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Topic: An analysis of online customer reviews on online retailing at Pick n Pay stores during the Covid-19 pandemic.

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DECLARATION:

In accordance with Rule G5.6.3, I hereby declare that the above-mentioned
treatise/dissertation/thesis is my own work and that I have not previously been
submitted to another University or for another qualification

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ABSTRACT

Customer reviews aim to provide a platform for consumers to share their thoughts on products and services they have used. Many companies rely on reviews to help them grow. Companies can learn how customers feel about the products and services provided by conducting reviews. Companies also gain access to important user information that can be used to improve their services. Hello Peter.com, has been a very effective online site as it allows customers to leave reviews, both positive and negative, on their customer experience with a specific retailer. Hello Peter.com allows customers to share their customer experience, read about other customers' experiences, and connect with retailers to help them resolve their issues.

The Covid-19 pandemic, on the other hand, has shifted many customers to online purchasing rather than going to physical stores. South African consumers' demand for online goods and services has reached an all-time high because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Many customers opted for online retailing rather than visiting physical stores. Online retailers have given customers access to a wide range of products from the convenience and comfort of their own homes.

The study's main aim was to provide an analysis of online customer reviews on online retailing at Pick n Pay stores. The study focused specifically on providing insight into Pick n Pay's overall customer experience on their online platform using the online customer reviews left by customers on Hello Peter.com during the Covid-19 pandemic. Over 1000 customer reviews were collected from Hello Peter.com.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Due to the lockdown restrictions imposed by the South African government in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, consumers' preferences for retail shopping have changed. The novel coronavirus that causes severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS 2), later named Covid-19, first emerged in Wuhan, China at the end of 2019 and quickly spread to Europe and then the rest of the world. The pandemic is taking a toll on the healthcare systems and economic activity all over the world (Jhaveri, 2020:736; Clark, Davila, Regis & Kraus, 2020:76). As expected, the World Health Organization (WHO) provided advice and guidelines to governments around the world on how to deal with Covid-19 after declaring it a pandemic in March 2020. Following this, the South African government implemented plenty of regulations to curb the spread of the virus and save lives. The first regulations of the South African government, which were gazetted in March 2020 and remained for a 21-day lockdown duration till April 2020, had a major influence on individual customers' and businesses' lives and livelihoods. The rules restricted people and goods movement, prohibited public transit, limited activities, restricted numerous service providers and businesses, and imposed harsh penalties on anyone who violated the regulations (Redda, 2021:3). According to Zhao and Bacao (2021:4), since the Covid-19 pandemic broke out, the use of various technologies, such as mobile devices, tablets, and laptops, to name a few, has increased, and people have seen the benefits of existing technology, such as online retailing, improved banking, chatbots, online reviews, and so on, in meeting their many demands. The Internet and mobile device advancements have attracted not just a large number of customers that seek and purchase products online, but they've also presented businesses with the opportunity to increase their online sales (Nguyen, Leeuw & Dullaert, 2018:255).

According to Mkansi (2021:19), panic buying was one of the causes of an unusual increase in demand in the online grocery market. Because South Africans chose home delivery to physical malls and stores, online retailers reported a rise in online sales (Daniel, 2021). Consumers prefer online shopping to in-store purchasing for

a variety of reasons, including convenience, time savings, and the absence of crowds (Singh & Kashyap, 2017:659).

Khurana (2020) explains that e-commerce refers to online shopping, whereas e-business refers to every online transaction by the customer. E-commerce is considered a subcategory of e-business. Some individuals misinterpret the terms e-business and e-commerce, although they are not equivalent. During the Covid-19 pandemic, e-commerce was dominant, and retailers put a lot of effort into developing, upgrading, and boosting their online stores (Koch, Frommeyer & Schewe, 2020:24). The Covid-19 pandemic has had a large influence on worldwide e-commerce, both positive and negative, but generally, e-commerce is growing quickly as a result of the epidemic (Bhatti, Basit, Akram & Khan, 2020:1450).

The shift to online retail has not always been smooth. However, the online retail industry is growing more competitive, and companies are employing innovative strategies to attract and retain new customers. These innovative strategies include attracting customers, businesses collaborating with marketplaces to market their services, establishing specialized websites which are easy to navigate and use, and to partner with logistic suppliers for on-time deliveries. The strategies used by online retailers are critical to the company's success (Sanjeev, Dadhabai, Shailaja & Saikumar, 2022:2103).

One of the reasons why consumers prefer online shopping is that they can discover all they need to learn regarding a product by reading the customer reviews published by other consumers (Sunitha & Gnanadhas, 2018:14). Customer reviews enable users to provide feedback on application usage more efficiently and consistently (Alalwan, 2020). Hello Peter.com, is a customer review website based in South Africa that solely provides consumer reviews. A user can search for a business on the Hello Peter.com website and either read or leave reviews on their services (Hello Peter, 2021).

Pick n Pay which is also a grocery retailer has had to adjust to the trend of online retailing. The study will mainly focus on Pick n Pay stores in South Africa. The Pick n Pay Group is a multi-format retailer which operates three distinct businesses— Pick n Pay, Boxer, and TM Supermarkets— and has the largest online grocery

footprint in Africa, which specializes in food, clothing, and general retail business. The retailer operates one of the largest and most developed online grocery platforms in Sub-Saharan Africa. For the past two decades, it has influenced online food retailing in South Africa. The digital platform offers convenience, high availability, and timely delivery. Pick n Pay online is a minor component of the Pick n Pay business overall, but the Covid-19 outbreak has caused a significant increase in demand for online grocery transactions. During the lockdown, the elderly and those with health concerns relied heavily on online purchases and deliveries because they felt safer shopping online than in-store. Pick n Pay has also launched a Click n Collect service in several stores, with many of their stores encouraging consumers to email or WhatsApp their orders directly to the store for pickup or delivery. The company's online segment reacted quickly and effectively, increasing planned deliveries and working to develop an on-demand food and shopping "app" that was quick and easy to use (Pick n Pay Investor Relations).

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The retail sector has grown rapidly in recent years as retailers have increased their efforts and resources to give a consistent experience across many platforms. The retail sector's improvements resulted in major changes in customer behaviour, where people started to use online retailing and there was a clear shift in customer activity toward online retailing (Saria & Abdulrahman, 2021).

The growth of online retailing is being aided by the rise of online grocery sales and the increasing number of food delivery companies entering the industry (Sanjeev, et al., 2022:2099). According to Alam, Ali, Omar, and Hassain (2020:79), due to increased competition in online retailing, online retailers must identify the factors that influence their overall customer satisfaction levels. Companies need to have a thorough understanding of their customer's needs to serve them better and more consistently to acquire a competitive advantage.

Shopping from the convenience of your own home is more comfortable than going to a store. Users of mobile devices with delivery service apps are primarily motivated by the fact that they do not need to leave their homes to purchase food and beverages; they can complete the purchase and pay for it all through the Pick n Pay "App" (Musakwa, 2021:49). Most people, especially the elderly citizens and

those who are classified as vulnerable, used online services during the stringent Covid-19 Lockdown as it meant that they could purchase their groceries online, book a delivery slot and get the retailer to deliver the goods to their desired destination. The retailer is responsible for making sure that the consumer receives their delivery as stipulated.

Many of the barriers, such as price, delivery costs, returns and refunds, company websites, and poor customer service, left customers concerned about online shopping. Although online retailing has advanced tremendously, consumers still have concerns such as product quality, confusing websites, delivery delays, and so on, with online purchases from time to time (Schaefer & Bulbulia, 2021). The customers have left online customer reviews to address these concerns, which will be addressed throughout the study.

The study aims to provide an analysis of online customer reviews on online retailing at Pick n Pay stores by providing insight into Pick n Pay's overall customer experience on their online platform using the online customer reviews left by customers on Hello Peter.com during the Covid-19 pandemic.

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1.3.1 Primary research objective

The primary aim of the study is to investigate which aspects are most important to customers that are shopping on Pick n Pay's online retailing platform in South Africa through online customer reviews left by customers on Hello Peter.com during the Covid-19 pandemic.

1.3.2 Secondary research objectives

Several objectives can assist in addressing the research problem and reaching the research's purpose. The following objectives assist to:

- Investigate the influence of customer reviews on the purchasing decisions of prospective online customers.
- Assess which aspects customers regard as important when making purchases online during the Covid-19 pandemic.

- Investigate the customer's online experience when making purchases online.
- Identify the various opportunities for improvement that the online retailer can employ.

1.3.3 Methodological objectives

For the research aim and secondary objectives to be achieved, the following methodological objectives must be formed:

- To gather and provide an analysis of secondary data on online retailing.
- To determine the aspects that customers consider important in their Hello Peter.com customer reviews about online retailing.
- To determine the most appropriate research method of the study to address the research problem and research objectives.
- To ensure that the data collected from Hello Peter.com is valid and credible for the study.
- To provide recommendations and conclusions according to the findings from the online reviews left by customers on Hello Peter.com.
- To prepare tables and graphs using the research findings.

1.3.4 Research questions

What aspects of overall customer experience do customers consider important during the Covid-19 pandemic when making online purchases?

1.3.5 Significance of the research

It is envisioned that the findings of the study would provide insight into determining the aspects that customers consider important when making online purchases at Pick n Pay stores during the Covid-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the study will be based on the three business divisions of Pick n Pay, namely, Food, Liquor, and Clothing, particularly focusing on the company's overall customer experience in those divisions.

1.4 SUMMARY

Chapter One provides a brief background and introduction to the study's topic. The problem statement was thoroughly discussed. The primary, secondary, and methodological research objectives were introduced. The study's research

question was also identified. Furthermore, the importance of the research study was discussed.

Lastly, the study will be carried out over five months, from April to August to be exact. Chapters One to Three should be completed by 8 June. Chapters four and five should be completed by 19 August to allow for corrections. The final treatise submission is on 31 August. The timeframe will allow us to conduct the study accordingly.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE OVERVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated the transition to a more digital world where consumers now purchase their goods using online platforms (Wood, 2020). People isolated themselves and limited their social interaction due to concerns about the spread of the coronavirus. When physical interaction should be limited, online retailing is the ideal solution. Online retailing offers several advantages that physical stores do not, such as convenience, a diverse product selection, user-friendly websites, and time savings.

Chapter two aims to provide an initial impact assessment on online retailing in the South African retail sector during the Covid-19 pandemic, looking specifically at any factors that contribute both positively and negatively to Pick n Pay's online customer experience. It further discusses the importance of customer reviews for businesses that make use of the online retailing platform, as through customer reviews, businesses can see how the customer feels about the service received and what aspects customers consider important.

2.2 DEFINITION

Covid-19 is an illness caused by a distinct coronavirus now known as severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2; formerly known as 2019-nCoV), which was first identified in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China, during a respiratory illness outbreak (Cennimo, 2021).

E-business is the use of the internet and online technology to facilitate business. E-business is not conducted entirely online, but rather uses the power of the internet to supplement an offline business (Shabat, 2020). For example, Amazon, e-Bay, LinkedIn, Skype, etc.

E-commerce refers to all business dealings that include the selling and buying of information, services, and products through the internet (Kingir & Gezer,2020:22).

Online retailing refers to a type of electronic commerce in which customers purchase goods or services from a seller directly via the internet rather than visiting a physical store (Hudson, 2018).

2.3 PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON ONLINE RETAILING

A previous study by Fatema and Siddiqui (2021:67) explains that online shopping is one of Bangladesh's fastest-growing markets where a significant shift was observed in GDP, with an average of 6 percent growth over the last decade, and above 7 percent growth in the last two years. During the Covid-19 pandemic, however, when other sectors were unstable, only online retailing received a more positive response. According to the study in Bangladesh, during the pandemic, quality, performance and durability, trust and reliability, service quality, ease of use, and time factors were found to influence customers' online purchasing as a significant shift observed in GDP, with an average of 6 percent growth over the last decade, and above 7 percent growth in the last two years. Redda (2021:17) states that the circumstance formed by the Covid-19 pandemic has given businesses a chance to develop e-commerce and has increased the usage of the internet, especially for online retailing.

According to Accenture consumer research (2020), the Covid-19 pandemic has caused a shift in consumer priorities, which now focus on the most basic needs like hygiene and staple products, while non-essential products like clothing are not a priority to consumers. Cicek and Muzaffaer, (2021:18-19) also confirm that due to the Covid-19 pandemic, certain changes have occurred in retail sectors and the clothing sector has experienced a decline in sales. People did not worry about clothing because they were forced to stay at home due to the pandemic restrictions and to escape becoming ill, they reduced their shopping habits. Chang and Meyerhoefer (2020:12) stated in their study that there is a greater demand for cereal, fruits, fresh vegetables, and pre-cooked foods. McKinsey discovered a 90 percent increase in online purchasing across most categories in South Africa, with online purchases of alcohol, snacks, personal care products, and groceries increasing by more than 100 percent.

Given the fact that most consumers were forced to eat at home during the lockdown period, the food and beverage industry saw an increase in online sales

(Gu, Beata, Hajizada, Kovalyova & Sakhbieva, 2021:2266). According to Hashem (2020:8), e-commerce through various online sites or mobile apps is becoming a core component for most consumers around the world. Buyers are most interested in online grocery shopping and other necessities during the pandemic. While some customers used the online shopping option, others took advantage of new or expanded pick-up or delivery options from their local physical stores. Petrack (2021) argues that the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on online retailing has been mixed. According to the World Bank, most specialized online retailers' sales decreased, while most third-party online marketplaces' sales increased. GeoPoll discovered a general decrease in online shopping among its respondents, possibly as a result of the overall decline in spending. Mkansi (2021:19) also argues that the Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on businesses of all sizes across various economies. However, the online grocery industry has seen an extraordinary surge in demand due to panic buying.

Many retailers are seen improving their online retailing strategies as customers increasingly rely on online shopping to avoid going to physical stores (Redda, 2021:15). According to (Cicek & Muzaffaer, 2021:22), physical stores will be replaced by more online purchases, and people will have easier access to these online retailers. The Covid-19 outbreak caused everyone to change their purchasing patterns. Whether you prefer shopping online or in-store shopping, the pandemic changed the routine of many customers in several ways (Tymkiw, 2022).

2.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Previously, traditional retailing was conducted only in person, with consumers having access to goods displayed in stores. Now consumers are relying on online orders and deliveries for their purchases because of lockdown regulations that were implemented by governments around the world to contain the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic (Abe & Mugobo, 2021:89). One factor that called attention on a global scale was the shift from traditional shopping or trade to online shopping (Rao, Saleem, Saeed & Haq, 2021). The Lockdown restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic have created many opportunities for online shopping, particularly online grocery shopping. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and the

restrictions enforced by the government, the South African retail sector has faced considerable challenges, such as limited trade for certain retail sectors, and changes in consumer demand. On the contrary, the Covid-19 pandemic has caused major changes in several industries, including retail (OECD, 2020). The following are some of the most important considerations when using online retailing.

2.4.1 Online sales

Online shopping is the act of purchasing a product or service from an online store using a website or “app” (Rao, Saleem, Saeed & Haq, 2021). According to Gavaza (2021), global payments processor MasterCard saw a rising e-commerce sector in South Africa, with higher online retail sales because of the pandemic, particularly on food items. Ghose, Sudineni, Vasimalai, Vankamamidi, and Sachin (2021:671) say that in developed countries, e-commerce has achieved remarkable success; however, it remains a niche in several developing countries. The prohibition on liquor sales in South Africa has harmed the liquor industry significantly, and the prohibition on cigarette sales has had a similar effect.

The Covid-19 pandemic has affected the operations of major fast-moving consumer goods companies like Shoprite, Spar, Pick n Pay, and Woolworths, to name a few. As a result, the epidemic has had an impact on Pick n Pay's online store as well as its physical stores. Home delivery and "click and collect" services, in which customers purchase online and pick up their items in-store, are examples of this. The company's online retail operation includes two specialized distribution centers in Cape Town and Johannesburg, which account for around 80 percent of their online sales volume. Outside of this, orders are done from the nearest shop or delivery location. However, online retailing continues to account for a small portion of total sales (Goga, Paelo & Nyamwena, 2019). The company also has a mobile interface, with 40 percent of internet clients reportedly using it. In the last year, the “app” has seen a 70 percent rise in usage. Pick n Pay aims to achieve one-hour delivery windows for goods so that customers may better plan their delivery times (Pick n Pay, 2018).

Retailers of essential goods such as food, grocery, and healthcare, are experiencing a rise in demand for providing a service to customers at home,

despite any issues with inventory and delivery (Roggeveen & Sethuraman, 2020:169). The rise of online shopping in South Africa gives retailers, distributors, and manufacturers exciting growth potential. It will become increasingly important for retailers to build services that address specific consumer needs and to leverage consumer insights to strengthen competitiveness to advance e-commerce in South Africa. Kim (2020:216) also stated that the pandemic has accelerated the rate of expansion in online sales, prompting businesses in a variety of industries to invest in making their online presence more effective and accessible.

2.4.2 Delivery

The rise of grocery e-commerce has increased retailers' awareness of delivery fees. The delivery fees become a challenge for the online grocery retailer due to the significant capital investment in equipment and resources that must be recovered (Nguyen, et al. 2018:255). Although shipping costs can be high at times, it is equally important for retailers to try to keep the fees to a minimum or to offer a value-added benefit, such as free delivery on online purchases if a customer spends a certain amount. Additionally, to free deliveries, Nguyen, et al. (2018:255) highlights the fact that customers should also be able to track the status of their orders using an online track and trace system while awaiting a delivery from the retailer. Tracking and tracing systems foster trust because consumers perceive online grocery purchases as a significant risk because they cannot physically inspect a product before purchasing.

2.4.3 Website

A retailer's website is one of the most important aspects of online shopping because websites are an essential part of doing business. It can assist businesses in meeting consumer expectations and improving the customer experience (Lopienski, 2018). Detailed information about a product must be provided on the retailer's website. The response time, where there is little waiting time for the website to load, is equally important. According to Alam, et al. (2020:79), the design of a company's website can influence whether a customer is going to purchase from the retailer or not. Therefore, a website should be well-structured, simple, easy to use and navigate, and have the fastest loading time so that

customers can find what they are looking for in a timeous manner. The security of the transactions done by customers on the website is also a dominant factor that influences consumers' willingness to shop online. Many Internet users avoid online shopping due to concerns about credit card fraud, privacy, non-delivery risk, post-purchase service, and so on (Hymavathi, Vashi & Mumbai, 2018:8). According to Nagy and Hajdu (2021:157), the stronger the consumer's trust in the online retailer, the more likely a transaction will be made. Retailers are therefore improving their business operations by upgrading their websites to be more attractive to online consumers and converting conventional clients to online customers (Redda, 2021:15-16).

2.4.4 Perceived risk

Perceived risk can be defined as a consumer's perception of the uncertainty and negative consequences of making a purchase (Pathak & Pathek, 2017). When customers buy products online, they are often concerned about the product arriving in good condition. The risks of delivery include the product being damaged while it is in transit, delivered to the incorrect address, or delivered late. As a result, delivery risk significantly impacts consumers' attitudes toward online purchases (Makhitha & Ngobeni, 2021:3). Another issue is that customers' information, such as phone numbers and addresses, is being used for promotional advertising by other businesses. The retailer must ensure that the customers' information is always secure, with no leaks that could lead to potential fraud or risk exposures. The internet is providing businesses with new ways to manage information and better serve their customers (Aref & Okasha, 2019:22). Understanding consumers' risk perceptions in online shopping is critical because it influences consumers' purchasing decisions in an online shopping environment. This suggests that if consumers perceive a high level of risk, they are less likely to purchase a product online (Rosillo-Daz, Blanco-Encomienda, & Crespo-Almendros 2019:152). Previous research has investigated the impact of perceived risks on consumers' online shopping intentions, with some findings indicating that perceived risk has no effect (Bhatti, Saad & Gbadebo 2018:7–8).

Due to the remarkable income and anticipated rate of growth in South African online retailing, the sector still faces several challenges. Among these challenges

are an increase in online scams, perceived risks (financial, product/service, or privacy risk), and website trust associated with online shopping sites (Kuhn & Petzer, 2018). Existing research has looked at the importance of trust and perceived use, as well as the risk of e-commerce (Pentz, du Preez & Swiegers, 2020). Other studies show that consumers' risk perceptions do not affect their online purchase decisions (Lin, Featherman, Stoney, Brooks & Hajli, 2019:1198), indicating that the effect of perceived risks on consumers' online shopping intention varies by the consumer.

2.4.5 Customer experience

Hu and Jasper (2018:153) describe customer experience as becoming increasingly important in today's business world. A customer's experience is the result of a process in which the customer either participates in or is involved in the delivery of goods or services by a company. Customer experience encompasses the complete purchasing process, from initial contact with the offer to selecting the proper product variant (Ingaldi & Ulewicz, 2019:5-6). Many researchers consider customer experience to be an important factor in deciding whether to purchase online or not (Albayrak, Karasakal, Kocabulut, & Dursun 2020; Izogo & Jayawardhena 2018; Widagdo & Roz 2021). As a result, customer experience is meant to ensure that the customer's requirements are met, that their tastes, as well as preferences, are maintained, and that communication is prioritized.

2.4.6 Customer satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is a very important aspect of online retailing. Customer satisfaction refers to a customer's feelings because of using a product or service, as well as a comparison of the perceived outcome to expectations. Rao, Saleem, Saeed, and Haq (2021) explain that customer satisfaction is how a consumer is happy with a particular brand or a product/service that matches their requirements. The ultimate goal of online retailers is to retain their customers, but in doing so, they must devise proper strategies to keep their customers satisfied. Product delivery, perceived security, product diversity, and information quality were found as indicators of customer satisfaction in online retailing in the South African online industry (Okeke, 2019). As a result, online retailers must provide adequate options for customers to return defective products. Customers must also be compensated

in the event of damages or delays. Customers may now read and learn about product reviews before making a purchase which in turn assists with customer satisfaction. Finally, customers must be able to contact the retailer's call centre at any time and speak with specialized personnel about their issues (Shafiee & Bazargan,2018:36). Service enhancement is one of the factors that influence customer loyalty. Customers will be dissatisfied if their online orders are not delivered on time or if they receive poor customer service. Because most consumers are concerned about customer service, it is one of the most important factors influencing customer satisfaction in online shopping. Prompt delivery of goods or services will also have a significant positive impact on customer satisfaction when shopping online (Alam, et al., 2020:79).

McKinsey & Company (2020) states that people are increasingly turning to online shopping for all types of goods, including food and product delivery. According to Kahn (2018:150), consumers expect online retailers to provide both pleasant and effortless experiences. If they are not satisfied, they will not hesitate to switch to other online retailers that will provide better service. This means that online retailers must understand why consumers behave in a certain way at a specific time to meet consumers' needs and remain competitive in the retail sector (Antwi 2021:1). Each online customer's purchasing habits are unique. The distinction is based on purchasing decisions, which are easily influenced by purchasing habits and, in turn, are influenced by social and psychological factors that influence the purchasing decision process (Mehta, Saxena & Purohit, 2020:292). It is therefore recommended that online retailers keep their customers satisfied to increase profitability. Consumer satisfaction can therefore be the deal-breaker factor in the online sector (Rao, Saleem, Saeed & Haq, 2021).

2.4.7 Customer reviews

A customer review can be described as a reflection of a customer's experience with the company's products or services (Baker, n.d). Van Rooyen and Amoah (2021:26) suggested that to compete in online shopping; online stores must constantly obtain customer feedback, either through customer reviews or word of mouth, listen to concerns raised, and respond to changes in customer expectations. Customers share reviews on platforms such as Google,

Hello Peter.com, Facebook, and Twitter, just to name a few, which are both positive and negative for the most important aspects of their customer experience with the retailer. It makes no difference whether it is positive or negative; the fact that it is included in a review indicates that it is relevant and important to the reviewer. Customers are most likely to leave reviews on what they consider as important to them on a specific aspect. Customer reviews can provide providers of goods and services with valuable information about customer preferences and priorities (Safi, 2020). Adwan, Zamil and Areiqat (2021:7) states that when it comes to factors influencing consumers while shopping online and influencing satisfaction, consumers believe that convenience and trust are the most important, with costs and nature of the item coming in second. These are the most important considerations for buyers when they decide to shop online.

Because prospective customers typically check for feedback before making a purchase choice, positive or negative reviews can have a major influence on online retailers. Customers will most likely listen to the reviews if they consider them reliable and accurate (Mao, 2018). Pradhan (2021) also states that positive and negative reviews both enhance consumer engagement and confidence in a company. Customers also use online customer reviews to evaluate the quality of goods and assist them in making purchasing decisions (Zhong, Qu, Chen, Liao & Xiao, 2021:2). Online retailers should therefore retain positive customer reviews from customers, respond to negative ones, and seek to make improvements. This will keep the customers happy and guarantee that they meet their expectations.

2.5 SUMMARY

This chapter discussed the transition caused by the Covid-19 pandemic on online retailing in the retail sector. The chapter goes into depth about online retailing, the Covid-19 pandemic, factors considered when utilising online retailing, and the importance of customer reviews. According to the study, the Covid-19 pandemic and the Lockdown regulations imposed by the government at the time had a significant shift in consumer preference for online shopping during the Covid-19 pandemic because it limited human interaction, which curbed the spread of the coronavirus. The growth of online shopping gave many online retailers the growth potential to grow their businesses as online sales increased rapidly during this

time. Furthermore, the study showed that the success of any online business is highly dependent on factors that contribute both positively and negatively to Pick n Pay's online customer experience. The study also places emphasis on the retailer's website. Consumers prefer websites that are well-structured, simple, easy to use, and navigate with the quickest loading time so that they can find what they are looking for as quickly as possible. The website must also be secure, with no credit card fraud, customer information leakage, non-delivery risk, post-purchase service, and so on. Customer service and timely delivery of ordered goods are also important factors in the success of online retailers because they increase customer satisfaction. A bad shopping experience on a retailer's online platform can have long-term consequences for the business, as customers can write bad reviews about them. Companies need to understand the key concepts that shape consumers' perceptions of online retailing. It is, therefore, imperative that online retailer maximize their online retailing growth through overall customer experience.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will provide details about the research design, how the data was collected, and how it is analyzed. The chapter examines the research design, paradigm, approach, and methods in detail and logically to ensure that they are appropriate for addressing the research problem and achieving the study's goals and objectives. There are seven sections in this chapter. Section 3.2 discusses the research population and sampling in four subsections: 3.2.1 research population, 3.2.2 sampling frame, 3.2.3 sampling technique, and 3.2.4 sample size. Sections 3.3 and 3.4 deal with data collection and the design of the measuring instrument, respectively. The data analysis is described in Section 3.5. Section 3.6 discusses ethical considerations, and section 3.7 concludes with a summary of Chapter 3.

3.2 RESEARCH POPULATION AND SAMPLING

3.2.1 Research Population

According to McLeod (2019), a target population can be defined as the overall group of people where the check can be pulled for the collection of data and analysis. A study population is defined as a group of individuals who participate in a study and make up the study population (Stoppler, 2021). As a result, a research population represents all of the individuals to which the research applies. The research population of the study includes all customers who use Pick n Pay's online service during the Covid-19 pandemic. The research population consists of all customers who completed online reviews on Hello Peter.com, between March 2020 to June 2022, where each customer left reviews on their customer experience while using Pick n Pay's online platform to make purchases.

3.2.2 Sampling Frame

Sampling is the method of choosing a sample from an individual or a big group of people for a particular research objective (Bhardwaj, 2019:158). The sampling frame refers to the specific source of respondents from which the sample is drawn (Mackinnon, 2020). According to Mooney and Garber (2019:15-16), the population list is an entire demographic of the target population, but a subset is typically

referred to as a sampling frame since it defines the appropriate sampling process. There is no sample frame available for this study because the information will be given by Pick n Pay customers who make use of Hello Peter.com, which is confidential and will not be shared with the researchers.

3.2.3 Sampling Technique

Probability sampling and non-probability sampling are the two types of sampling methods used in research. According to Bhardwaj (2019:158), in probability sampling, each person in the population has a known possibility of being selected for the sample. When a population is highly homogeneous, each member has a high probability of being selected for a sample. Non-probability occurs when the sample is not selected at random or when the included probability of a unit is unknown, even though sampling is done randomly. The advantages of non-probability samples include faster data collection, lower survey costs, and easier access to potential respondents (Kyu-Seong, 2022:616). This study followed the probability sampling technique, which allows the total population to be included in the study. The probability sampling method that will be used is systematic sampling. Systematic sampling is a probability sampling technique in which researchers randomly select members of a population at regular intervals (Thomas, 2020). In this study, a customer review from Hello Peter.com will be selected after a fixed interval in which every second respondent will be taken for sampling. When there are diverse members of the population, the researcher can obtain relevant information and assist in understanding the phenomenon by using the systematic sampling method.

3.3 DATA COLLECTION

The study uses a mixed methodology where there is a combination of both qualitative and quantitative research approaches. To discover how people think and feel, qualitative research involves gathering and analyzing narratives and/or open-ended observations using methods such as interviews, focus groups, or narratives. Quantitative research involves the collection of a wide range of numerical data. Methodologies used in quantitative research include questionnaires, structured observations, and experiments (Ahmad, Wasim, Irfan, Gogoi, Srivastava & Farheen, 2019:2828). The reason for the study using both

qualitative and quantitative research is because the study makes use of the number of times a word appears and comments collected from Hello Peter.com to get data that is appropriate to the objective of this study and its research questions. The quantitative data will give an overview of the number of times certain words appear in the customer reviews, while qualitative data will go in-depth into customer comments and personal feelings, allowing you to truly understand the customers' feedback. The model followed by the researcher was to first gather a minimum of ninety research articles from previous research done by various authors in order to find information on the research study topic of analysis of customer reviews at Pick n Pay stores during the Covid-19 pandemic. The researcher needed to find out what aspects customers considered important when making online purchases at Pick n Pay using Hello Peter.com. Hello Peter.com is an online platform that allows customers to rate and share their positive and negative experiences with businesses in South Africa. A total of 1071 customer reviews from Hello Peter.com will therefore be drawn and used for data analysis. After collecting the customer reviews, they will be copied onto a Microsoft Word document which will thereafter be put on the Atlas.ti program Word Cruncher tool. The Word Cruncher tool then will convert the Microsoft Word document into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet that contains keywords from the customer reviews, which thereafter assigns a rating based on the most frequently used words in the customer reviews. This method will assist in determining what aspects the customers consider important when purchasing online.

3.4 DESIGN OF THE MEASURING INSTRUMENT

Measuring instruments are the various technical methods used by researchers to collect reliable data from respondents or study participants. When using measuring instruments, it is critical to ensure that the instrument is appropriate for the type of research being conducted. It provides assurance of accurate data collection and trustworthy results (Oden, n.d). The Atlas.ti program Word Cruncher tool will also be used to count the words that are used in the customer reviews. The Atlas.ti program is a powerful tool or program that is used to analyse a large amount of data. Atlas.ti is intended to provide the researcher with in-depth insights into the behaviours, emotions, and motivations that drive customers to perform specific actions (Atlas.ti, 2022). The program helps arrange data in a more

systematic manner and assists researchers in processing their data for analysis. The program gives a summary of all the words that appear in the customer reviews and ranks it from the words that appear most to least in an Excel spreadsheet. This instrument looked at what the most important factors to Pick n Pay consumers were, whether positive or negative.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

According to Grant (2020), data analysis is the procedure of evaluating data using analysis or numerical tools to reveal valuable information. According to Longjam (2022), the most crucial component of any research is the analysis of data. Data analysis is the process of summarizing collected data. This study gathered both qualitative and quantitative data. Because the data collected from customer reviews is qualitative and the number of times that a word appears are quantitative, a mixed-method approach is used. Textual analysis will be completed once the data has been collected. Textual analysis is a type of data analysis used to describe, understand, and comprehend texts. A text can reveal a lot of information, from its literal meaning to its subtext, symbolic meaning, assumptions, and values (Davis, 2021). Once the data for the study has been collected, an analysis of the customer reviews on Pick n Pay that customers wrote on Hello Peter.com will be conducted. A random selection of 1071 customer reviews will be chosen for analysis. The customer reviews will thereafter be extracted into a Microsoft Word document. The Microsoft Word document will then be put on the Atlas.ti program. The Atlas.ti program makes use of the Word Crunch function, which will be used to assign a rating based on the most frequently used words in the customer reviews. This method of analysis is most desirable as it provides the researcher with an insight into Pick n Pay's overall customer experience during the Covid-19 pandemic based on customer reviews.

3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethics are the norms or standards of behaviour that distinguish between what is right and wrong. Ethics can help you differentiate between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Ethical consideration in research entails providing informed consent to intended research subjects by ensuring that participants have the option of participating in the research. It also entails ensuring that

beneficiaries do not disrespect participants' confidentiality and privacy (Ubi, Orji & Osang, 2020:55).

According to Dudovskiy (2022), one of the most important aspects of the research is ethical considerations. If this section is missing, dissertations may fail. The validity of research questions is the first and most fundamental ethical issue that may arise in research. The purpose of research is to find an answer to a specific research question. The research conclusion must be consistent with the initial research question. It will be considered an ethical violation if research questions are not matched with research conclusions. Maintaining participant anonymity during the research process is critical. The confidentiality of the information provided by the participant is one of the most important ethical considerations. No information related to or provided by participants may be made available or accessible to anyone other than the researcher under any circumstances. Before starting with the research, the researcher must let the participants know about all research activities and obtain their consent to comply with ethical considerations.

Therefore, the validity of the research, confidentiality, integrity, and transparency are important aspects of ethical considerations to follow in any research study.

3.7 SUMMARY

This chapter addressed the study's research topic and attempted to identify and defend the study's proper research design and methodology. The study design and methodology were described in the first portion of this chapter, which helped to construct the theoretical framework that drove the research process. This study comprehensively discusses the research population, sample frame, sampling strategies, sampling method, measurement instrument, data gathering method, data processing process, and ethical considerations.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this section of the research study, the findings from the customer reviews which were extracted from Hello Peter.com will be discussed. The empirical findings from the customer reviews will expand the theory of the literature that is discussed in chapter two and the research results of this research study.

The Atlas.ti program Word Cruncher tool was used to count the words that were used in the reviews, and textual analysis was done to analyse the customer reviews. Vivek (2018) states that customer reviews are a good source to understand the "Voice of the Customer" and they may give useful insights into what consumers like and dislike about a service or product. Sun, Chen, Tian, and Yan (2021:9) also state that customers rely heavily on online customer reviews when making purchasing decisions. Customer reviews can have a significant impact on a customer's perception of a product, so online retailers should consider the impact of reviews.

Section 4.2 discusses the results of the demographics, section 4.3 discusses the results of the research on online retailing, and section 4.4 concludes with a summary of Chapter Four.

4.2 RESULTS OF DEMOGRAPHICS

The results of the study did not specify the demographics of the respondents because customer reviews from Hello Peter.com were used, and no demographic information was presented on the platform. The customer reviews showed that the sample demographics were 1071 individuals who use the Pick n Pay online platform to make various purchases. However, from observation, both male and female customers left feedback in the customer reviews. The age demographic of the sample has not been disclosed in the customer reviews. The consumers' income has not been disclosed. The education level of the customers has also not been specified, although customers who make purchases through Pick n Pay's online platform must be at least technology literate to use the Pick n Pay ASAP, Pick n Pay Clothing website, and the Pick n Pay Bottles "App".

4.3 RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH ON ONLINE RETAILING

The purpose of this study was to investigate the customer experience of online shoppers at Pick n Pay stores during the Covid-19 pandemic.

As a starting point, customer reviews were abstracted from Hello Peter.com for the period of the Covid-19 pandemic, which started in March 2020 to June 2022. The customer reviews were copied into a Microsoft Word document. While copying the customer reviews, the customer's identity remained anonymous for the duration of the study. The Microsoft Word document, with the customer reviews, was then submitted to the Atlas.ti program that utilised its Word Cruncher tool that produced a Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet. The spreadsheet gives a summary of all the words used in the customer reviews and the number of times that the words have been used. The words obtained from the Word Cruncher tool were first grouped together with similar words before excluding any words. Only words that had a frequency of more than one hundred were used in the analysis. The words that had a frequency below one hundred were considered too small to make a significant contribution to the important factors of the study.

Based on the results of the Word Cruncher (Annexure A), a total number of 11188 words were identified in the customer reviews. The words that appeared the most are “orders”, “delivery”, “service”, “calls”, “app”, “refund”, “money”, “email”, “complaint”, “purchase”, “response”, “groceries”, “manager”, and “missing”. These are the words that customers considered important in terms of their online retailing experience at Pick & Pay stores.

Table 4.1 provides the combined words and the number of times that they appeared in the customer reviews on Hello Peter.com.

Keywords	Frequency	Keywords	Frequency	Keywords	Frequency	TOTAL FREQUENCY
Order	1571	ordered	322	Orders	99	2045
		ordering	52	ordering	1	
Delivery	888	delivered	550	Deliver	206	3024
		ASAP	969	Drivers	37	
		deliveries	41	delivering	32	
		driver's	4	Driver	291	
		delivers	6			
Service	1149	services	77			1226

Calls	579	called	385	Calls	103	1148
		calling	80	call's	1	
App	738	apps	9	bottlesapp	4	751
Refund	583	refunded	111	Refunds	28	732
		refunding	8	refund's	1	
Money	404	funds	33	Refund	1	437
Email	254	emails	153	Emailed	70	485
		emailing	8			
Complaint	119	complaints	42	Complain	25	204
		complained	14	complaining	3	
		complains	1			
Purchase	122	purchased	58	Purchases	24	204
Response	186	responses	10	responded	1	280
		immediately	83			
Groceries	187	grocery	41	Grocer	1	279
		lamb	8	Meat	42	
Manager	155	managers	14	managerial	3	237
		manage	6	management	1	
Missing	126	miss	6	Missed	4	136

Table 4.1: Keywords related to the customer reviews

As per the above table, the following are the frequency of the average keywords used by each consumer that submitted a review on Hello Peter.com about their online retailing customer experience at Pick n Pay stores: orders (2045), delivery (3024), service (1226), calls (1148), “app” (751), refund (732), money (437), email (485), complaint (204), purchase (204), response (280), groceries (279), manager (237), and missing (136). Other words that appeared the most were pronouns and adverbs such as is, this, and that, which were not relevant to the data analysis were deleted and excluded. Not all words that are identified on Word Cruncher (Annexure A) will be used in the study as some of these words are irrelevant to this study. The words that best described the customer's experience with the online retailer were used to determine which words were relevant and which were irrelevant.

Figure 4.2 shows how frequently the words from Hello Peter.com customer reviews were used.

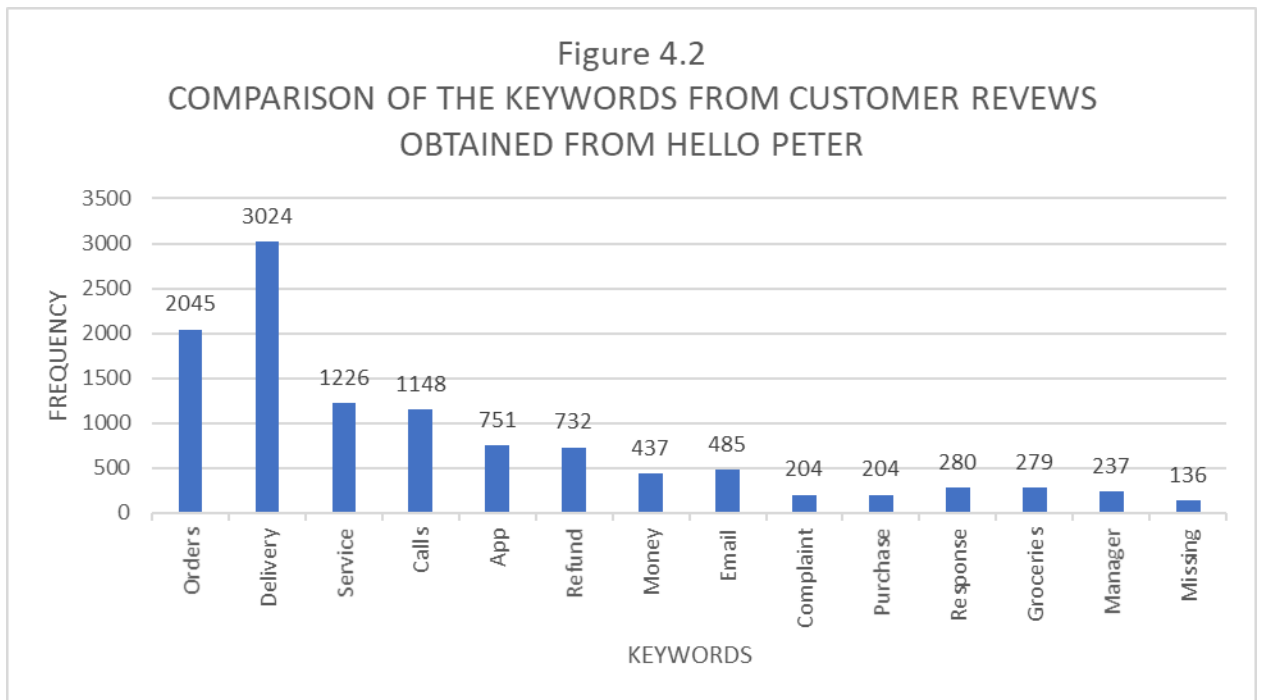


Figure 4.2: Frequency of the keywords from customer reviews on Hello Peter

The findings will illustrate how the Covid-19 pandemic impacted Pick & Pay's overall online retailing customer experience. This will provide the company with an opportunity to improve on specific elements of customer service that consumers identified as important throughout their online experience.

4.4 SUMMARY

This chapter provides the results of the empirical study. The data preparation was done by collecting customer reviews from Hello Peter.com. After collecting the customer reviews, they were copied to a Microsoft Word document which was thereafter put on the Atlas.ti program Word Cruncher tool. The Word Cruncher tool then converted the Microsoft Word document into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet which contained keywords from the customer reviews. The keywords, as identified in Annexure A, obtained are the words that appeared the most in the customer reviews. Each of the words was then grouped according to the words that were of similar meaning. Furthermore, words with a word count of less than one hundred were excluded from the empirical study because they were irrelevant since the words were not important, and the study would not contain any information that had no influence on the study's results.

In summary, from the empirical results, the keywords gained the following total frequency: orders (2045), delivery (3024), service (1226), calls (1148), “app” (751), refund (732), money (437), email (485), complaint (204), purchase (204), response (280), groceries (279), manager (237), and missing (136).

Chapter five presents an overall summary, final conclusions, and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This section of the study provides a summary of all the previous chapters that have been discussed. The chapter commences with the research objectives, research design, and methodology. The main finding from the literature review and empirical results will be discussed. A conclusion of the study will also be provided in this chapter. Furthermore, the limitations and shortcomings of the study are also discussed, and recommendations are suggested. The chapter then concludes with a self-reflection on the researcher's learning experience while doing the study.

5.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The following research objectives were identified for the research study, which comprised the primary, secondary, and methodological objectives.

5.2.1 Primary objectives

As indicated in Chapter One, the primary objective of the study is to determine how the Covid-19 pandemic has affected Pick n Pay's online retailing platform in South Africa through online customer reviews left by customers on Hello Peter.com.

5.2.2 Secondary objectives

The primary objective of the research study was achieved by completing the following secondary objectives:

SO 1) To investigate the influence of customer reviews on the purchasing decisions of prospective online customers.

SO 2) To assess which aspects customers regard as important when making purchases online during the Covid-19 pandemic.

SO 3) To investigate the customer's online experience when making purchases online.

SO 4) Identify the various opportunities for improvement that the online retailer can employ.

5.2.3 Methodological objectives

The following methodological objectives were identified to achieve the primary and secondary objectives:

MO 1) To gather and provide an analysis of secondary data.

MO 2) To determine the aspects that customers consider important in their Hello Peter.com customer reviews about online retailing.

MO 3) To determine the most appropriate research method of the study to address the research problem and research objectives.

MO 4) To ensure that the data collected from Hello Peter.com is valid and credible for the study.

MO 5) To provide recommendations and conclusions according to the findings from the online reviews left by customers on Hello Peter.com.

MO 6) To prepare tables and graphs illustrating the research findings.

5.2.4 Research questions

The following research question was formulated for the purpose of this investigation:

RQ) What aspects of overall customer experience do customers consider important during the Covid-19 pandemic when making online purchases?

5.3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Chapter Three of the research study addressed the study's research design and methodology. The research population, sampling frame, sampling technique, and sample size were elaborated on. Furthermore, the data collection and the design of the measuring instrument were explained. In addition, the data analysis process was discussed in depth.

5.3.1 Research design

A research design is a method for using empirical data to answer your research question. A well-planned research design assists in ensuring that the procedures meet the study objectives and that the appropriate type of data analysis process is

followed (McCombes, 2021). The research design is meant to provide a suitable framework for a study (Sileyew, 2019). The study used a combination of both qualitative and quantitative research approaches. To discover how people think and feel, qualitative research was used by gathering customer reviews left by Pick n Pay customers on Hello Peter.com. Quantitative research was also used as a data analysis was done to depict the number of times a keyword appeared in the customer reviews obtained. Hello Peter.com was used for collecting the desired data from the customer reviews; the customer reviews were then captured in a Microsoft Word document for data analysis purposes.

5.3.2 Research methodology

Research methodology can be described as a method for solving a research problem in a systematic manner. It can be thought of as a science that investigates how scientific research is conducted (Patel & Patel, 2019:48). The data collection and analysis methods used in the research are discussed and explained in the research methodology section of the research study. The study's methodology chapter discusses what the researcher did and how it was done, allowing readers to assess the research study's validity and reliability (McCombes, 2021).

The steps taken in the study included identifying the population, sampling frame, and sampling techniques. It also included the gathering of data using customer reviews obtained from Hello Peter.com following a textual analysis of the data collected.

5.3.3 Data collection

According to Bhandari (2020), data collection is the systematic collection of observations or measurements. Data collection enables the researcher to obtain first-hand information and insights into the research problem.

For this research study, customer reviews submitted by Pick n Pay customers on Hello Peter.com were used to obtain the relevant data and a total of 1071 customer reviews were used for data analysis.

Secondary data was used throughout the whole research study. Secondary data is defined as research data that has already been collected and is available to

researchers (Hillier, 2022). To achieve the study objective, the researcher consulted journal articles, library books, previous research papers, NMU's online database, and the internet to gather secondary data. The information gathered was then used to conduct a literature review to get a better understanding of the topic at hand.

5.3.4 Data analysis

Data analysis was done to summarize the collected data. The data was gathered using Hello Peter.com, an online platform that collected customer feedback given by Pick n Pay customers who make use of the company's online retailing platform. A random selection of 1071 customer reviews was chosen for textual analysis. After collecting the customer reviews, they were copied to a Microsoft Word document which was thereafter put on the Atlas.ti program Word Cruncher tool. The Word Cruncher tool then converted the Microsoft Word document into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet that contained keywords from the customer reviews, which thereafter assigned a rating based on the most frequently used words in the customer reviews.

5.4 MAIN FINDINGS FROM LITERATURE REVIEW

The main objective of the study was to investigate which aspects are most important for customers that are shopping on Pick n Pay's online retailing platform in South Africa through online customer reviews left by customers on Hello Peter.com, from the period when the Covid-19 pandemic started in March 2020 to date.

The Covid-19 pandemic has shifted consumers to a more digital world where consumers now make use of online platforms when making purchases. Customers can buy any product from anywhere in the world at any time without having to physically visit the store (Usman & Kumar, 2020). Online retailing received a positive response as consumer needs also shifted due to the restrictions imposed by the South African government because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Consumers could now buy essential and non-essential goods such as groceries, alcohol, and clothing online.

E-commerce is expanding rapidly every day as more and more businesses join the e-commerce industry, offering customers a wide selection of products and services (Ingaldi & Ulewicz, 2019:5). E-commerce and e-business have become a core component for many consumers around the world as it offers various advantages. The pandemic has created many opportunities, particularly fast-moving consumer goods, as it has achieved remarkable success due to an increase in usage.

The internet has allowed consumers to share their experiences with online retailers by leaving customer reviews on Hello Peter.com. From previous research, it was found that customer satisfaction is a very important aspect of a retailer. Consumers need to be happy with the customer service they receive to retain them. It is evident from the customer reviews that if a customer receives poor customer service from the online retailer, it will be difficult to retain them.

5.5 MAIN FINDINGS FROM EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

The findings of the empirical data that was collected online from Hello Peter.com customer reviews provided by Pick n Pay customers who left reviews were presented in Chapter Four.

Based on the total results that were obtained, the frequency of the keywords used by each consumer that submitted a review on Hello Peter.com about their online retailing customer experience at Pick n Pay stores were: orders (2045), delivery (3024), service (1226), calls (1148), “app” (751), refund (732), money (437), email (485), complaint (204), purchase (204), response (280), groceries (279), manager (237), and missing (136). Other words that appeared the most were pronouns and adverbs that were not relevant to the data analysis.

5.5.1 Orders

Orders received a total frequency of 2045. Customers who provided customer reviews believed that orders were essential to them because it was one of the reasons they were using the online retailing platform. Customers noted how they had received their online orders, whether favourable or poor. Some customers left reviews indicating that they were satisfied with the manner their orders were delivered, while others were dissatisfied.

5.5.2 Delivery

Delivery received the second highest frequency of 3024, indicating that customers are particularly concerned about the delivery of their online orders. Customers gave mostly negative feedback on delivery because they felt that it is a significant aspect of online retailing. According to customer reviews on Hello Peter.com, the manner in which their orders were delivered was unsatisfying.

5.5.3 Service

Service received the third highest frequency. Service means consistently meeting the customer's needs and expectations. Customers felt that the service that was received from the online retailer was a critical factor as it influences online purchasing decisions. Based on the customer reviews, the majority of customers were extremely dissatisfied with the service they received from the online retailer, making it the third most discussed aspect.

5.5.4 Calls

Calls received a frequency of 1148. Calls are an important method of communication with the retailer since they need to reach the retailer if there are any problems with their delivery or the products ordered. Customers complained in their reviews about Pick n Pay not answering their calls after numerous attempts to contact their contact centre. Customers were frustrated because the majority of them required assistance with their online order refunds.

5.5.5 App

The word "App" received a frequency of 751. The majority of customers indicated that the "App" was significant to them since it was where they placed orders for their requirements. According to the customer feedback, customers felt comfortable making purchases from a reputable company's "App". One of the reasons customers preferred using an "app" to make purchases was their fear of the coronavirus and the convenience factor. Customers were overall extremely satisfied with Pick n Pay's "App" because it allowed them to access it from the comfort of their own homes using their smartphones. Furthermore, the "app" was accurate and did not contain any information that could mislead customers.

5.5.6 Refund

Refund received a frequency of 732. Customers found refunds to be an important aspect because if there is a refund and returns policy in place, they have the freedom to make purchases and if they are unhappy with a product received, they can return it for a refund. Customer reviews left on Hello Peter.com by Pick n Pay customers indicated that getting refunds from the online retailer was difficult, leaving many customers frustrated.

5.5.7 Money

Money received a frequency of 437. Money is important because it determines whether or not customers receive value for money from their online orders. The online platform is also scary to many customers because it can pose a security risk and make you vulnerable to being scammed; therefore, this aspect is important to many customers.

5.5.8 Email

Email received a frequency of 485. Emails are an important means of communication because they are quick, inexpensive, and easily accessible. Email can greatly benefit both the customer and retailer because it allows for the efficient and effective transmission of all types of information. Pick n Pay customers had negative experiences with the retailer's email nonresponse. The majority of the customer reviews stated that the retailer did not respond to their emails.

5.5.9 Complaint

Complaint received a frequency of 204. The majority of customers stated in their reviews that the retailer ignored their online complaints and did not respond to them. Complaints are important to customers because they get to express if they are happy or unhappy. This will provide the retailer with information to see where they can do things differently to improve where they are lacking.

5.5.10 Purchase

Purchase received a frequency of 204. Purchases represent what customers have purchased from the online retailer. Purchase also indicates that customers are not only browsing but also buying on the website or "app".

5.5.11 Response

Response received a frequency of 280. Customers value the online retailer's response because it indicates whether the retailer is responsive or not. This is important to the customer because it keeps them informed about the status of their online purchase and eliminates frustration if there are any issues with the purchase or service provided by the retailer. Customers indicated that when they attempted to communicate with the retailer, they received no response.

5.5.12 Groceries

Groceries received a frequency of 279. Groceries are important because they are one of the reasons customers buy online. The majority of purchases made during the Covid-19 pandemic were also groceries. According to the reviews, the following are the top grocery-related factors that customers were complaining about; delivery time, meat products arriving in poor condition, and some groceries not arriving in full as ordered.

5.5.13 Manager

Manager received a frequency of 237. According to the customer reviews, many customers valued the availability of the store manager. This was because if they were dissatisfied or had problems, they could get clear direction from the manager. Customers felt that their queries were not promptly answered by store managers, which frustrated customers who had already paid for their products.

5.5.14 Missing

Missing received a frequency of 136. Missing is an important factor because when customers receive their online deliveries and something is missing or not delivered, it can cause problems. The customer reviews indicated that some of their orders were not received in full as per their order requirements, with some items delivered but missing despite the fact that they had already paid for them.

5.6 CONCLUSIONS

The study has provided relevant information necessary to understand which aspects are most important for customers that are shopping on Pick n Pay's online retailing platform in South Africa through online customer reviews left by

customers on Hello Peter.com. From the research and empirical findings, the top three categories which obtained the highest overall frequency and those customers felt were important aspects were orders, delivery, and service. Orders and delivery had a high frequency because the orders placed online by the customers needed to be delivered on time, with a proper handover where all Covid-19 restrictions were adhered to, and goods were delivered without any damages. Finally, service got the third highest frequency because the overall customer service experience was the most important factor for customers when considering making a purchase.

Therefore, it can be concluded from the research that the customers using the online retailing platform at Pick n Pay stores in South Africa consider orders, delivery, and service as more important aspects during the Covid-19 pandemic compared to before the pandemic. Furthermore, the aspects that consumers considered important before and during the Covid-19 pandemic changed as the pandemic has shifted many people to purchase their groceries, beverages, and clothing using the online retailing platform to curb the spread of the coronavirus as many of them feared being infected while doing their shopping.

5.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

The limitations of any study refer to potential weaknesses that are typically beyond the control of the researcher and are directly related to the selected research design, statistical model limits, or any other aspects. In this regard, a limitation is a restriction that the researcher does not influence as it is essentially out of the researcher's control (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018:156). The limitation of this study was that there was limited information on the topic at hand as there were not many previous studies done prior.

5.8 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, it is evident that online customers are concerned with the overall level of satisfaction received from Pick n Pay's online retailing platform. Pick n Pay must leverage the Covid-19 pandemic to improve their online retailing platform by making the most of their ASAP "App", Bottles "App", and Clothing website in terms of achieving overall customer satisfaction for customers who are making use of the platform.

The research study also revealed that negative customer reviews left on Hello Peter.com have a significant influence on customer purchasing behaviour, so businesses must read customer reviews as they contain valuable information that could potentially improve their online retailing platform.

This section will focus on the keywords with the highest frequency, and recommendations for marketers for each keyword will be provided.

5.8.1 Orders

Orders had the highest frequency, indicating that it is a very important aspect to customers. Pick n Pay should provide customers with a satisfactory ordering experience. This could be achieved by keeping the customer informed about their orders from the time the order is placed until it is delivered. For example, the retailer can provide an update on the “App” for each stage of the delivery (picking, collection, in transit, and delivery of the order). If the customer has any queries about their orders, they should be attended to as soon as possible.

5.8.2 Delivery

Customer orders should be delivered as soon as possible and promptly. Customers should also be able to track their orders via the app's tracking system. An online tracking system notifies customers of the expected delivery time and allows them to communicate with the driver while their orders are in transit.

It is also critical to ensure that the delivery fees are reasonable and fair, with no hidden delivery costs.

It is important that drivers take precautionary measures when making deliveries during the Covid-19 pandemic. Drivers should be trained on how to maintain hygiene standards during the delivery process.

Finally, when the goods are delivered, the driver should give the customer a good handover. Customers are more likely to feel satisfied when they receive the ordered goods on time, in the right quantity, and at a reasonable price.

5.8.3 Service

Pick n Pay needs to be more service orientated in order to improve its customer service experience. Improving service can be accomplished by actively listening

to customer concerns and resolving them timeously. Customers simply want a positive customer service experience. In today's competitive environment, service quality is a critical strategy for success and survival.

5.8.4 Calls

When customers call the retailer, it is important that they are attended to promptly. If a customer calls and their calls are not returned, it reflects poorly on the retailer. Customers should be able to contact the online retailer's customer support center if they require assistance or have concerns. It would therefore be beneficial for Pick n Pay to have an active call center that handles online customer complaints and inquiries. It would be recommended that customers can contact the call center during extended business hours when they need to get ahold of the retailer. It is also essential to train contact center employees on how to interact and assist the customers that call in order to resolve their inquiries.

5.8.5 App

Customers expect a pleasant experience when purchasing products and services using a retailer's mobile "app". Mobile apps are known to provide customers with convenience and access to a variety of products and services. Pick n Pay must modify its mobile "app" for it to be user-friendly and secure. Pick n Pay should also provide customers with a positive user experience while using the "app".

5.8.6 Refund

Pick n Pay should have a clear refund policy that is clearly visible on their website. The refund policy should include all of the terms and conditions, as well as the process that both parties must follow when processing refunds. To avoid frustrating customers, the retailer should respond to refund requests as quickly as possible.

5.8.7 Money

Pick n Pay should provide their customers with value for their money by providing products and services that are worth what they are paying for. Customers have confidence and trust in a company that can offer valuable goods and services. Customers who feel they made a good purchase are more likely to buy

from the retailer again and tell others about the positive experience that they received.

Customers are also concerned about online scams that take money from their bank accounts without their knowledge. It is thus the responsibility of the retailer to always provide their customers with a safe and secure shopping experience on their websites or apps.

5.8.8 Email

The retailer must provide excellent email customer service to their customers. This can be accomplished by promptly responding to customer emails, resolving customer queries made via email, and following up a few days later with a quick survey question to determine whether the customer's issues have been resolved.

5.8.9 Complaint

Pick n Pay should develop a strong Complaints Management Framework. The Complaints Management Framework aims to ensure reliable and prompt responses to complaints. It also ensures that all customer complaints are handled fairly and are resolved to the satisfaction of the customer. A process that shows how Pick n Pay will get, document, and responds to customer complaints should also be included in the framework. Pick n Pay will benefit greatly from an effective Complaints Management Framework as this is a great tool for managing customer queries and complaints.

5.8.10 Purchase

Pick n Pay should implement a post-purchase survey to gather feedback from customers about their purchases. This will assist them in improving the customer service experience of many of their customers.

5.8.11 Response

The time it takes to respond to customer inquiries is an important aspect when dealing with customers. Pick n Pay should have a response time for responding to customer inquiries and concerns, preferably within 48 hours of receiving the inquiry.

5.8.12 Groceries

Groceries are a risky delivery area because they may contain perishable goods or goods that could be damaged in transit. It is suggested that Pick n Pay have well-equipped vehicles to make grocery deliveries, ensure that customers do not receive expired goods and that goods are not damaged in transit.

5.8.13 Manager

The store managers should develop and communicate a vision of the customer service experience throughout the organization. Managers should also be available to respond to customer inquiries quickly by resolving issues, answering questions, and maintaining customer satisfaction.

5.8.14 Missing

Pick n Pay can avoid missing items in their deliveries by having a designated person who double checks the order before it is delivered to the customer.

5.9 SELF REFLECTION

During this research study, I found the topic to be unique and interesting because there have been only a few other studies on the subject. The study revealed useful insights into the influence that customer reviews have on many customers' purchasing behaviour.

Throughout the study, I learned a variety of skills, but the most important and necessary skill I learned was time management. Without this acquired skill, I would not have been able to complete my research study on time. I needed to set aside several hours to conduct research on the topic at hand.

Finally, I can certainly say that this research study was beneficial and informative. I have gained an understanding of several previously unknown aspects of what customers considered important when making online purchases during the Covid-19 pandemic.

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Annexure A – WORD CRUNCHER

WORDS	Total Count	WORDS	Total Count	WORDS	Total Count	WORDS	Total Count
the	6554	money	404	goods	165	Shop	116
i	5738	after	401	way	165	Well	116
to	4776	would	396	waiting	161	refunded	111
and	4565	again	393	same	160	two	110
my	2394	or	390	hours	159	wrong	109
was	1914	called	384	paid	159	yesterday	109
is	1743	all	374	contact	158	checkers	108
that	1711	do	372	first	158	food	108
on	1679	told	369	phone	156	need	108
of	1645	there	366	ever	155	via	107
for	1639	which	358	manager	155	agent	104
order	1571	if	355	could	154	bank	104
not	1556	out	344	want	154	between	104
pay	1397	what	344	where	154	such	104
pick	1373	by	331	emails	153	calls	103
they	1373	never	329	went	153	say	103
this	1297	ordered	322	asked	149	send	103
it	1278	were	321	being	147	week	103
have	1275	one	320	receive	146	work	103
me	1243	only	318	worst	146	charged	102
n	1230	up	312	bottles	145	does	100
service	1149	day	310	more	145	orders	99
in	1084	just	305	his	144	immediately	83

rating	1049	she	305	our	143	calling	80
no	1040	driver	291	over	143	services	77
with	999	did	289	wait	137	emailed	70
asap	969	even	283	him	136	purchased	58
delivery	888	days	272	pathetic	136	ordering	52
online	859	placed	268	bad	135	management	50
you	849	because	265	customers	133	complaints	42
from	842	can	265	her	133	meat	42
at	834	said	258	last	133	grocery	41
as	798	email	254	done	132	deliveries	41
be	742	shopping	253	it's	132	drivers	37
app	738	sent	239	off	132	funds	33
an	714	use	236	some	132	delivering	32
but	698	today	234	centre	131	refunds	28
will	690	go	230	experience	131	complain	25
customer	615	very	217	through	131	purchases	24
items	594	who	211	card	130	managers	14
refund	583	don't	209	tried	129	complained	14
call	579	take	207	give	128	responses	10
pnp	579	deliver	206	another	126	apps	9
delivered	550	got	203	missing	126	refunding	8
had	536	about	200	using	126	emailing	8
get	527	how	200	before	125	lamb	8
so	515	later	198	yet	125	managed	7
store	507	number	195	know	124	miss	6
your	506	also	191	since	124	delivers	6
are	500	made	189	amount	123	manage	6

been	499	should	189	other	123	bottlesapp	4
time	499	times	189	support	123	missed	4
when	492	groceries	187	purchase	122	driver's	4
received	491	response	186	going	121	managerial	3
then	490	i'm	185	issue	121	complaining	3
still	476	nothing	184	make	120	responded	1
back	446	item	183	poor	120	grocer	1
them	440	any	173	complaint	119	manageress	1
he	427	like	173	its	119	orderring	1
their	427	account	169	morning	119	call's	1
has	423	stock	169	than	118	refund's	1
am	414	why	169	disappointed	117	refundd	1
we	413	please	167	feedback	117	complains	1
now	407	care	166	next	117	management	1

ANNEXURE B – TURNITIN REPORT

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