis. Expected codes have been described as the codes and topics the researcher anticipated finding as a result of the literature review and researcher's experience (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Although no previous studies of this nature have been done specifically within the automotive industry of South Africa, the literature based on the general services industry suggested various categories that codes were expected to emerge from. Codes that emerged from the data, that were anticipated and expected in some way included:

- No feedback
- No answering of phones
- No response to mails
- Rude staff
- Damage to vehicle
- Poor customer service
- Not living up to promises
- Helpful staff
- Outstanding service received
- Courtesy car/ alternative transport

These codes were particularly evident from the work done by Nimako and Mensah, (2012), Jugwanth and Vigar-Ellis (2013), Carinfo.co.za (2015), Business Queensland (2017), and Hellopeter.com (2018b). Although the wording of the codes may differ

from those identified by the above-mentioned authors, their meanings are similar. Therefore, there were various expected codes that emerged from the data.

5.5.2 Surprising codes

Creswell and Creswell (2018) describe surprising codes as codes that the researcher could not anticipate finding before the analysis of the data, and that were found to be surprising. The most prominent surprising code that emerged was 'new vehicles giving problems', as part of vehicle manufacturing issues. It was surprising to see the number of consumer complaints related to new vehicle problems. It is to be expected that a new motor vehicle would be in excellent working order, hence, this was a surprising code for this study.

Another surprising code that emerged from the data was related to consumer compliments which indicated that the dealership feels like a friend. Although only one compliment indicated this, it was surprising, as it is unlikely for consumers to indicate how they feel about the dealership, specifically on Hellopeter.com. It was a good indication that if the dealership went the extra mile for the consumers, they are more likely to compliment them on Hellopeter.com.

5.5.3 Codes of unusual or conceptual interest

These codes are described as unusual, as they would not necessarily be found within the data but form an important code of interest for the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

There were two codes of conceptual interest found within the data, namely, consumers demanding action and consumers' health and safety compromised. Consumers demanding action was the second-largest code found within the data and represented 24% of the consumer complaints. Although this specific code did not describe the nature of a complaint, various consumers complained about several aspects and then at the end, demanded some form of action to be taken. This specific code was of conceptual interest as it shows that consumers expect some form of action or resolution because of the complaint placed on Hellopeter.com.

The second of the two codes of conceptual interest was that consumers' health and safety were compromised. One would not expect anyone to cause harm to consumers,

specifically to their health and safety. This code was of conceptual interest as it did not appear in any of the previous literature and forms a significant finding from the study. The next section will elaborate on the word counts of specific words within the data, to support the above-mentioned analysis.

5.6 WORD COUNTS

In order to strengthen the themes and codes identified from the data, and as a form of triangulation, word frequency counts were also conducted using Atlas.Ti. The researcher did a search for the most negative and positive words associated with negative and positive service experiences. The negative word search yielded the following, as indicated in Figure 5.13 below.



Figure 5.13: Word cloud – negative words

The words bad, disappointed, poor and worst appeared the most within the data. Other words such as refuse, frustrated, terrible, horrible and rude also had significance within the data. The number of times these negative words appeared within the data confirms the findings of complaints far exceeding the number of compliments for the study. It is a good indication that consumers use the most impactful words to describe their negative service experiences.

On the other spectrum, in terms of the compliments related to this study, the positive words associated with positive service experiences yielded the following, as indicated in Figure 5.14 below.



Figure 5.14: Word-cloud: Positive words

Positive words such as best, great, helpful and outstanding were found to be the top words associated with the compliments and positive service experiences. Other words associated with the positive service experiences included excellent, pleasant, exceptional, happy and wonderful.

By doing these word counts and frequencies, it provides a form of triangulation to strengthen the findings of the themes and codes identified in previous sections of this chapter.

5.7 REFLECTION JOURNAL/ GENERAL OBSERVATIONS MADE

Creswell and Creswell (2018) describe the researcher as the key instrument to collecting and analysing qualitative data. It is, therefore, imperative to remember that the researcher's understanding of the data, to make sense of the data, needs to be taken into consideration. This is particularly important with qualitative research, as some sort of personal analysis and observation needs to be made throughout the process. The researcher, therefore, made use of a reflection journal to capture general observations made that could not be directly deduced by only looking at the data. This reflection journal could be summarised as follows:

- The majority of the user-generated complaints are multi-faceted, indicating that consumers rarely complain about only one thing. The consumers may start off by complaining about one specific issue, but mostly end up complaining about various different issues.
- The fact that none of the OEM brands respond to the user-generated content on Hellopeter.com, causes major frustrations among the consumers, leading them to threaten to take further steps.
- Although the user-generated content analysed was only looked at from the broad OEM brand perspectives, the majority of the content was aimed at specific dealerships, and not the corporate body as a whole.
- It is clear from the complaints-to-compliments ratio, that consumers are more likely to complain when they are not happy with the service received, than complimenting a company on a job well done.
- The user-generated content could be regarded as being biased to some degree, as the researcher only had access to the consumers' side of the story, and not the truth from both parties, and this could also be a limitation of the study.
- There are a few outlier complaints that were in Afrikaans. The researcher's home language is Afrikaans, and as a result, she could translate these complaints in order to analyse the data.
- Based on the amount of user-generated content gathered per OEM brand during the period of two months, there is a clear alignment between each OEM's market size and vehicle sales and number of complaints/compliments.
- It is clear that some consumers are ill-informed and tend to take matters to the extreme very quickly, without getting all their facts straight.
- Various complaints are not even related to the OEM brands or dealerships, indicating that consumers do not know where to complain about specific issues, or to whom they should address the issues.
- The amount of single codes identified from within the data set is a clear indication that a point of saturation will never be reached. The two-month data-collection period can therefore be regarded as sufficient.

- It could be a possibility that the OEM brands do not regard these complaints as dangerous to the company, and for this reason, they do not respond to the content posted on Hellopeter.com.
- Out of the 185 content reports analysed, only a few of the consumers provided follow-up communication with regards to the resolution of their problems.
- Consumers are unaware of the formal process to be followed in order to submit claims, and so forth to the OEMs.
- Because the data may not be manipulated in any way, the language use and spelling errors had to be kept in their original format. As a result, when doing word counts and frequency counts, some of the words may have been omitted due to language errors.
- At the start of the coding process, the codes were very long and very specific. Throughout the coding and re-coding process, the codes became shorter and more general, although still very specific.
- Although each OEM brand's data set was coded and analysed on its own, once all these seven data sets were merged, clear themes and descriptions emerged from the codes that were generated. This provided a good holistic picture of the OEM brands as a whole.
- From the few compliments within the data set, most of them are aimed at a specific dealership, and at a specific person who provided outstanding service to the consumer.
- The naming of codes and themes proved to be very difficult, and if the theme was not clearly defined, it left room for discrepancies and other interpretations. The naming and describing of the codes and themes were a continuous process until the final set of themes was developed.
- Due to the fact that the content analysis is based on manifest coding, the codes and themes need to relate as closely to the original text as possible, which sometimes proved to be very difficult.
- The labelling of codes is based on the researcher's interpretation, and not necessarily on academic suggestions.

- Complaints were either technical or related to specific motor vehicle-related issues, or complaints were more general with regards to service, staff and communication. These are applicable within the general service industry.

5.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented a detailed discussion of the empirical data analysed for this study. The chapter provided an overall view of the frequency of user-generated content that was collected and analysed on Hellopeter.com. A brief background to theme development was discussed, before the detailed discussion followed.

The detailed analysis of the theme development process indicated that there were eight prominent themes that emerged from the data collected on Hellopeter.com. Each of the themes had several codes that contributed to the final development of the theme. Seven of the themes were related specifically to consumer complaints and included poor communication, unsatisfactory dealership services, poor customer service, consumers demanding action, disappointing OEM brand experience, motor vehicle manufacturing and assembly problems, and consumers initiating further action. The one theme related to compliments emerged as customer service excellence. Some of the findings correlated with previous work done within the literature, and new findings were added with specific reference to the automotive industry in South Africa.

A summary of the main themes and codes was presented in Table 5.3, after which the discussion on the coding categories followed. As a means of triangulation, word counts were included to strengthen the credibility of the data. Due to the qualitative nature of the study, the researcher's reflection journal was included to provide the necessary insight into the researcher's interpretation of the data analysed.

This concludes the data analysis chapter. Chapter 6, the final chapter, will provide a summary of the main findings, and recommendations. A discussion of the assumptions and limitations will also be included as part of this chapter.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This dissertation consists of six chapters, each addressing specific content related to the study. Chapter 1 provided an overview of the background of the study, where the problem statement and research objectives were stated for the first time. Chapter 2 served as the first of two literature review chapters and dealt with the consumer decision-making process associated with the purchase of a high-value product such as a motor vehicle. This chapter, more specifically, explored consumer post-purchase evaluations and post-purchase response behaviour, as the most integral component of this study. Chapter 3 served as the second literature review chapter and explored the South African automotive industry as an integral component of the South African economy. Chapter 4 explained the research methodology employed in the study in detail. The specific research approach followed in this study was a qualitative research approach making use of a content analysis. Chapter 5 provided an in-depth discussion of the results of the analysis of the empirical data of this study. The main purpose of this chapter, Chapter 6, is to provide a comprehensive summary and meaningful conclusions in order to make the necessary recommendations, based on the results obtained in the previous chapter.

In the next section, the research objectives are scrutinised in terms of the findings, conclusions and recommendations associated with each individual objective. A discussion of the assumptions and limitations of the study is also included, and where possible, future research directions are identified. This chapter ultimately concludes with a summary of the main findings, discussions and recommendations of the study.

6.2 REFLECTIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS LINKED TO EACH SECONDARY RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The sections below will provide a reflection of each of the secondary research objectives of this study. The findings from the literature as well as from the empirical data analysis will be included in each section. Thereafter, the conclusions and recommendations linked to each individual secondary objective will be given.

6.2.1 Secondary research objective 1

To investigate the frequency of user-generated-content posted on Hellopeter.com related to the seven OEM brands in South Africa.

The first objective aimed to determine the frequency of user-generated content posted on Hellopeter.com, with specific focus on the seven OEM brands of South Africa. The findings, conclusions and recommendations are discussed in the sections below.

6.2.1.1 Literature findings

It was determined from the literature (Sections 2.4.2 and 2.4.3) that consumers are more likely to complain about bad service experiences than to compliment a company or leave a positive review. It was found that it takes approximately 40 compliments to offset the damage caused by one complaint online. According to Section 4.7.3, a total of 48 225 user-generated content items were posted on Hellopeter.com in 2019 that relate to the automotive industry in South Africa.

6.2.1.2 Empirical findings

A total number of 185 items of user-generated content were collected and analysed for the time period of this study (Section 5.3.1). It was determined that an average of 3,03 reports were posted per day on Hellopeter.com for the data-collection period. The number of complaints analysed was 176 (Section 5.3.2). Only nine compliments were analysed for the specific data-collection period (Section 5.3.3), resulting in 5% positive reports for the period.

The frequency of the user-generated content collected per OEM brand was indicated in Figure 5.1 and showed a direct correlation to the OEM new vehicle market share in South Africa. Volkswagen, Ford and Toyota were the three OEM brands with the most user-generated content posted during the data-collection period. Toyota, Volkswagen and Ford also held the top three positions with regards to their market share in the South African automotive industry. General Motors, being in one of the bottom positions with regards to market share, as a result of withdrawing from the market, had the lowest number of user-generated content posted for the data-collection period.

The frequency of the complaints analysed were indicated in Figure 5.2, and it was calculated that an average of 2,89 complaints were posted per day for the data-collection period. The number of complaints analysed for the data-collection period

also showed some correlation to the OEM new vehicle market share in South Africa. Volkswagen (48 complaints) had the highest number of complaints for the data-collection period, with Ford in the second position with 36 complaints for the data-collection period. As indicated above, these two brands, also hold two of the leading positions with regards to new vehicle market share in South Africa.

The frequency of the compliments analysed per OEM were included in Figure 5.3 and indicated that only three of the OEM brands received compliments during the data-collection period. Thus, confirming the literature that consumers are more likely to complain than to leave a compliment. Toyota, which held and still holds the leading position within the new vehicle market share of South Africa, had the most compliments for the data-collection period.

It was also found, and important to mention for the discussion of these findings, that none of the OEM brands responded to consumer complaints or compliments on Hellopeter.com for the data-collection period.

6.2.1.3 Conclusions

The number of user-generated content items collected and analysed for the data-collection period totalled 185, indicating an average of 3,03 reports compiled and submitted on Hellopeter.com on a daily basis. The number of user-generated content analysed per OEM brand, shows a direct correlation with the OEM new vehicle market share of South Africa. This reveals that the number of vehicles sold per OEM brand in South Africa may provide the brand with an indication of the percentage of user-generated content to be expected on Hellopeter.com, in relation to the other brands.

The number of complaints analysed per OEM brand for the data-collection period corresponds to the new vehicle market share in South Africa, and indicates a direct correlation between the new vehicle market share and number of complaints raised on Hellopeter.com.

The amount of complaints analysed far exceeded the number of compliments analysed for the data-collection period, confirming the literature that consumers are more likely to complain than to write a compliment. It can be concluded that the consumers of the seven OEM brands of South Africa are more likely to complain on Hellopeter.com, than to leave a compliment.

None of the OEM brands responded to consumer complaints on Hellopeter.com, increasing consumer frustrations, which may also lead to repeat complaints on Hellopeter.com.

6.2.1.4 Recommendations

It is recommended that the OEM brands anticipate the number of consumer complaints and compliments to be posted on Hellopeter.com, as a means to apply the necessary procedures to deal with these reports. It is also recommended that user-generated content posted on Hellopeter.com be monitored to determine where consumer expectations were not met, how to improve their service offering, and to reduce the number of complaints posted on Hellopeter.com. The OEM brands should also respond to online user-generated content on Hellopeter.com, as free review packages are available for them to do so. These free packages allow them to respond to consumer reports.

6.2.2 Secondary research objective 2

To determine the compliment-to-complaint ratio on Hellopeter.com related to the seven OEM brands in South Africa.

The second research objective was developed to determine what the compliment-to-complaint ratio on Hellopeter.com was for the user-generated content related to the seven OEM brands of South Africa. Although this objective was briefly touched on in the previous research objective, the ratio was not determined.

6.2.2.1 Literature findings

The literature in Section 2.4.2 revealed that only one in every ten satisfied consumers is likely to leave a compliment. The average compliment-to-complaint ratio for general services was calculated as 1:10 (Section 2.4.2). The average compliment-to-complaint ratio across all service industries listed on Hellopeter.com was given as 1:4 (Section 2.4.2). The ideal compliment-to-complaint ratio was described as 5:1, indicating that for every complaint there should be at least five compliments (Section 2.4.2).

6.2.2.2 Empirical findings

Figure 5.4 indicated that 95% of the user-generated content analysed for this study were complaints, while only 5% were compliments. It was, therefore, calculated in Section 5.3.4 that for every compliment given in the data-collection period, there were

19 complaints. None of the OEM brands were able to reach the ideal compliment-to-complaint ratio of 5:1. The overall compliment-to-complaint ratio for the seven OEM brands in South Africa was calculated in Section 5.3.4 as 1:19.

6.2.2.3 Conclusions

Consumers of the seven OEM brands of South Africa are 19 times more likely to complain than to leave one positive compliment on Hellopeter.com, which contradicts to 1:4 ratio within the general services industry on Hellopeter.com.

The compliment-to-complaint ratio on Hellopeter.com for the seven OEM brands in South Africa, can therefore be indicated as 1:19.

6.2.2.4 Recommendations

It is recommended that the OEM brands should strive to achieve the ideal compliment-to-complaint ratio of 5:1. This can only be achieved by monitoring and responding to consumer complaints and compliments on Hellopeter.com. The OEM brands should also aim to increase the number of positive reviews/compliments on Hellopeter.com, by improving their service offering, as an attempt to offset the damage caused by the consumer complaints.

6.2.3 Secondary research objective 3

To report on the descriptive nature of the complaint themes on Hellopeter.com related to the seven OEM brands in South Africa.

The third research objective dealt specifically with the identification of the themes in terms of to consumer complaint behaviour related to the seven OEM brands of South Africa on Hellopeter.com.

6.2.3.1 Literature findings

Based on the information provided in Table 2.4, the most frequent complaints within the general service industry on Hellopeter.com were categorised as: bad quality, poor customer service, rudeness, not keeping promises, playing pass the parcel, no omni-channel touchpoints, inaccessibility and hidden costs. Other researchers have identified the consumer complaint categories on Hellopeter.com as: delay in response, promise to do something and didn't, unhelpful, ignored, defective product, and bad attitude (Table 2.4). Within the motor vehicle insurance industry, Table 2.4 indicated

that the complaint categories on Hellopeter.com were: billing/accounts, repairs/servicing feedback/response, call centre and breach of contract.

It was determined in Section 2.3.3.9 that post-purchase conflict, known as cognitive dissonance, also serves as a motive for complaining online. The dissonance arousal factors were identified as: awareness of expectations, unconfirmed expectations, reported dissonance, effort expended, incongruence with self-concept, price, perceived persuasiveness of the salesperson and level of confidence.

The top five general reasons why consumers were frustrated, specifically with automotive dealerships, were determined in Section 3.3.4, and indicated that they were frustrated because: the service took longer than consumers expected, the dealership tried to push additional services, consumers had an appointment but had to wait in line, consumers had to enquire about how much the dealership would charge, and the dealership did not provide the consumer with a loan vehicle.

It was determined that, on average, five to eight main themes or categories emerged from the complaints within the literature.

6.2.3.2 Empirical findings

During the data-collection period, 176 consumer complaints were analysed. The coding process yielded a total of 54 significant codes (codes that appeared within the data more than once and had a significant impact on the study). From the codes, seven distinct themes emerged that were specifically related to the consumer complaints about the seven OEM brands on Hellopeter.com.

The seven main themes that emerged from the data were discussed in Section 5.4 and are summarised in Table 6.1 below.

Table 6.1: Description of the main complaint themes

Complaint theme	Description
Poor communication (Section 5.4.1)	Described as a breakdown in communication and a lack of exchanging information. Aspects that contributed to poor communication were identified as: no feedback, consumer not contacted to grant permission to do work, transferred from one person to the next, shifting blame and misleading information.
Unsatisfactory dealership services	A prominent theme emerged from the data when consumers specifically indicated that they were not satisfied with the way in which the dealership performed

Complaint theme	Description
(Section 5.4.2)	during their service encounter. The aspects contributing to this theme are: problems persist after various book-ins, dealership not living up to its promise, courtesy vehicle/alternative transport, vehicle kept at the dealership for a long period, vehicle giving problems after service, vehicle damaged, dealership refusing to take responsibility, poor quality work, consumer accounts, and better service received from another dealership.
Poor customer service (Section 5.4.3)	Poor customer service emerged specifically as a result of not meeting consumer expectations and was more general in nature. The codes that led to the development of this theme were: unacceptable customer service, no assistance, staff incompetency, repeat disappointing service, consumer inconvenienced, and consumer's health and safety compromised.
Consumers demanding action (Section 5.4.4)	Consumers demanding action comprises all the ways in which consumers expressed a final plea for something to be done to alleviate the problems experienced in the complaint. The codes that assisted in the development of this theme included: requesting urgent assistance, fix the problem immediately, seeking solutions, requesting a refund, demanding compensation and insisting on a new vehicle.
Disappointing OEM brand experience (Section 5.4.5)	Consumers indicated their level of disappointment with the specific OEM brand, and not necessarily the dealership. Aspects that led to the development of this theme included: lost trust in reputation of the brand, brand not living up to its promise, received better service from another brand, regrets buying the brand and warranty-related issues.
Manufacturing/assembly related problems. (Section 5.4.6)	This theme encompasses all the aspects that are related to the production, assembly and parts causing problems for the consumer. The codes within this theme included: vehicle manufacturing issues, common problem with vehicle model and difficulty to get hold of parts.
Consumers instigating harmful consequences (Section 5.4.7)	This theme dealt specifically with the fact that consumers have reached a point where the intent of the complaint was to cause harm to the brand or dealership. As a result, dealers and brands are faced with consequences, such as losing consumers and subsequently, losing profit. The aspects involved in this theme were: threatening to leave the brand, advises everyone against the dealership, advises everyone against the brand, threatening to escalate the matter and threatening to leave the dealership.

Source: Researcher's own compilation.

The majority of the complaint reports were multi-dimensional and did not address only one specific issue or theme. The majority of the complaints, therefore, consisted of a combination of different themes and codes. Consumers tend to start complaining about the main issue, unpacking the report into more detail about any other problems encountered along the way, and end the report by means of demanding some sort of action.

6.2.3.3 Conclusions

Seven distinct themes were identified that contributed towards the online complaint behaviour related to the seven OEM brands of South Africa. Several of the complaint categories identified from the literature, also emerged from the empirical data, but were reworded to fit the description of this study. The seven themes were identified as poor communication, unsatisfactory dealership services, poor customer service, consumers demanding action, disappointing OEM brand experience, manufacturing and assembly-related problems, and consumers instigating harmful consequences.

Only three of the seven themes were directly associated with the OEM brands and automotive industry in South Africa. The remaining four themes were more general in nature, and the complaint behaviour may, therefore, be applicable to generic service industries. The findings are in line with previous findings found in the literature and added new dimensions within the South African automotive industry.

6.2.3.4 Recommendations

It is recommended that the seven OEM brands should respond to consumer complaints on Hellopeter.com. They should also focus on the complaint themes identified in this study to improve their service offerings, as complaint handling does not only mean that issues must be resolved, but that service offerings must be improved to prevent harm to the brand. This can be achieved by communicating openly with their consumers, ensuring that they live up to their service expectations, educating their staff members on customer service, attending to consumers' final pleas for help, ensuring that the manufacturing and assembly of vehicles are up to standard using quality control measures, and listening to their consumers.

6.2.4 Secondary research objective 4

To report on the descriptive nature of the compliment themes on Hellopeter.com related to the seven OEM brands in South Africa.

In line with secondary research objective 3, this objective aimed to describe the themes that emerged from consumer complimenting behaviour on Hellopeter.com related to the seven OEM brands of South Africa.

6.2.4.1 Literature findings

Much more research has been done on consumer complaint behaviour than on consumer compliment behaviour (Section 2.4.2). The compliment-to-complaint ratios within the literature are a good indication as to why much more research has been done on consumer complaint behaviour. It was, therefore, anticipated that only a small number of compliments would be analysed for the study.

Based on Table 2.3, the main motives for consumer complimenting behaviour were identified as: delight or great satisfaction, dissonance reduction, reciprocity/social norms, improve relationship with a service person, high involvement with product or service, voting behaviour to continue special services or products, to buffer complaints and increase effectiveness and flattery. No literature could be found on the categories of consumer compliments within the South African automotive industry.

6.2.4.2 Empirical findings

Nine consumer compliments were analysed for the data-collection period. Due to the fact that only 5% of the user-generated content were compliments, only one theme emerged from the data, in terms of consumer complimenting behaviour. The theme was labelled as customer service excellence and is summarised in Table 6.2 below.

Table 6.2: Description of the main compliment theme

Compliment theme	Description
Customer service excellence (Section 5.4.8)	Customer service excellence implies that the organisation delivers on its promises and has plans in place should anything go wrong. The aspects involved in this theme were identified as: outstanding service received, staff going the extra mile, helpful staff, dealership feels like a friend, recommends dealership and loyal consumer.

Source: Researcher's own compilation.

Even though only nine consumer compliments were analysed, these reports were also multi-dimensional. Consumers would compliment the dealership, then the specific person, and end the report by either recommending the dealership or summarising their positive service experience again.

6.2.4.3 Conclusions

The customer service excellence theme is highly significant for this study. The aspects that formed the cornerstone of customer service excellence for this study were identified in Table 6.2, as outstanding service received, staff going the extra mile, helpful staff, dealership feels like a friend, recommends dealership and loyal consumer. The only aspect identified from the literature that emerged from the data as well, was great satisfaction/delight, which was labelled as outstanding service. It can, therefore, be concluded that the aspects related to customer service excellence within the automotive industry of South Africa, are unique.

6.2.4.4 Recommendations

It is recommended that the seven OEM brands should use the aspects that contribute to customer service excellence, as a benchmark to retain customers, to satisfy consumer needs, and ultimately, to create a loyal customer base. The OEM brands should also, through interaction with consumer advocacy platforms, monitor consumer compliments to understand where they have met consumer expectations, and where improvements can be made. When monitoring these consumer compliments, it is also recommended that they be responded to, in efforts to build better relationships with their consumers and enhancing the overall customer experience.

6.2.5 Secondary research objective 5

To determine the most prominent reasons why consumers of the seven OEM brands in South Africa complain on Hellopeter.com.

The aim of this objective was to determine the main reasons why the consumers of the seven OEM brands in South Africa complained on Hellopeter.com for the data-collection period.

6.2.5.1 Literature findings

The majority of the literature classified complaints according to the complaint categories as indicated in Table 2.4 and Section 2.4.3.1. The main complaint categories, specifically on HelloPeter.com, can be summarised as in Table 6.3 below.

Table 6.3: Main complaint categories on HelloPeter.com

Article title	Service industry	Complaint categories
The most frequent customer complaints	General service industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bad quality • Poor customer service • Rudeness • Not keeping promises • Playing pass-the-parcel • No omni-channel touchpoints • Inaccessibility • Hidden costs
Are you using the Best Insurance Company in South Africa?	Motor vehicle insurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Billing/Accounts • Repairs/Serviceing • Feedback/Response • Call Centre • Breach of contract
Customer Complaint Behaviour and Companies' Recovery Initiatives: The Case of the Hello Peter Website.	General service industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delay in response • Promise to do something and didn't • Unhelpful • Ignored • Defective product • Bad attitude • Rude or impolite

Source: Researcher's own compilation.

Even though these complaints were classified as categories, they serve as the major contributors for consumer complaints on HelloPeter.com and serve as a good theoretical foundation for this study.

6.2.5.2 Empirical findings

From the data analysis, 54 significant codes were identified which contributed to the development of the seven themes discussed in Section 6.3.3.

In order to determine the most prominent reasons why consumers complained on HelloPeter.com, the researcher used the code list developed on Atlas.Ti. From the code list, the codes were ordered from most frequent to least frequent (as indicated in

Appendix B). The top ten codes that were complained about most frequently were then identified in the order as listed in Table 6.4 below:

Table 6.4: Top ten codes related to consumer complaints according to frequency of codes

Code	Frequency	% of total complaints
No feedback (Section 5.4.1.1)	76	43,18%
Unacceptable customer service (Section 5.4.3.1)	63	35,79%
Consumers demanding action (Section 5.4.4)	49	27,84%
Vehicle manufacturing issues (Section 5.4.6.1)	44	25%
Problems persist after various book-ins at the dealership (Section 5.4.2.1)	37	21,02%
Dealership not living up to its promise (Section 5.4.2.2)	28	15,90%
No courtesy car/alternative transport (Section 5.4.2.3)	25	14,21%
Threatening to leave the brand (Section 5.4.7.1)	24	13,63%
Vehicle kept at dealership for a long period (Section 5.4.2.4)	23	13,07%
Customer inconvenienced (Section 5.4.3.4)	22	12,50%

Source: Researcher's own compilation.

6.2.5.3 Conclusions

The most prominent reasons why consumers of the seven OEM brands in South Africa complained on Hellopeter.com were:

1. No feedback
2. Unacceptable customer service
3. Consumers demanding action

4. Vehicle manufacturing issues
5. Problems persist after various book-ins at the dealership
6. Dealership not living up to its promise
7. No courtesy car/alternative transport
8. Threatening to leave the brand
9. Vehicle kept at dealership for a long period
10. Customer inconvenienced

Some of these reasons confirm what has already been identified from the literature, however, the majority of the above-mentioned reasons are unique and specific to the automotive industry in South Africa. For this reason, these may not be applicable to other industries.

6.2.5.4 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the main reason for consumer complaints was due to the consumer not receiving feedback from the company, pointing to communication issues in the industry. It is imperative that open communication channels and proper feedback systems be put in place to satisfy consumer needs. These could include an open-door policy, clear reporting lines within the company, and dedicated customer service/feedback personnel.

It is recommended that the seven OEM brands, as well as the automotive industry in South Africa, should consider the top reasons for consumer complaints, and use it as focus points to advance their service offerings and improve customer satisfaction.

6.2.6 Secondary research objective 6

To determine the main reasons why consumers of the seven OEM brands in South Africa, leave a compliment on Hellopeter.com.

This secondary objective aimed to determine the main reasons for consumer compliments on Hellopeter.com.

6.2.6.1 Literature findings

The main motives for consumer complimenting behaviour were identified in Table 2.3 as: delight or great satisfaction, dissonance reduction, reciprocity/social norms, improve relationship with a service person, high involvement with product or service,

voting behaviour to continue special services or products, to buffer complaints, and increase effectiveness and flattery.

6.2.6.2 Empirical findings

Only nine compliments were analysed for the data-collection period, for this reason the frequency of codes are far less than the frequency of the complaints. The coding list was used again to determine the top reasons why consumers left a compliment on Hellopeter.com for the data-collection period. These were identified as indicated in Table 6.5 below.

Table 6.5: Main codes related to consumer compliments according to frequency of codes

Code	Frequency	% of total compliments
Outstanding service received (Section 5.4.8.1)	9	100%
Staff going the extra mile (Section 5.4.8.2)	5	55,56%
Helpful staff (Section 5.4.8.3)	6	66,67%
Recommends dealership	3	33,33%
Loyal consumer	2	22,22%
Dealership feels like a friend	1	11,11%

Source: Researcher's own compilation.

Due to the small number of compliments analysed, all codes that contributed to the customer service excellence theme were included in the top reasons for leaving a compliment on Hellopeter.com.

6.2.6.3 Conclusions

The main reasons why consumers of the seven OEM brands in South Africa left a compliment on Hellopeter.com were:

1. Outstanding service received
2. Staff going the extra mile
3. Helpful staff
4. Recommends dealership
5. Loyal consumer

6. Dealership feels like a friend

Only one of the motives for consumer complimenting behaviour identified from the literature emerged from this study and was labelled as outstanding service received. The above-mentioned can, therefore, be considered the main reasons why consumers leave a compliment on Hellopeter.com.

6.2.6.4 Recommendations

The seven OEM brands should engage with their consumers by responding to the compliments on Hellopeter.com and thanking the consumer for the compliment. It could assist in attracting new customers if they share these compliments on their company websites or social media pages. These aspects should be regarded as the cornerstone of striving to achieve customer excellence within the automotive industry, and act as a guide to assist in improving customer service to create loyal consumers.

This concludes the discussion on the findings, conclusions and recommendations linked to each secondary research objective. The following section presents the overarching conclusion and recommendation linked to the primary research objective of this study.

6.3 ADDRESSING THE PRIMARY RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The primary objective of this study is to explore the nature of user-generated content, as found on Hellopeter.com, in terms of consumer complaint and compliment behaviour related to the seven OEM brands in South Africa.

The findings gathered from the previously discussed secondary research objectives, assisted in the development of the main findings of this study. There were seven themes that emerged from the data that described the complaint behaviour of the consumers of the seven OEM brands of South Africa. Ten most prominent complaints were also identified from the data.

In terms of consumer complimenting behaviour related to the seven OEM brands of South Africa, only one theme emerged to describe the nature of consumer compliments. Within this theme, the top six reasons for consumer compliments were also identified. It was evident that consumer complaints far exceeded the number of compliments analysed for the data-collection period, with a compliment-to-complaint ratio of 1:19.

Figure 6.1 and Table 6.6 below highlight the most important findings as a means to answer the primary research objective.

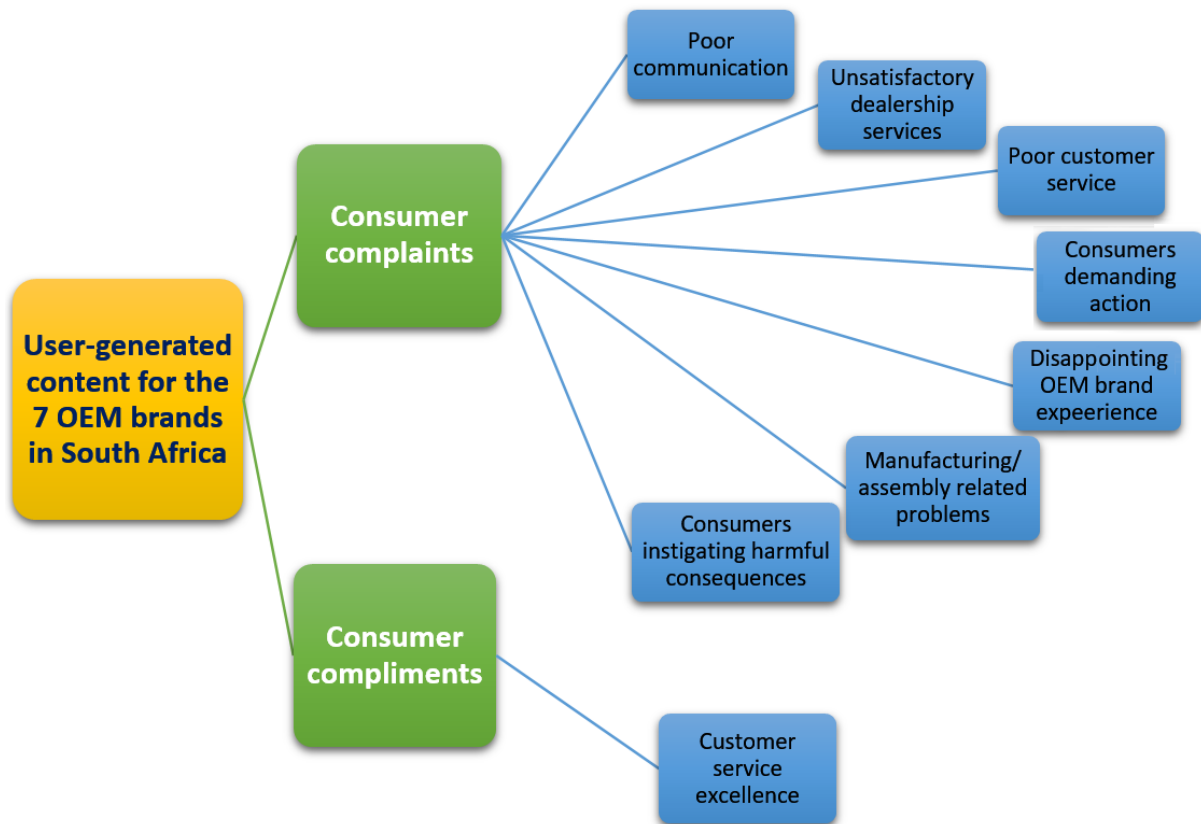


Figure 6.1: Nature of user-generated content for the seven OEM brands in South Africa

Table 6.6: Summary of the main findings associated with the primary research objective

User-generated content	Nature of user-generated content (themes)	Top complaints/compliments
Consumer complaints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor communication • Unsatisfactory dealership services • Poor customer service • Consumers demanding action • Disappointing OEM brand experience • Manufacturing and assembly related problems • Consumers instigating harmful consequences 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No feedback 2. Unacceptable customer service 3. Consumers demanding action 4. Vehicle manufacturing issues 5. Problems persist after various book-ins at the dealership 6. Dealership not living up to its promise 7. No courtesy car/alternative transport 8. Threatening to leave the brand 9. Vehicle kept at dealership for a long period 10. Customer inconvenienced

User-generated content	Nature of user-generated content (themes)	Top complaints/compliments
Consumer compliments	Customer service excellence	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Outstanding service received 2. Staff going the extra mile 3. Helpful staff 4. Recommends dealership 5. Loyal consumer 6. Dealership feels like a friend

Source: Researcher's own compilation.

6.3.1 Overarching conclusion and recommendations linked to the primary research objective

Although the literature that was consulted for the purpose of this study was not based specifically on the automotive industry, but more on the general services industry, some expected overlaps between codes and themes were identified from the data. This proves that, although, the automotive industry is specific in nature, certain general service attributes and/or failures, are consistent within this industry.

As pioneering work related to the automotive industry in South Africa, an inductive content analysis approach was followed, and various findings from the general services industry were confirmed from the findings of this study. This indicates that general service industry user-generated content is also applicable to the automotive industry of South Africa. However, the majority of the user-generated content that was analysed was more industry specific and unique to the automotive industry. Thus, confirming that pioneer work was needed to provide the basic framework needed for future studies within this industry.

The consumer complaint and compliment behaviour on Hellopeter.com, as related to the seven OEM brands in South Africa, can therefore be summarised as in Table 6.6 above.

It is highly recommended that the seven OEM brands in South Africa use the findings of this study to monitor and improve consumer complaint and compliment behaviour, as a means to ultimately create loyal consumers.

Customer service should always be made a priority, and staff should be trained to address and improve on the issues identified, where possible. Staff training interventions could include training service personnel on how to be effective and

efficient communicators, as this could assist in providing better feedback to consumers, which could ultimately enhance the customer service experience.

Although the OEM brand is not responsible for the manufacturing of the vehicles, quality measures should be put in place to ensure that vehicles meet the minimum acceptable standards and are in 100% working order before being given to the consumer.

Dealerships must ensure that problems with vehicles get fixed properly the first time, to ensure that consumers need not return the vehicle to the dealership with the same problem. Dealerships can achieve this by increasing quality control measures and final checks, before releasing the vehicle to the consumer. Job cards must be completed and checked meticulously, to ensure that all parts and the vehicle is in a better working order than when it arrived at the dealership.

Dealerships should always strive to deliver on their promises, rather under promise and over deliver, than providing sub-standard service and ultimately causing harm to the brand and the dealership.

When consumers threaten to leave the brand, the organisation (the OEM brand or dealership) needs to ensure that they understand why the consumer feels that way and investigate the reasons that led up to the consumer threatening to leave the brand. By having a better understanding of the circumstances, and listening to the consumer, the organisation might be able to solve the problem and convince the consumer to stay loyal to the brand.

Vehicles that are kept at the dealership for a long period, should be addressed. Management should look into the reasons why the vehicle is kept on the floor for such a long time and provide valuable feedback to the consumer. For example, if they are waiting for parts to be delivered, it is an issue out of the dealerships' hands, however, the way the dealership handles the communication with the consumer, is of extreme importance. In such instances where the vehicle must be kept for a longer period, it is suggested that the dealership provide the consumer with a courtesy car. If possible, the dealerships should aim to finish work on vehicles as soon as possible, to ensure that consumers are not left without their vehicles for a long period and not be inconvenienced further.

Consumer complaints and compliments need to be monitored and responded to, to improve relationships with the consumers and achieve customer service excellence.

It is also recommended that they should not only focus on the findings from other general service industries, as the complaint and compliment behaviour was very specific in nature and related to the automotive industry in South Africa.

This concludes the discussion of the main findings of this study, which is summarised in Table 6.7 below.

6.3.2 Summary of research objectives' findings, conclusions and recommendations.

A discussion on the assumptions, limitations and possible future research areas is included after the table.

Table 6.7: Summary of research objectives' findings, conclusions and recommendations

Research objective	Empirical findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
<p>To investigate the frequency of user-generated-content on Hellopeter.com related to the seven OEM brands in South Africa.</p> <p>(Secondary research objective 1)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 185 user-generated content reports were analysed. 176 of the reports were complaints and only 9 of the reports were compliments. • The frequency of the user-generated content collected per OEM brand showed a correlation to the OEM new vehicle market share in South Africa. • The frequency of the complaints also showed some correlation with the OEM new vehicle market share in South Africa. • Toyota, the new vehicle market share leader, had the most compliments for the data-collection period. • None of the OEM brands respond to consumer complaints or compliments on Hellopeter.com. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on the 185 user-generated content analysed, an average of 3,03 reports were compiled and submitted on Hellopeter.com on a daily basis. • The number of complaints analysed for the time period was 176, thus an average of 2,89 complaints were posted per day for the data collection period. • Only 9 compliments were analysed for the specific time period of this study (Section 5.3.3). • The number of the user-generated content items analysed showed a direct correlation with the OEM new vehicle market share in South Africa. • The number of complaints analysed corresponds with the OEM new vehicle market share. • The frequency of the compliments analysed per OEM were included in Figure 5.3, and Toyota, the new vehicle market share leader, had the most compliments for the data-collection period. • Consumer frustrations are increased by the zero responses from the OEM brands. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OEM brands should anticipate the number of consumer complaints and compliments to be posted on Hellopeter.com, as a means to apply the necessary procedures to deal with these reports. • User-generated content posted on Hellopeter.com should be monitored to determine where consumer expectations were not met, and how to improve their service offering. • The OEM brands should respond to online user-generated content on Hellopeter.com, as free packages are available for them to do so.

Research objective	Empirical findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
<p>To determine the compliment-to-complaint ratio on Hellopeter.com related to the seven OEM brands in South Africa.</p> <p>(Secondary research objective 2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 95% of the user-generated content analysed for the study were complaints, while only 5% were compliments. • None of the OEM brands reached the ideal compliment-to-complaint ratio of 5:1. • The overall compliment-to-complaint ratio for the seven OEM brands in South Africa was calculated as 1:19. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number of complaints far exceeded the number of compliments. • Consumers are 19 times more likely to complain than to leave a compliment on Hellopeter.com. • The compliment-to-complaint ratio for this study was 1:19. • The consumers of the seven OEM brands of South Africa are more likely to complaint about negative service experiences than to leave a compliment when expectations have been exceeded. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The seven OEM brands should strive to reach the ideal compliment-to-complaint ratio of 5:1 by monitoring and responding to consumer complaints and compliments on Hellopeter.com. • The seven OEM brands should aim to increase the number of compliments as an attempt to offset the damage caused by consumer complaints.
<p>To report on the descriptive nature of the complaint themes on Hellopeter.com related to the seven OEM brands in South Africa.</p> <p>(Secondary research objective 3)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 54 significant codes led to the development of seven themes for consumer complaint behaviour. • The seven themes were identified as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Poor communication ○ Unsatisfactory dealership services ○ Poor customer service ○ Disappointing OEM brand experience ○ Consumers demanding action ○ Manufacturing/assembly-related problems. ○ Consumers instigating harmful consequences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seven distinct themes were identified that contributed towards the online complaint behaviour of the seven OEM brands of South Africa. • Several of the complaint categories identified from the literature also emerged from the empirical data. • Three themes were directly associated with the OEM brands, and automotive industry in South Africa. • Four themes were more general in nature, and may be applicable to other service industries. • The findings are in line with previous findings and added new dimensions within the South African automotive industry, which were not previously available. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is recommended that the seven OEM brands should respond to consumer complaints on Hellopeter.com. • Focus should be placed on the identified complaint themes to improve service offerings. • It is recommended that the OEM brands should: communicate openly with their consumers, ensure that they live up to their service expectations, educate their staff members on customer service, assist in the consumers' final pleas for help, ensure that the manufacturing and assembly of vehicles are up to standard, and listen to their consumers to avoid future harmful consequences.

Research objective	Empirical findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consumer complaints were multi-faceted and consisted of a combination of different themes and codes. Consumers tend to start complaining about the main issue, unpacking a report into more detail, and end the complaint by means of demanding some sort of action. 	
<p>To report on the descriptive nature of the compliment themes on Hellopeter.com related to the seven OEM brands in South Africa.</p> <p>(Secondary research objective 4)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nine consumer compliments were analysed for the data-collection period. Only one major theme emerged for the consumer complimenting behaviour related to the seven OEM brands of South Africa. Customer service excellence was identified as the major theme of consumer complimenting behaviour. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer service excellence within the automotive industry of South Africa is made up of: outstanding service received, staff going the extra mile, helpful staff, dealership feels like a friend, recommends dealership and loyal consumer. These aspects form the cornerstone of customer service excellence. Only one finding from the literature was confirmed. Consumer compliments were multi-dimensional and did not only include one aspect. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The seven OEM brands should use the aspects that contribute to customer service excellence as a benchmark to retain customers, to satisfy consumer needs and to ultimately create a loyal customer base. Consumer complaints need to be monitored to understand where consumer expectations were not met, and where improvements can be made. Consumer compliments should also be responded to in efforts to build better relationships with consumers.
<p>To determine the most prominent reasons why consumers of the seven OEM brands in South Africa complain on Hellopeter.com.</p> <p>(Secondary research objective 5)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The top ten codes related to consumer complaints, according to the frequency of their appearance within the data were identified and listed from most frequent to less frequent. Some overlaps were evident in the codes identified from the data and the categories identified from the literature review. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The most prominent reasons why consumers of the seven OEM brands in South Africa complained on Hellopeter.com were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No feedback Unacceptable customer service Consumers demanding action Vehicle manufacturing issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is imperative that open communication channels and proper feedback systems are put in place to satisfy consumer needs. Customer service should always be made a priority and staff should be trained to address and improve on the identified issues, where possible.

Research objective	Empirical findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Problems persist after various book-ins at the dealership ○ Dealership not living up to its promise ○ No courtesy car/alternative transport ○ Threatening to leave the brand ○ Vehicle kept at dealership for a long period ○ Customer inconvenienced <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The majority of the most prominent reasons why consumers complain on Hellopeter.com are unique and specific to the automotive industry in South Africa, and may not be applicable to other industries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The seven OEM brands, as well as the automotive industry in South Africa, should use the top reasons for consumer complaints as focus points to improve their service offerings and improve customer satisfaction.
<p>To determine the main reasons why consumers of the seven OEM brands in South Africa, leave a compliment on Hellopeter.com.</p> <p>(Secondary research objective 6)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Only nine compliments were analysed, and the frequency of codes was far less than the frequency of the complaints. ● The coding list was used to determine the top reasons why consumers left a compliment on Hellopeter.com during the data-collection period. ● All the codes that contributed to the customer service excellence theme were included in the top reasons for leaving a compliment on Hellopeter.com. 	<p>The main reasons why consumers of the seven OEM brands in South Africa left a compliment on Hellopeter.com were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Outstanding service received ○ Staff going the extra mile ○ Helpful staff ○ Recommends dealership ○ Loyal consumer ○ Dealership feels like a friend 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The seven OEM brands should engage with their consumers by responding to the compliments on Hellopeter.com and saying thank you. ● It is also recommended that compliments be shared on the company websites and/or social media pages. ● These aspects should be regarded as the cornerstone of striving to achieve customer excellence to create loyal consumers.
<p>To explore the nature of online user-generated content, as found on Hellopeter.com, in terms</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Seven complaint themes emerged from the data. ● One compliment theme emerged from the data. 	<p>The nature of the user-generated content was indicated as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Poor communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The seven OEM brands in South Africa should use the findings of this study to monitor and improve consumer complaint and compliment behaviour, as a means

Research objective	Empirical findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
<p>of consumer complaint and compliment behaviour related to the seven OEM brands in South Africa. (Primary research objective)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were ten top reasons why consumers complained on Hellopeter.com. • There were six main reasons why consumers left compliments on Hellopeter.com. • The number of complaints far exceeded the compliments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Unsatisfactory dealership services ○ Poor customer service ○ Consumers demanding action ○ Disappointing OEM brand experience ○ Manufacturing and assembly-related problems ○ Consumers instigating harmful consequences ○ Customer service excellence 	<p>to ultimately create loyal consumers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The complaint and compliment behaviour was very specific in nature, and was related to the automotive industry in South Africa, and brands should not focus only on the findings from other general service industries.

Source: Researcher's own compilation.

6.4 ASSUMPTIONS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

As with any other research study, certain assumptions and limitations need to be taken into consideration. These assumptions and limitations need to be addressed as it could possibly affect the outcomes of the research study. The assumptions and limitations identified for this specific study will be discussed in the sections that follow.

6.4.1 Assumptions

For any research undertaking, the researcher makes assumptions related to the specific study. For this study, it was assumed that:

- the consumers did not include any sensitive and personal information in the user-generated content posted on Hellopeter.com;
- the user-generated content posted on Hellopeter.com was a true reflection and representation of consumer experiences and series of events;
- consumers were aware of all the options available to them to complain about and compliment a specific OEM brand;
- consumers believe that the OEM brands monitor and respond to the user-generated content posted on Hellopeter.com;
- the consumers who compiled the reports on Hellopeter.com are aware that the reports are publicly available, and cannot be changed or reviewed;
- the OEM brands are aware of the user-generated content posted on Hellopeter.com, and choose not to respond to consumer reports;
- none of the user-generated content published on Hellopeter.com was false, as a means to advertise or damage any of the OEM brands.

6.4.2 Limitations

There were several limitations specifically associated with the novel way in which this study was pursued, which include:

- There is a wealth of online data available in the form of user-generated content. As a result of the overwhelming amount of data available online, the researcher had to choose one primary electronic media source for the data to be collected for this study.

- The primary source for data collection was Hellopeter.com, and the content published on this site was not written for the primary purpose of this research study.
- Due to the personal nature of the user-generated content published on Hellopeter.com, this content can be described as being unrestricted. Therefore, it should be noted that the content represents what is on the consumers' minds after their service experience, and may not be the full truth, or may be fabricated in some way. Therefore, a margin of error is applicable in the conclusions of this study.
- Due to the nature of the online user-generated content published on Hellopeter.com, it can be argued that the data lacks specific content. Unlike traditional qualitative research methods involving interviews, it is difficult to provide demographical information about the consumers, which may be viewed as key information within any research undertaking.
- As a result of saturation not being reached, it may be argued that the results of the study cannot be scientifically proven, or be scientifically true. The results, therefore, only represent an overview of the data collected for the specific time period.
- Based on the qualitative nature of the study, the results cannot be statistically proven as it contains researcher interpretations, which may differ between individuals.
- The research results and findings of the study cannot be duplicated with other studies to the same degree of certainty, as in a quantitative scientific study.
- It is by no means possible to differentiate between user-generated content of new and used vehicle, unless explicitly stated. For this reason, it is not known if the majority of the content was related to new vehicles or used vehicles.
- Offline consumer feedback cannot be documented and analysed, as a result, there is no way of knowing if consumer reports were addressed directly with the consumer.
- With the manifest content analysis, the content is described as closely to the words used as possible, and it may not necessarily reveal the underlying motive for uploading a report on Hellopeter.com.

- The findings may not be an accurate reflection and fair representation of the overall situation, as data was only gathered for a period of two months and may not be true for longer periods of data collection.

The assumptions and limitations of the study were highlighted in the above sections. The next section will include a discussion on possible future research opportunities and suggestions.

6.5 POSSIBLE FUTURE RESEARCH SUGGESTIONS

The following possible future research focus areas were identified by the researcher:

- This study made use of qualitative research methods to obtain thicker more rich data. Unfortunately, the sample size for qualitative data is much smaller, if compared to quantitative samples, and this creates difficulty with relation to the generalisability of qualitative research. Future research could draw on the qualitative findings of this research to develop a quantitative questionnaire which could be tested on a much larger participant sample, increasing the generalisability of the research findings.
- The themes related to consumer complaint and compliment behaviour, identified in this study, could be applied to other sectors of the South African automotive industry, to determine if the same themes and results emerge. Focus could be on only one OEM brand, only dealerships, only one geographical area, or all of the brands available in South Africa.
- The study may be replicated over time to determine if the results are conclusive over longer time periods and if seasonality will yield the same results when employing a longitudinal study.
- The study may be replicated within other sectors, products or services in South Africa, on Hellopeter.com.
- The study may be replicated on different social media platforms and consumer advocacy platforms, to determine if a difference in themes is evident across the different platforms.

6.6 CONCLUSION

The purpose of the final chapter was to present the overarching conclusion and recommendations for the study. Each secondary research objective was scrutinised as a means of addressing the primary research objective.

The primary research objective of this study was to explore the nature of online user-generated content on Hellopeter.com, in terms of consumer complaint and compliment behaviour related to the seven OEM brands in South Africa. The primary research objective was addressed in Section 6.4, and Figure 6.1 provided a diagram to indicate the nature of consumer complaint and compliment behaviour in terms of the seven OEM brands in South Africa. Table 6.6 provided a summary of the main findings of this study. The study found that the complaint behaviour of the seven OEM brand consumers of South Africa was made up of seven distinct themes, namely: poor communication, unsatisfactory dealership services, poor customer service, consumers demanding action, disappointing OEM brand experience, manufacturing and assembly-related problems, and consumers instigating harmful consequences. Each theme, however, had major contributing factors that led to the development of the unique themes.

The study also found that complimenting behaviour of the seven OEM brand consumers of South Africa, was specifically related to one theme, named customer service excellence. Some of the findings of the themes related to complaints and compliments within the general service industry, but other themes were more specific to the automotive industry. It is surely a unique situation where the major OEM role players in South Africa deign not to react to user-generated content posted on Hellopeter.com. Considering the turbulent times in the global automotive industry, it stands to reason that the OEM brands should reconsider their current perspective regarding public user-generated content.

A final recommendation was made that the OEM brands should be monitoring and responding to online user-generated content. By doing so, it would be more likely that consumers will become loyal and leave compliments on Hellopeter.com and assist in reaching the ideal compliment-to-complaint ratio of 5:1.

The nature of the user-generated content of the seven OEM brands of South Africa, can therefore be described as unique, and specific to the automotive industry in South Africa.

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APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



UNISA DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

27 September 2017

Dear Mrs Magdalena Sophia van Heerden,

ERC Reference #: 2017_CEMS_BM_063
Name: Mrs Magdalena Sophia van Heerden
Student #: 53777530
Staff #: 1983385 & 1944290

**Decision: Ethics Approval from
27 September 2017 to 26
September 2020**

Researcher(s): Mrs Magdalena Sophia van Heerden
E-mail address: legrams@unisa.ac.za
Telephone #: 012 429 4370

Supervisor (s): Prof Sharon Rudansky-Kloppers & Prof Johan Strydom
E-mail address: rudans@unisa.ac.za & strydjw@unisa.ac.za
Telephone #: 012 429 4689 & 012 429 4455

Working title of research:

Online customer satisfaction of the 7 Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEM's) in South Africa

Qualification: MCom Degree

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the UNISA Department of Business Management Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for 3 years, from 27 September 2017 to 26 September 2020

The low risk application was expedited by the Department of Business Management Ethics Review Committee on 26 September 2017 in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.



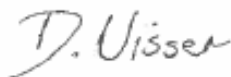
University of South Africa
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PO Box 197 UNISA 0001 South Africa

2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the Department of Business Management Ethics Review Committee.
3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing, accompanied by a progress report.
5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.
7. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date (26 September 2020). Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

*The reference number **2017_CEMS_BM_063** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Yours sincerely,



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APPENDIX B: CODING LIST

CODING LIST (Listed in order of frequency, highest – lowest)	
1	No feedback
2	Unacceptable customer service
3	Vehicle manufacturing issues
4	Problems persist after various book ins at dealership
5	Dealership not living up to its promise
6	Courtesy vehicle/alternative transport
7	Threatening to leave the brand
8	Vehicle kept at dealership for a long period
9	Consumer inconvenienced
10	New car giving problems
11	Rude staff
12	Vehicle giving problems after service
13	Vehicle damaged
14	Requesting urgent assistance
15	Misleading information
16	No assistance
17	Dealership refusing to take responsibility
18	Warranty related issues
19	Lost trust in the reputation of the brand

20	Advises everyone against the dealership
21	Consumer disrespected
22	Consumer charged with additional fees
23	Poor quality work done
24	Outstanding service received from dealership
25	Common problem with vehicle model
26	Threatening to escalate the matter
27	Advises everyone against the brand
28	Fix the problem immediately
29	Compliment
30	Staff members not trained adequately
31	Loyal consumer
32	Consumers' health and safety compromised
33	Brand not living up to its promise
34	Transferred from one person to the next without any assistance
35	Threatening leave the dealership
36	Regrets buying the brand
37	Difficulty to get hold of parts
38	Seeking solutions
39	Helpful staff
40	Incompetent staff
41	Staff going the extra mile

42	Insisting on new vehicle
43	Better service received from another brand/s
44	Repeat disappointing service
45	Charging exorbitant fees
46	Better service received at another dealership
47	Requesting refund
48	Consumer not contacted to grant permission to do work on vehicle
49	Recommends dealership
50	Blame is shifted
51	No response to mails
52	No answering of phones
53	Demanding compensation
54	Dealership not seeing the urgency/consequences of the problem
55	Dealership insisting that car was involved in an accident. and motor plan was suspended.
56	Car had minor scratches and dents that were fixed at an independent panel beater.
57	Dealership refusing to provide hourly rate
58	Shocks not checked according to job card
59	Nearest breakdown services not sent
60	Vehicle signed off for different fault
61	Blame engine problems on software upgrade
62	Dealership refuses to look at car over the weekend

63	No understanding from dealership
64	Customer held responsible for delay of car
65	Car cannot be moved and dealership requires car to be brought in
66	Incorrect date for debit order deduction
67	Debit order still not going off
68	No deduction for insurance
69	Dealership not keeping to appointment schedule
70	Dealership refusing customer access to camera footage
71	Repeat complaint
72	Customer was taken advantage of
73	Customer held liable for repairs due to dealership mistake
74	Dealership refusing to take car in for repairs
75	Inconsistency regarding prices at different dealerships
76	Parts replaced during service that were not indicated
77	Refusal to purchase a car from the dealership
78	Attempting to log accident with insurance underwriter
79	Refuse to replace car as it is not under maintenance plan
80	Suspended motor plan reinstated, only to be suspended again later.
81	Parts not put back after service
82	Took car to dealership after hearing about good service offered
83	Late delivery of vehicle bought
84	Amount agreed upon in quote not adhered to

85	Matter escalated to international holding brand
86	Late notice of inspection for car
87	New vehicle sale dragged out too long
88	Maintenance plan given without any financial advisory
89	Dealership not working on first come first serve basis
90	Dealership not willing to look at car unless an appointment is made
91	Older cars not seen as priority
92	Dealership let someone other than owner pick up car without his consent
93	Car brand dealership assisted with problems
94	Dealership refusing to refund customer for parts that should be included under the maintenance plan
95	Other dealership offer same discount
96	Problem reported while under warranty
97	Dealership will only look at replacing part once warning light comes on
98	Car fixed after complaint on Hellopeter.com
99	Various problems with vehicle after driving off road
100	Various problems experienced with second hand car
101	Fixed car without final approval from customer
102	Dealership feels like friends
103	Service plan conditions changed without prior notification
104	Escalated matter to OEM
105	OEM provided better service
106	Own insurance had to be contacted

107	Full amount deducted although refund was issued
108	Customer account debited unauthorised amount
109	Dealership refusing to pay for missing part
110	Other dealership assisted without payment

APPENDIX C: DECLARATION OF PROFESSIONAL EDIT



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Independent Skills Development Facilitator

Dear Ms van Heerden

This letter is to record that I have completed a language edit of your MCom dissertation entitled, "A content analysis of user-generated content of the seven Original Equipment Manufacturer brands in South Africa".

The edit that I carried out included the following:

- Spelling
- Grammar
- Vocabulary
- Punctuation
- Pronoun matches
- Word usage
- Sentence structure
- Correct acronyms (matching your supplied list)
- Captions and labels for figures and tables
- Spot checking of 10 references

The edit that I carried out excluded the following:

- Content
- Correctness or truth of information (unless obvious)
- Correctness/spelling of specific technical terms and words (unless obvious)
- Correctness/spelling of unfamiliar names and proper nouns (unless obvious)
- Correctness of specific formulae or symbols, or illustrations.

Yours sincerely

Retha Burger

1 June 2020