Cape Peninsula
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FACTORS AFFECTING THE ADOPTION OF E-TAILING BY SELECTED CLOTHING COMPANIES IN CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

By

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree.

Master of Retail Business Management

In the Faculty of Business and Management Sciences

At the Cape Peninsula University of Technology

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February 2024

ABSTRACT

The continuous change in the technological landscape has driven e-tailing to become the fastest growing business platform within the technological sphere. E-tailing is becoming more popular among customers worldwide due to the simplicity of shopping. In South Africa, there is a lack of e-tailing adoption in many retailers, resulting in lower customers convenience of purchasing their products online. This study sought to identify the key factors affecting the adoption of e-tailing within selected clothing retailers in Cape Town. Although the adoption of e-tailing has been researched immensely in other countries, little has been researched in South Africa. This study is influenced by the potential advantages that e-tailing has for the clothing retail Companies.

The study adopted a quantitative research approach, with a close-ended questionnaire used as a primary data collection tool. Data were collected following ethical protocols of informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality. A total of 100 questionnaires were administered to individuals who worked for three conveniently selected clothing retail companies and 88 questionnaires were used for the data analysis. The reliability of the questionnaire (0.6) was acceptable according to Cronbach's alpha scale for the study to proceed. Charts, frequency tables, and non-parametric statistics were applied on the data to produce meaningful results.

This study managed to determine the factors that affect the adoption of e-tailing by the clothing retail business in Cape Town. Respondents agreed that the size of the business affects e-tailing adoption process as small businesses usually struggle with adopting technological advances as they lack resources and are not motivated to invest in technological advances. Most respondents agreed that the adoption process of e-tailing is expensive because of the required resources. Most respondents also agreed that the adoption of e-tailing is affected by the fact that it is less attractive for some customers due to face-to-face preference.

The current study complements the empirical work that has been conducted in this particular field, specifically in the context of South African clothing companies. This study also contributes immeasurably to academic research in the field of retail management as the adoption of technological advancement in businesses has been growing.

DECLARATION

I, **Masibulele Bentlanu**, declare that the contents of this thesis represent my own unaided work, and that the thesis has not previously been submitted for academic examination towards any qualification. Furthermore, it represents my own opinions and not necessarily those of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

Signed_____   Date_____

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank:

- The man above for keeping me and giving me the strength to finish this master's dissertation.

- My parents for always being there for me; indeed, you are a true example of how every parent should raise their sons.

- Professor Virimai Victor Mugobo, for guiding me throughout this exciting journey: your expertise was invaluable.

- Mr. Silence Chomunorwa for the massive contribution to making this project a success.

- Mr John Bulani for being my buddy reader and editor from time to time.

- The participants in this research study for making it possible to complete the project; without you, it would not have been possible.

- My church mates: colleagues, thank you for your prayers and motivation.

- The CPUT Centre for Postgraduate Studies for organising all the workshops that have played a massive role in this project.

- Wholesale and Retail SETA for funding my studies since my undergraduate qualification, you have made it possible for a black child.

- My friends, for always supporting and checking up on me from time to time.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Nosihle Bentlanu, and my father Eric Bentlanu,

Inene umzamo omhle niwuzamile, ugqatso nilufezile, ukholo nilugcinile

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The South African clothing sector has been deleteriously affected by international competitors since the year 1994 (Veitch, 2019:1). There is evidence that the influx of international competitors has stunted the growth of South African clothing retailers (Van Zyl & Matswalela, 2016:371). On the other hand, Ndweni (2016:1) posits that the availability of international brands in SA furnishes customers with a better shopping experience in clothing retailers. Measures were taken to help clothing retailers to be more competitive (Veitch, 2019:1). These measures were introduced in more than 800 clothing manufacturers operating in South Africa, and this generated a total of R19bn in annual revenue (Van Zyl & Matswalela, 2016:371). The South African Government has supported the clothing sector by introducing competitive programmes and production incentive programmes (Yarns & Fibers, 2017). These programmes aim to assist the industry in upgrading its processes and products to re-position the South African clothing industry to compete effectively against other producing countries (Yarns & Fibers, 2017).

Despite all these developments in the sector, competition has continued to increase (Veitch, 2019:2). Consequently, clothing retailers need to spend more time on understanding their customers to be able to satisfy them while gaining a sustainable competitive advantage. Over the years, e-tailing has emerged as an effective way of selling goods and services to customers and offering customers convenience (Prasad & Aryasri, 2009:73).

The constant growth of internet users has opened up a whole new platform for conducting business known as e-tailing or, more commonly, online shopping (Olivier, 2018:1). E-tailing is a way of conducting business involving companies and customers performing electronic transactions through the internet 24 hours a day and 7 days a week (Dawn,

2011:101). From a business viewpoint, it offers the ability to serve consumers across different geographical areas with no operational timing (Swapna, 2015:60).

According to Corkery (2017:1), e-tailing competes directly with traditional retailing and has resulted in many shopping centres around the world closing down. It has also compelled many retailers to change their business model to include e-tailing. Clawson (2019:1) reports a decline in business in many shopping centres around Britain, which were attributed to the advent of e-tailing. In the United States, Yehia (2018) notes that retailers are exiting shopping centres at a rapid pace due to the rise of e-tailing, with (by 2019) more than 7400 physical stores closing in the country. In South Africa too, shopping centres are starting to be less attractive as e-tailing becomes more popular (Githahu, 2019). Many South African retailers are nevertheless still using the brick-and-mortar business model, which cannot survive for long due to retailing being disrupted by global digital innovations (Githahu, 2019). An increase in the speed of online transactions has motivated numerous retailers to adopt e-tailing or to diversify their business model to multi-channel in order to serve their customers' needs (Goga et al., 2019:1). For example, Checkers South Africa has recently introduced an online platform that sells groceries and households items to their customers without the customers having to go to the physical store (Njomane & Telukdarie, 2022). Other supermarkets have followed suit.

Continuous change in the technological landscape has driven e-tailing to become the fastest-growing business platform in the field (Farrar, 2018). Prinsloo (2016) notes that this is true of the retail markets in both Europe and North America. E-tailing is becoming more popular among customers worldwide due to the simplicity of shopping in this way (Jain et al., 2015). Additionally, it saves time and offers customers the convenience of being able to explore a wide variety of products and compare prices (Limbore & Nalkol, 2013).

In developing countries like South Africa, businesses survive by sustaining a high degree of competitiveness through, for instance, adopting new technologies to enable them to offer customers the best quality and a better experience (Mutambo, 2016:14). Businesses

that successfully adopt internet technologies experience high growth, a high market share, improved service delivery and enhanced competitive positioning in the market (UNCTAD, 2015; Mutambo, 2016:15).

It is evident that retailers who have successfully adopted e-tailing can diversify their business strategy to support their growth, profitability and customer satisfaction (Mutambo, 2016:15). Yet despite the potential advantages to be gained, there is little indication that retailers operating in the South African clothing sector are embracing e-tailing. Sargent et al. (2012) have studied the factors affecting the adoption of technology by construction companies, and Wang et al. (2016:163) have investigated the factors affecting technology adoption in the hotel sector. This study is occasioned by the dearth of studies on the factors affecting the adoption of e-tailing within the South African clothing sector.

The technology organisation environment (TOE) theoretical framework was used to understand the factors affecting the adoption of e-tailing by selected clothing retail companies. Chandra and Kumar (2018) note that the TOE has been used in several technology adoption studies. It has a strong theory base that makes it easy to understand the technology adoption intentions of a business. This study aimed to identify the factors that influence the adoption of e-tailing within the clothing sector in Cape Town by selected retail companies.

1.2 Background

In the interests of promoting the efficiency and effectiveness of business transactions, there has been an increase in the adoption of internet technologies by retailers and individual households worldwide (Mutambo, 2016:14). Technology enables a business to be supported by customers regardless of their area of residence, leading to an increase in retail revenue and sustainability (Johnson, 2018:3). However, because of the resources required to develop and implement e-tailing systems, the adoption of e-tailing is still relatively low in developing countries (Farrar, 2018). In South Africa, for example,

although there has been an increase in e-tailing over the past few years, this trend has had to contend with the high price of data and the poor quality of internet services (Goga et al., 2019:3). A study by Kemp (2020:1) nevertheless reported an increase in internet usage in South Africa by 1.1 million customers between year 2019 and 2020. This suggests the importance of pursuing online clothing retail markets and e-tailing (Goldstuck & Elliot, 2019:3).

There is also growth in the retail sector in South Africa, with the contribution of trade sales to GPD increasing by 1.7% in 2022 over 2021 (Stats SA, 2022). Among the main contributors to trade sales is the clothing industry, which together with textiles, footwear and other leather goods contributed R 61.7 million and R 64.3 million in 2021 and 2022, respectively.

In this climate of opportunity and growth, it is vital for retailers to develop a competitive advantage by positioning their products or services within the electronic space, thus enabling them to respond to shifts in customer demand (Mutambo, 2016:14). Many retailers still do not take advantage of the benefits of e-tailing (Johnson, 2018:3), and it would be useful to find out why (Panda & Swar, 2013:52). Identifying the factors responsible should not only boost the usage of e-tailing, but also make it possible to assess its future growth.

The clothing retailers with which this study is concerned generally target low-medium income earners. These retailers operate in the Cape Town area and are mostly positioned outside of malls in front of busy roads and intersections. They attract people who are looking to purchase clothing items for their families. The oldest business has been in operation since the year 1931 and the youngest since 2010. These are medium-size retailers with an average employee complement of not more than 15 employees per store.

1.3   Problem statement

Many clothing retail businesses operating in the South African clothing sector are perceived to be underperforming because of their failure to adopt e-tailing (Johnson, 2018:1). Failure to understand the factors affecting the adoption of innovative technologies by businesses may lead to missed opportunities for financial growth and improved service (Afolayan & Wintola, 2014). Although research has attributed the underperformance and high failure rates in other industries to their reluctance to adopt e-tailing, minimal research has been conducted on the adoption of e-tailing by companies in the retail clothing sector in Cape Town or South Africa generally. Johnson (2018) conducted a study on the factors affecting the adoption of e-tailing in the Western Cape grocery sector, while Mapeshoane and Pather (2016) investigated the adoption of technology within the tourism industry. These studies showed that many businesses were unaware of the benefits of these innovative technologies. There is, therefore, a need to conduct a study on the uptake of e-tailing within the South African clothing sector.

1.4   Aim and objectives of research

1.4.1 Aim of research

Given the research problem articulated above, the study sought to establish the factors affecting the adoption of e-tailing by selected clothing retail companies in Cape Town, South Africa.

1.4.2 Sub-research objectives

In accordance with this aim, the following objectives were identified for the study:

- To identify the factors that affects the adoption of e-tailing by the selected clothing retailers in the Cape Town clothing industry.
- To measure the extent to which e-tailing is adopted in the clothing retail industry in Cape Town.
- To determine the benefits of adopting e-tailing in selected clothing retail companies in Cape Town.
- To recommend the strategies for adopting e-tailing as a trading platform.

1.5   Research Questions

1.5.1 Main Research Question

What are the factors affecting the adoption of e-tailing by selected clothing retail companies in Cape Town, South Africa?

1.5.2 Sub-Research Questions

Based on the research aim of the study, the following research questions guide the project in answering the study problem;

- To what extent is e-tailing adopted in clothing industry in Cape Town?
- What are the benefits of adopting e-tailing in selected clothing retail companies in Cape Town?
- What strategies can be recommended for adopting e-tailing as a trading platform?

1.6   Research Hypotheses

H_1:   There are factors that hinder the business from adopting e-tailing.

H_2:   There is lack of resources needed by the company for e-tailing.

H_3:   The size of a business affects e-tailing adoption process.

H_4:   The e-tailing business model is not appropriate for the type of business.

H_5:   There is lack of knowledge and awareness about the e-tailing platform.

H_6:   The adoption process of e-tailing is expensive.

H_6:   E-tailing is less attractive due to face-to-face preference.

H_7:   E-tailing platform has high security risks that inhibit the company from adopting it.

H_8:   Target market is not technologically inclined.

1.7   Rationale of the study

Although the adoption of e-tailing has been extensively researched in other countries, little investigation has been done in South Africa. Mutambo (2016:15) evaluated e-tailing take-up in the Kenyan context and concluded that it was affected mainly by the organisation's readiness to adopt innovative technologies. Zhao (2016) carried out a similar study on the adoption of e-tailing by SMEs in China, but in that country e-tailing is already widespread. Neither study is strictly applicable to the South African context. This is why it is important to fill this gap. This study seeks to identify the factors affecting the adoption of e-tailing by selected clothing retail companies in Cape Town, South Africa. This study is motivated by the potential advantages of e-tailing for the retail clothing trade. The principal stakeholders are therefore the clothing companies, the body of relevant knowledge or theory, and the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

1.7.1   The clothing companies.

The retail clothing trade constituted the main focus of the study, as the study was directly aimed at the conduct and wellbeing of the selected businesses. The research will enlighten the owners and managers of clothing companies operating in the South African clothing sector about the various factors affecting the adoption of e-tailing. This information should help them to apply all the mechanisms recommended to boost the usage of e-tailing.

1.7.2 Contribution to theory

The study will increase the body of knowledge concerning the researched phenomenon, which is the adoption of e-tailing.

1.7.3 The Cape Peninsula University of Technology

The study will allow the institution to contribute to meeting the challenges faced by the clothing industry. The study is in line with CPUT's vision of being a recognised leader in innovative research. Lastly, the study also satisfies a requirement for the researcher to obtain the qualification of Master of Retail Business Management.

1.8 Delimitation

The study only focused on the selected clothing companies operating in the Cape Town clothing sector as is it feasible for the research to conduct a study in this area due to the time and resources available. As mentioned earlier, the data was collected from the owners, managers, supervisors due to the fact that they are involved in the decision making process of the business. The study was limited to a sample size of 88 participants. Moreover, an acceptable research sample for this study was selected within the Cape Town population.

1.9 Structure of the dissertation

Chapter 1:	This chapter introduced the dissertation, giving the background of the study, problem statement, research aim and objectives, research questions and the significance of the study.
Chapter 2:	The chapter covers an evaluation of prevailing literature on e-tailing. This chapter provides baseline information on studies that have been conducted around the topic of e-tailing.
Chapter 3:	This chapter discusses the research methodologies and design used in this research, including the research instrument employed for data collection.
Chapter 4:	The chapter contains an examination of the collected data and uses figures and tables for the presentation of the collected information.
Chapter 5:	The chapter discusses the results that were presented in

Chapter 4.

Chapter 6:   The chapter provides conclusions and recommendations in line with the study objectives well described in Chapter 1.

1.10 Chapter summary

This chapter instigates the research topic, "Factors affecting the adoption of e-tailing by selected clothing retail businesses in Cape Town". Issues germane to e-tailing were unpacked and focused to identify the problem being investigated and the research questions and objectives. The study aimed to identify the factors affecting the adoption of e-tailing by selected clothing retail companies in South Africa. Although the adoption of e-tailing has been widely researched in other countries, this is not the case in South Africa. The findings from this study could therefore provide information on how this important platform is being utilised in South Africa. The next chapter provides a literature review exploring the theoretical background of the research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter provided an introduction and some background to this study. It also presented the research questions, objectives, and rationale of the study. This chapter reviews the existing literature on e-tailing in both developed countries and developing countries in Africa. This chapter outlines the theoretical framework for the study and concludes with a summary of the major points.

2.2 Introduction to e-tailing

The past decade has seen a significant shift in how marketing and advertising have been applied to new and existing products and services for consumers and companies (Pandey et al., 2018:147). Technology, through the growth of interactive media, primarily the internet, has fuelled these changes (Pandey et al., 2018:147; Xiang, 2018:147-150). Nowadays, most companies use internet marketing to retain their customers and build relationships with them to increase brand loyalty (Coelho et al., 2018:108).

The world has seen tremendous changes in practically every aspect of existence (Gomollón-Bel, 2019:18). Developing as well as developed countries continue to advance technologically. Over the last two decades, for example, the development of internet-based electronic commerce has provided firms with unrivalled marketing opportunities (Dias et al., 2020:18). Because of the cheaper operational costs and greater flexibility that web-based firms provide, brick-and-mortar enterprises nowadays frequently find it difficult to compete with them (Sumarliah et al., 2021:586). Every day, new technologies are invented to make life easier, and these include a shift from traditional retailing to e-tailing (Gupta et al., 2018:140). Atieh (2021:13) claims that the main drivers of these changes are technological advancements such as quicker data transmission methods and

improved mobile devices with increased computational capability, data storage, and a better user interface.

2.3   Evolution of e-tailing

E-commerce emerged in the 1990s. Initially, it was used to predict the growth of a business-to-business market and access the interactions of businesses (Tscheke & Lesher, 2019). E-commerce is defined as using telecommunication networks to share business information and maintain business relationships (Boateng et al., 2008:564). The realm of e-commerce ranges from little activities like electronic mailing to complex activities like supply chain management (Mthembu, 2016:17). E-commerce interactions gradually included business-to-consumer as well as business-to-business (Tscheke & Lesher, 2019). Decades later, e-commerce has grown and is growing at a faster rate than traditional retail (Mthembu, 2016:17). Even though it took retailers some years to believe that the Internet would become a viable sales channel, retailers like Amazon and Alibaba pioneered the adoption of an e-tailing platform as their growth strategy, enabling them to achieve huge sales (Parker, 2011).

Traditional retailing refers to products/goods purchased from manufacturers in bulk and then sold in smaller quantities or individually to customers (Mthembu, 2016:17). E-tailing is when websites make products accessible for online purchase. Thus retailing is done physically while e-tailing is online. The online market has experienced exponential growth in recent years. As more people shop on their computers and smartphones, businesses are looking for new ways to reach consumers.

Parker (2011:11) posits that e-tailing has simplified the shopping experience for customers by providing convenience while allowing them to compare prices. Considering the changes that e-tailing has brought to the industry, Williams (2009:222) agrees that e-tailing offers multiple customer advantages, resulting in massive migration from brick-and-mortar shopping. Convenience has become an expectation from consumers, and retailers need to meet this expectation. The movement to online shopping has opened

opportunities for most small businesses which can now reach an extensive market with very little effort (Williams, 2009:222).

As brick-and-mortar retailers transition to digital retailers, there are several key lessons to be learned. Although digital elements such as speed, differentiation and branding are equally important, the ability to transform core operations and practices to suit this new platform may determine whether a new business succeeds or fails (Grewal et al., 2018:93; Kane et al., 2019:39). Retailers need to examine the viability of such a transition and explore the synergies of using the new channel of e-tail (Hübner et al., 2016:296). They may need to revisit some basic retail functions and expand their competencies in merchandising marketing and demand prediction (Seyfang & Gilbert-Squires, 2019:235). The next section discusses some theoretical considerations.

2.4 Theoretical models

Theoretical models are essential to understand phenomena of interest (Fried, 2020:306). Theory-based research shifts attention from the superficial focus on eliminating problems and outcomes to a broader and deeper analysis of structures and processes and provides a baseline for a study (Bethel et al., 2022). The emerging digital technologies drive the implementation of new technologies (Verhoef et al., 2021). Information communication technology (ICT) advances have dramatically changed the way in which various organisations conduct their businesses. Applying new technologies in the workplaces has redefined intra- and inter-organisational communication and has streamlined business processes to ensure maximum benefits for example, higher productivity, employee wellbeing and the satisfaction of customers (Papagiannidis & Marikyan, 2020). In order to achieve these benefits, companies ought to spend massively on technologies. Investment in ICT implementation does not however, guarantee the successful deployment and high returns are not guaranteed. In this regard, the Technology Organisation Environment (TOE) which is more aligned to the current study is discussed further in the next subsection.

2.4.1 Technology Organisation Environment (TOE)

The TOE framework suggested by Tornatzky et al. (1990) to explain how new technology adoption and use are influenced by three main factors that include: organisational context, characteristics of the technology and the external environment in which the organisation operates (Na et al., 2022:2). Organisation context refers to the internal context in which the technology is used, including factors such as the culture, size and resources of the organisation. Environment refers to the external context in which the organisation operates, including factors such as market conditions, regulatory requirements, and social and cultural norms. While this framework was suitable for explaining technology acceptance and dissemination in this research, from the organisation's point of view, TOE has frequently been applied in research regarding corporations. An illustration of this framework is presented in Figure 2.1 below.
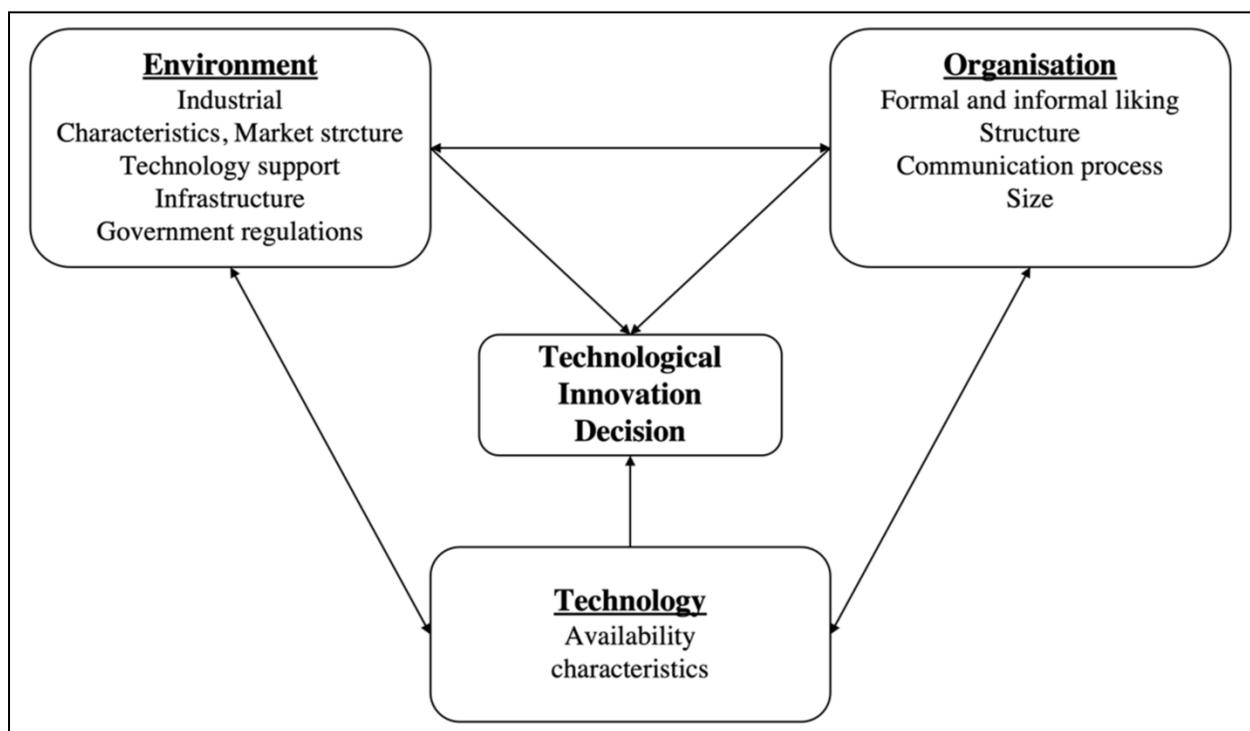
Figure 2.1: Technology Organisation Environment. Source: Tornatzky et al. (1990).

2.5   Factors affecting the adoption of e-tailing by clothing retailers.

2.5.1 Socioeconomic: Technological context

In general, the term "technological context" refers to all of a company's essential internal and external technologies, including equipment types and procedures (Hue, 2019:265). The technological context includes the internal and external technologies relevant to the business, including technologies already in use and technologies that are available outside the business but are not currently being used by the business (Oliveira & Martins, 2011). Retailers with advanced technology and in a strong financial position are more likely to adopt new technologies (Zhu et al., 2003).

Developed countries have a higher Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and income per capita than developing countries. These countries therefore tend to have more resources to invest in adopting new technologies and infrastructures than developing countries (Mthembu et al., 2018:11). Due to the high cost of the new technology infrastructure required for e-tailing, most shops in developing countries are unlikely to join the e-tailing sector. Even though reluctance to accept new technologies is normal in organisations, a quantitative study by Zhu et al. (2004) shows that perceived compatibility and values are critical factors in the technology adoption process. Yet Chatzoglou and Chatzoudes (2016:357) argue that cost need not be a significant barrier to e-business adoption. Factors such as context and scale would seem to be determinative. The next sub-section explores the organisational context factor.

2.5.2 Socio-cultural: Organisational context

The resources available to assist the adoption of e-tailing are an important element in the organisational context. Aspects include the size and scale of the company, top management support, organisational culture, the complexity of the managerial structure as determined by its centralisation, formalisation, interconnection, and the calibre and accessibility of the company's human resources (Estrin et al., 2018:439). Awa et al. (2017) claim that the size of the business is a key factor in the adoption of new technologies, in that adoption is slower in small businesses as they are unlikely to possess economy of scale advantage. Moreover, small businesses are exposed to

relatively greater risks when adopting new technologies (Awa et al., 2017). A study conducted by Wang et al. (2016) reported similar results, while El Rassi (2018) argues that top management support is critical in e-tailing adoption. The next sub-section outlines the importance of the environmental context.

2.5.3 Institutional: Environmental context

Among independent factors, environmental context, perceived ease of use, and perceived usefulness are significantly influential (Pipitwanichakarn & Wongtada, 2019:1433). The environmental context represents the setting in which the firm conducts business and is influenced by the industry itself, its competitors, the firm's ability to access resources supplied by others, and interactions with the government (Ralston & Blackhurst, 2020:5016). It is common to include pressure from competitors (local and international), customers, and society in considerations of environmental context (Hiran & Henten, 2019). For businesses to successfully adopt new technologies, they need to take all these factors into account (Angeles, 2014), although competition alone can impel companies to increase the quality of their service by doing so (Hiran & Henten, 2019).

2.5.4 Online consumer decision-making

Understanding online consumer decision-making is crucial to the success of e-tailing (Lin et al., 2019:1201). The process by which consumers analyse a purchasing decision involves five basic steps: problem recognition, information search, alternatives evaluation, purchase decision, and post-purchase evaluation (Qazzafi, 2019:134). According to Lăzăroiu et al. (2020:890), key points for investigation in this process are the psychological determinants of consumer engagement in e-tailing, decision mechanisms underlying the evaluation of prices, the types of perceived risk incurred, and online repurchasing behaviours and intentions on social commerce platforms. Also requiring exploration is whether the adoption of mobile payment services affects impulsive buying behaviour and decisions made by online consumers, especially under the influence of online product reviews (Chen & Ku, 2021:135).

Although the Internet promotes price uniformity inside the mobile agency when customers buy there, this does not ensure they will receive the best deal (Jing, 2018:483). In the decision-making process, price not only comes first but also comes last (Rothman, 2017:39). The result of a decision-making process is satisfaction, which is then incorporated into the feedback mechanism, linking past experiences to present behaviour. For instance, the Nicosia model attributes the state of consumer decision-making to the desire to complete a final act, which is the purchase of a good (Panwar et al., 2019:44).

2.6 Advantages and disadvantages of e-tailing

While many advantages are associated with the technological aspects of e-tailing, several disadvantages and limitations affect its implementation. Traditional shopping follows the following steps (1) identifying needs, (2) finding products, (3) evaluating the options, (4) paying for the product and (5) rating the services after purchasing the product (Oki et al., 2019). All the steps are taken in the course of a physical visit by the customer to the shop or retail site. The online shopping process follows the same steps, but instead of a physical visit, customers choose products through internet-connected devices (Richa, 2012). Understanding the pros and cons of operating an e-tailing business allows entrepreneurs to determine if it is right for them (Nolan, 2022). Table 2.1, below, summarises the advantages and disadvantages of e-tailing.

Table 2.1. Advantages and disadvantages of e-tailing

Advantages	Disadvantages
There are <u>lower overhead expenses</u> as e-retailing can be operated by an entrepreneur meaning that one does not need to hire employees until he/she has sufficient revenue and sales that justifies hiring someone	Some consumers still prefer in person shopping which may be valuable to customers who wish to ask questions about different products or to try out a product.
<u>24/7 selling opportunities</u> as e-retailing businesses are always open as long as the internet does not crash, as one does not need to be physically available every time someone makes a purchase	Delivery of a product is not instant. It might take 24 hours or more depending on location
<u>Increased consumer base</u> and ability to scale business as anyone who has internet access is a potential customer	Viruses, malware, and other phishing ransomware can compromise the e-retail business if the business does not have sufficient protection in place
Having <u>access to customer data</u> enables one to track buying habits of customers and therefore targeting them with carefully selected messages for marketing can increase sales	Having the products online means that competitors can easily monitor prices and customers will purchase where products are cheaper
E-tailing is preferred method of shopping which according to a 2022 Raydiant global report, 56% of the customers prefer shopping online	

Source: Nolan (2022)

2.7   E-tailing in Africa

Africa's retail market has been described as mostly informal and fragmented, although countries such as South Africa and Nigeria have been reported to have an online retailing presence. Zando, a South African online fashion retailer, and Jumia and Konga, a Nigerian online retailer, are well established on the African continent (Goga et al., 2019:1). Other countries – including Angola, Kenya, Gabon and Ghana – are said to exhibit online retailing potential (Mthembu, 2016:21). A survey conducted by Akar (2021:400) indicates that most consumers (66%) split their orders between e-tailing platforms and brick-and-mortar stores, and only 33% of respondents still shopped online as often as they did during the Covid-19 lockdown.
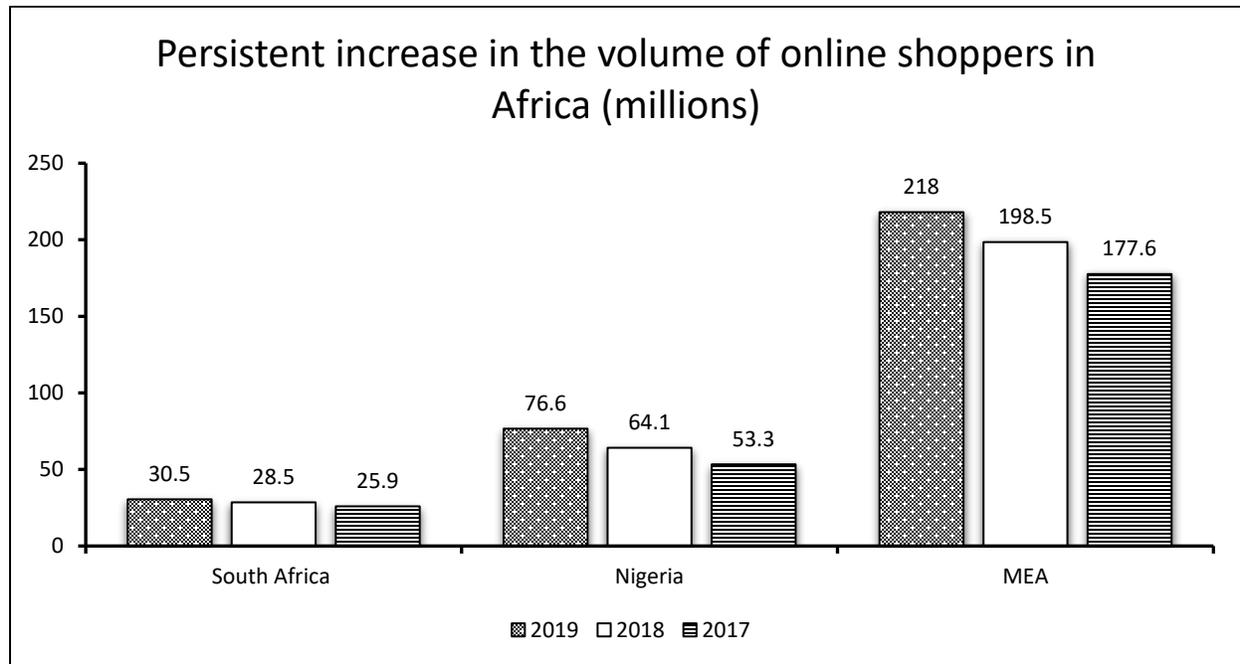
Figure 2.2: Online shoppers in Africa (Masekesa, 2020)

Solomon and Van Klyton (2020:100) observe that Africa's e-commerce environment is growing as more players enter the industry. With the innovation of electronic payments and improved technological security, the number of online shoppers in sub-Saharan

Africa will continue to grow (Masekesa, 2020). Melia (2020) argue that E-tailing platforms are gaining a foothold in the Sub-Saharan African retail industry, essentially fuelled by mobile technology, with smartphones offering internet access (Foya & Garikayi, 2021:72). According to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the percentage of people who use the internet climbed from 2.1 percent in 2005 to 24.4 percent in 2018 (Masekesa, 2020). In addition, Africa's payment services architecture is expanding in response to changing customer expectations and technology, with various disruptive payment methods allowing more people to participate in online purchasing, even if they do not have a bank account (Masekesa, 2020).

The development of online selling and purchasing in Africa has certainly been aided by technological advances and innovation (Arthur, 2020:225). In several African countries, e-tailing is being used to extend retail services to small towns and rural populations where the choice of goods is limited (Janjevic & Winkenbach, 2020:196). According to Rapp et al. (2015:369), retailers are increasingly turning to technology to increase sales and better engage with customers. However, several factors are preventing the African online market from reaching its full potential, including low internet penetration, high broadband internet access costs, the lack of national street address systems, a general distrust of online transactions, low bank card penetration, and limited online payment options (Al-Fawwaz, 2022:16). On the other hand, Kaplinsky and Kraemer-Mbula (2022:104-394) maintain that these same factors are spurring the development of innovative online shopping solutions in Africa.

Online consumer behaviour is likely to be influenced by how consumers interact with and use the internet (see Figure 2.3, below). There are psychological, sociocultural, and environmental factors to be taken into account to fully comprehend these complex interactions (Darley et al., 2010:116). Consumer purchase decisions are influenced strongly by the opinions of online consumers, one of the forms of electronic word-of-mouth generated by the internet and e-commerce (Hidayanto et al., 2017:85). Earlier studies seeking to determine whether internet shops profit from a combination of

favourable and unfavourable reviews found that negative online reviews had complex effects on consumers' purchasing decisions (Zhang et al., 2014:96). Making an online purchase can be risky, and retailers can influence the consumer's decision in various ways.
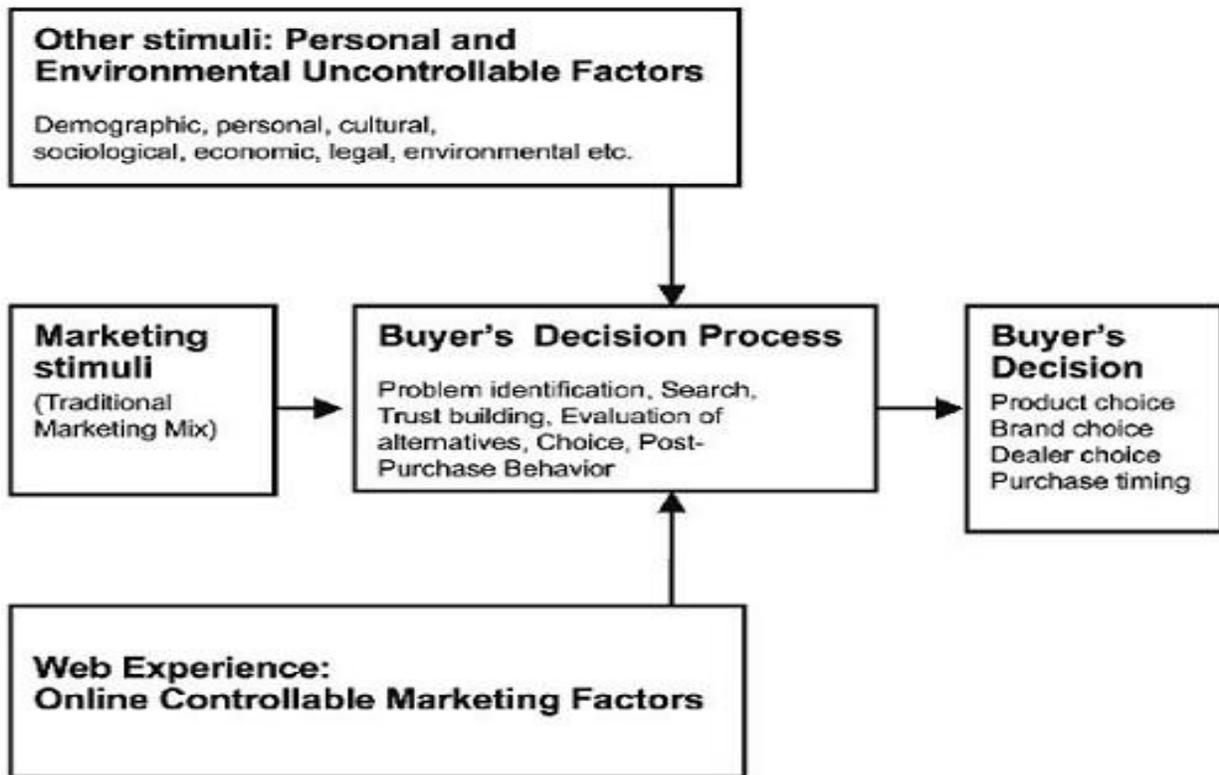
Figure 2.3: P Kotler's framework on online consumer buying behaviour (2003).

Customers may look for product reviews or customer comments during the search stage. They will find out which brand or company best suits their needs (Lavoye et al., 2021:329). An attractive website design and a well-organised website structure are important to persuade consumers to buy a product (Marmat, 2022:25).

2.7.1 E-tailing in South Africa

Online shopping has been growing in South Africa in recent years, though more slowly than in some other countries (Goga et al., 2019). Currently, consumers live in a highly

advanced digital world in which electronic resources such as the internet streamline their lives by supplying them with instant information and enabling them to make more informed decisions (Gao et al., 2020:578). Internet users can access a wide range of information, products, and services at anytime (Van Deursen & Van Dijk, 2019:373). Internet access is available on various devices such as smartphones, tablets, and computers, which means that consumers can benefit from its advantages almost anywhere (Kolny, 2021:23-32). Brits (2020:47) agrees that e-tailing has empowered consumers to purchase goods and services online at any time and virtually anywhere in recent years.

In South Africa, consumers use online systems to purchase products such as music or eBooks, travel, events tickets, and a wide range of physical products (Smith, 2017). These products include fresh food, non-perishable food, homeware, fashion, computers and tech, electronics, toys, movies and music, alcohol, flowers, cars etc. Currently, the most purchased products online include electronics, media, fashion, and apparel.

Goga et al. (2019:38) state that South African stakeholders have the wherewithal to support a decision to promote the growth of the local e-tailing business with some protection. Considering the potential for scale economies, data analytics, and platform economies to lead to dominant platforms in the future, competition authorities should be aware of this potential (Capobianco & Nyeso, 2018:27).

In South Africa, shopping centres are starting to be less attractive as e-tailing becomes more popular (Githahu, 2019). In addition, many South African retailers are still using the brick-and-mortar shopping experience, which cannot survive because of how retail is being disrupted by global digital innovations (Githahu, 2019). An increase in the speed of online transactions has motivated numerous retailers to adopt e-tailing or to diversify their business model to multi-channels in order to serve their customers' needs (Goga et al., 2019:1). For example, Checkers and other supermarkets have recently introduced online platforms that sell groceries and households items to their customers without requiring

them to go to the physical store (Njomane & Telukdarie, 2022).

Traditional retailers' losses, which fell to a nine-month low in 2020, correspond to gains made by South African online retailers, who more than doubled their combined market share to 2.8 percent (Munyai, 2020:97). Takealot, South Africa's largest online retailer, has increased revenue by 41% to over R3.3 billion (Munyai, 2020:97). This growth is consistent with the findings of Mastercard's 2020 study of consumer spending, which found that 68% of South Africans were spending more time shopping online than before the pandemic (Nicola et al., 2020:191). In addition to data and airtime, which continue to be the most popular online purchases, more than half of South Africans surveyed by Mastercard stated they intended to increase their online grocery and clothes purchases in 2020 (Namatovu & Larsen, 2021:120). Growth in 2021 was expected to be greater than the 30% growth of 2019, when growth was organic and driven by evolving shopping habits and retail strategies (Baker, 2018:1555).

2.7.2 E-tailing during Covid-19

The onset of Covid-19 has profoundly disrupted the retailing industry, inclining customers toward shopping online to meet their daily needs rather than using brick-and-mortar stores (Fihartini et al., 2021:17). During the pandemic, e-tailing provided a different experience and ambience for customers, as well as a whole new level of convenience. Data shows that online sales increased massively during 2020. An increase of 320% was seen in March 2020, followed by a whopping 480% increase by April 2020 (Fihartini et al., 2021:17).

Many clothing stores experienced a serious fall in sales during the Covid-19 pandemic, with numbers of businesses being forced to close (Dalgleish, 2020). Dalgleish (2020) notes that sales started to grow again when retailers utilised the e-tailing platform as a business strategy, even though the sales boost was not as marked as in other retail areas. It is evident that Covid-19 had a massive impact on the clothing industry, which has been partly remediated by the growth of online shopping. The discussion will now turn to the

conceptual framework of this study.

2.8 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework provides a structural overview of a study. Figure 2.4, below, portrays a conceptual framework for explaining the factors affecting the adoption of e-tailing in clothing retailers. Independent variables are described in rectangular boxes while the dependent variable is featured in the oval at the centre. This framework was created to develop suggestions for retailers to navigate the challenges they face in adopting e-tailing strategies.

Adoption of e-tailing is associated with several challenges, and these are included in Figure 2.4. Some retailers in developing countries have not benefited from e-tailing due to a lack of resources and awareness of the system (Odusanya et al., 2022:377). Understanding the factors affecting the adoption of e-tailing will help develop strategies to overcome the challenges and aid in developing business models that retailers can use to join the e-tailing sector (Odusanya et al., 2022:377).
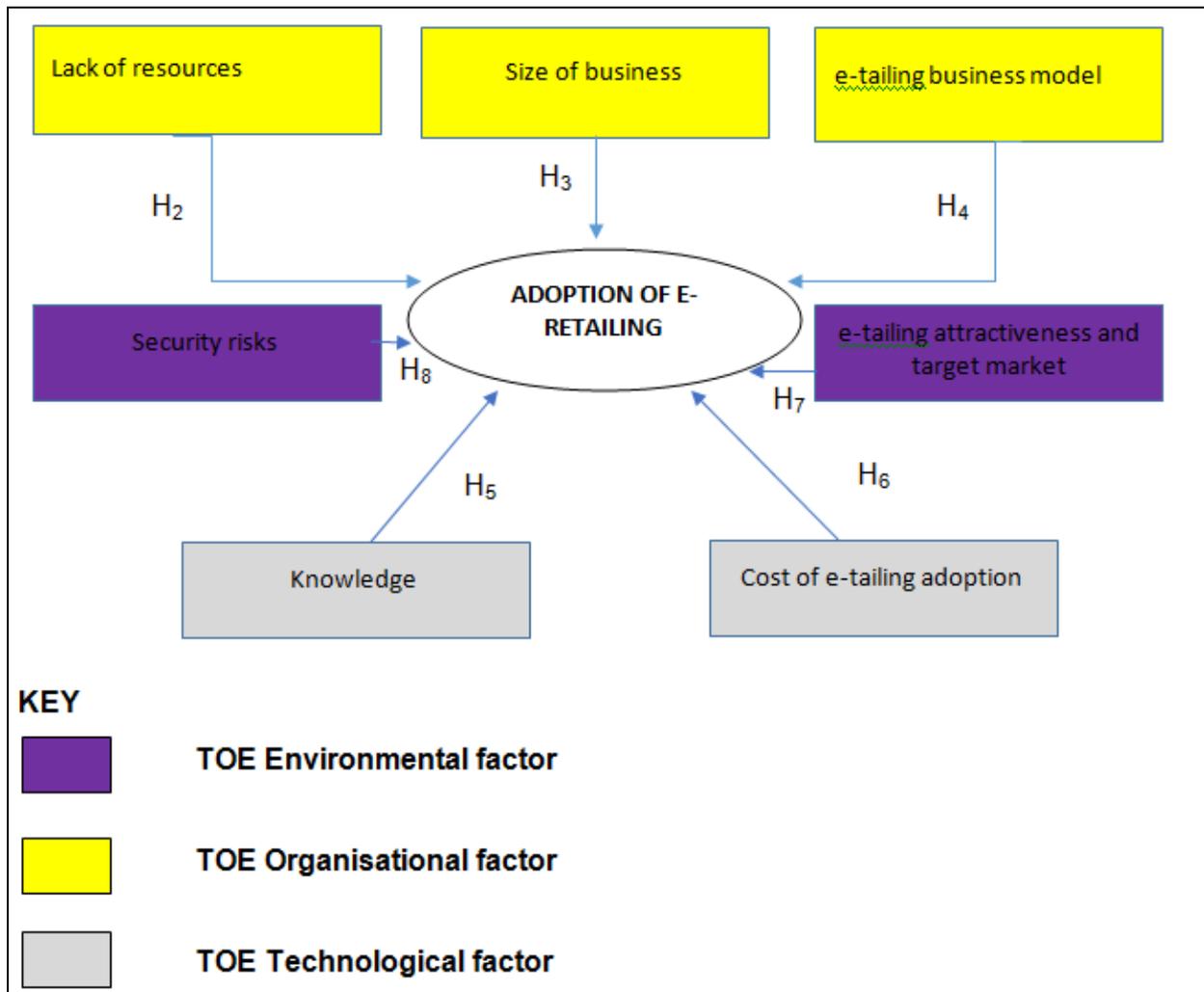
Figure 2.4: Conceptual framework of this study (own construction)

2.8.1 Lack of resources

The establishment of an e-tailing platform requires resources (Pipitwanichakarn & Wongtada, 2019:1433; Chauhan et al., 2020:2; Misra et al., 2022:1640). E-tailing requires computers, internet connectivity, web development, inventory control, optimisation, data security and trained staff (Sumarliah et al., 2021:586). These requirements are recurring and not once-off if the retailer is to maintain an online presence. Customers should always be engaged by the business through a user-friendly website (Pipitwanichakarn & Wongtada, 2019:1433). When resources are lacking, the adoption of e-tailing faces serious challenges (Amornkitvikai et al., 2022:3).

Resources are also needed by customers to enable them to switch to e-tailing (Moeti et al., 2021). A computer/laptop or smartphone together with data connectivity are necessary for a customer to access e-tailing platforms. The lack of access to such technological infrastructure is a key obstacle to the adoption of e-tailing by customers.

2.8.2 Security risks

Among the factors that affect the adoption of e-tailing are security and privacy issues (Misra et al., 2022:1640; Satar & Alarifi, 2022). E-tailing can be exposed to online attacks, phishing, viruses, malware and ransom ware. Any of these threats can compromise the e-retail business if it is not well protected (Sukumar et al., 2023:1). According to the *African Cyberthreat Assessment* of 2021, South Africa had the highest number of cyber business attacks in Africa (Matlhabe, 2022). Similarly, the 2022 *State of Email Security* report revealed that more than 75% of South African business organisations were receiving an increasing number of email-based threats. In 2016, cybercrime cost the South African economy $573 million and in 2021, South Africa had the third-highest number of cybercrime cases in the world which cost the economy R2.2 billion (Matlhabe, 2022).

Security risk is not only an issue for the business, but also affects the adoption of e-tailing by customers (Sukumar et al., 2023:1). Data breaches that have previously compromised the personal and financial information of customers may make them uneasy about the online transactions they make (Krishnan et al., 2017:8). They may well raise questions about the level of security of e-tailers, especially as it relates to the protection of payment information (Moeti et al., 2021). Similarly, consumers may be reluctant to share their personal information for use in ongoing marketing initiatives. Nevertheless, it is telling that a study conducted in South Africa found that most respondents preferred to shop online as they regarded it as a safer option than physically visiting a retail shop with the risk of being robbed (Moeti et al., 2021).

2.8.3 Knowledge

E-tailing platforms require individuals employed by the business to possess the knowledge and IT skills necessary to run the online shopping platforms, website, transactions and social media platforms for advertising (Chauhan, 2020:2; Satar & Alarifi, 2022).Employees running the e-tailing platforms need periodic re-training to remain up-to-date with technological advances that they can utilise for the convenience of both the business and customers (Chauhan, 2020:2).

The same applies to customers. They need to be knowledgeable about e-tailing procedures otherwise they will not be able to do business online. Web design is a complex matter and the design of e-tail stores is not standardised (Froehlich, 2022). Customers need to be able to adjust to various forms of interface.

2.8.4 Cost of e-tailing adoption

This factor is related to the question of resources, as discussed in sub-section 2.8.1.Although the initial investment cost of e-tailing is very high, the permanent running costs of e-tailing have been shown to present no disincentive to a business moving towards digitisation (Kamble et al., 2018). E-tailing is in fact less expensive and more cost-effective than traditional retailing as it saves on the wages of salespeople and the cost of renting and maintaining premises (Chauhan et al., 2020:2). Customers, on the other hand, can expect to have to pay for internet access, a telephone, delivery and associated taxes

2.8.5 E-tailing attractiveness and target market

Adoption of e-tailing is primarily driven by the target market. The use of e-tailing has been increasing globally due to the rising penetration of the internet as well as the growing preference for online shopping. Retailers in the United States of America are exiting shopping centres at a rapid pace due to the rise of e-tailing and thousands of physical stores have closed in the country (Younes et al., 2022). This shows how attractive e-tailing is in the global market. The Covid-19 pandemic has further accelerated the shift to

the digital market (Misra et al., 2022:1640). Despite African countries lagging in adopting e-tailing, the pandemic resulted in increased use of online shopping platforms (Fihartini et al., 2021:17; Galal, 2023). This was true of South Africa, where recent trends suggest that customers will continue to make use of e-tailing and e-shopping services (Cullen et al., 2022:14).

2.8.6 E-tailing business model

E-tailing is not necessarily uniform (Henderson, 2023). Merchants sell their products in various ways. They devise their own business models according to what they feel truly represents their brand. There are four basic models for e-tailing businesses: omnichannel merchants, virtual merchants, catalogue merchants and manufacturer-direct merchants (Henderson, 2023). The type of business model chosen influences the manner of e-tailing adoption.

2.8.7 Size of business

Large and established retailers are usually able to invest in technology as they are well-resourced. It is small retail businesses that struggle to invest in technologies (Ledwaba et al., 2019), although once the investment is made, business running costs will be low (subsection 2.8.4). In this regard, conducting business online has emerged as a potential platform for small businesses to operate more efficiently, improve networking and collaboration, and create avenues for sustainable competitive advantage (Satar & Alarifi, 2022). Nevertheless, a substantial percentage of small businesses are still reluctant to access the opportunities offered by e-tailing for the conduct of their business (Ramdani et al., 2022).

2.9   Research gaps

While the adoption of e-tailing is well-researched in developed countries, there is a dearth of information on the adoption and acceptance of e-tailing in developing countries (Tarhini et al., 2019:158). As revealed in the literature review presented in this chapter, there is little research available on the adoption of e-tailing in the clothing retail industry of South Africa. Olivier has (2018) investigated the factors affecting e-tailing in the sports business

industry, and Johnson and Iyamu (2019) and Mkansi and Nsakanda (2023) have explored factors affecting the adoption and use of e-commerce in South Africa's mainstream retail grocery sector. Moeti et al. (2021) have identified aspects of the use and acceptance of e-shopping by consumers in Limpopo, South Africa. Sampson and Mugobo (2023) have recently established the relevant factors that result in the success of apparel e-tailers trading in South Africa hybrid retail companies. The current study thus addresses a knowledge gap by investigating the situation of e-tailing in the retail clothing industry in South Africa.

2.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented a detailed literature review concerning various aspects of e-tailing. The chapter started with an introduction to e-tailing, then went on to explore the literature that is available on the factors affecting e-tailing adoption. Sociocultural, socioeconomic, cognitive, infrastructural and institutional factors were listed and described. The chapter then narrows the focus to e-tailing in Africa and South Africa and the effect of Covid-19 on the sector. The conceptual framework for the study is introduced, illustrated and discussed. The next chapter turns to the research methodology employed in the study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

3.1   Introduction

This chapter describes the research methodology used to address the aim, objectives and research questions developed for the study. Instruments such as questionnaires, surveys, structured interviews, internet research methods, observations, document interpretation and secondary data are used for research purposes (Bryman & Bell, 2016:383). This study aimed to determine factors affecting the adoption of e-tailing by selected clothing retail companies in Cape Town, South Africa. The chapter therefore covers the population under study, the sampling method used, data collection and analysis, the study's validity and limitations, and ethical considerations. It will be shown that data was collected and interpreted in such a way as to ensure the work's credibility, validity, and reliability.

3.2   Research paradigm

A research philosophy determines how a phenomenon is examined in order to gain an understanding of it (Al-Saadi, 2014). There are three main research philosophies: positivism, pragmatism, and post-positivism (Husam & Pius, 2020:39). Positivism is a research philosophy that relies on scientific evidence, such as experiments and statistics, to reach the study's goal (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:27). Post-positivism is a research paradigm that evolves from the positivist paradigm and retains the idea that the truth should be considered objective, but asserts that people's experience of such truths is necessarily imperfect because mediated by their experiences and values (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:27). Post-positivists believe that what is observed depends on the values and background of the researcher. This can overlap with the relativist paradigm of interpretivism. A pragmatist approach, on the other hand, maintains there are many ways in which data can be interpreted, and that the most useful for the researcher's purposes

is the best (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:27).

This study adopted a positivist approach. According to Kivunja and Kuyini (2017:27), positivism emerged as a philosophical paradigm in the nineteenth century with Auguste Comte's rejection of metaphysics and his assertion that only scientific knowledge can reveal the truth about reality. Chandra and Kumar (2018) studied the factors affecting the adoption of augmented reality in e-commerce using this research philosophy, while Al-Rjoub (2018) employed the positivist paradigm to study factors and issues affecting the adoption of innovative technologies in insurance companies in Jordan. Nwakanma et al. (2014) adopted a positivist philosophic stance in their research on factors affecting the adoption of technology in the hospitality industry in Nigeria.

Since the main aim of this study was to determine the factors affecting the adoption of e-tailing in selected clothing retail companies in the Cape Metropolis, the positivism paradigm was adopted. There are several reasons for this, the most important being that the paradigm supports numeric data, which is more reliable than narrative data (Prasad, 2018). The positivist paradigm is well served by a structured questionnaire that facilitates the collection and analysis of data, saving time and resources, especially when the sample is large. A structured questionnaire is a data-collecting tool that consists of standard questions for gathering the required information from the research respondents. Cameron and Price (2009) note that positivism is an epistemological stance that predetermines the research design according to the overall objectives of the study.

3.3   Research method

Qualitative and quantitative approaches are the most commonly used research methodologies (Bell & Waters, 2018:24). The qualitative approach relies on words, statements and sometimes images, while the quantitative approach involves numbers and statistical analysis (Kumar, 2018:47). Qualitative research is mainly based on respondents' perspectives. It is mostly achieved through communicating with people through questionnaires and interviews (Bell & Waters, 2018:24). Quantitative research, on the other hand, uses numerical data to obtain results (Bernard, 2017:3540). This

approach generalises the results to the population of interest from a selected subgroup of a population, using mathematical approaches (Maree, 2016:47; Andrew et al., 2019:10). Quantitative research uses strategies of inquiry such as experiments and surveys and collects information with predetermined instruments that yield statistical data (Bernard, 2017:3540). The current study adopted a quantitative research method to address the research questions that were derived from the problem statement. Quantitative research methods were used by comparable studies (e.g. Bonetti, 2020; Kamand & Lagler, 2021; Park-Poaps et al., 2021).

3.4 Research design

The phrase research design refers to the overall strategy for conducting the study and addressing the research problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). A research design provides a structure and strategy for completing a research study and ensuring that the information gathered addresses the primary questions (Kumar, 2018:47). Four types of research designs have been reported in the literature, namely, exploratory, descriptive, explanatory and experimental (Saunders et al., 2016:152; Kumar, 2018:47).

An explanatory research design was adopted for this study. Explanatory research design enables researchers to analyse a certain subject or topic thoroughly which increases the chances to learn more things and study new concepts around the topic being investigated (Asenahabi, 2019:85). Explanatory research designs are also explained as "cause and effect" as they investigate patterns and trends in existing data that have not been previously investigated and for this reason, it is also called causal research (George & Merkus, 2021). Explanatory research design investigates why and how a phenomenon takes place and serves as a starting point for future research. In this study, the variables are the adoption of e-tailing and the various factors affecting this (cf. Chibaro, 2015:14; Muriithi et al., 2016:92; Okoro, 2021:25). A relationship between the adoption of e-tailing in clothing companies and factors affecting the adoption of e-tailing was indeed established. The diagram in Figure 3.1, below represents the research plan, from the literature review to the reporting of findings.
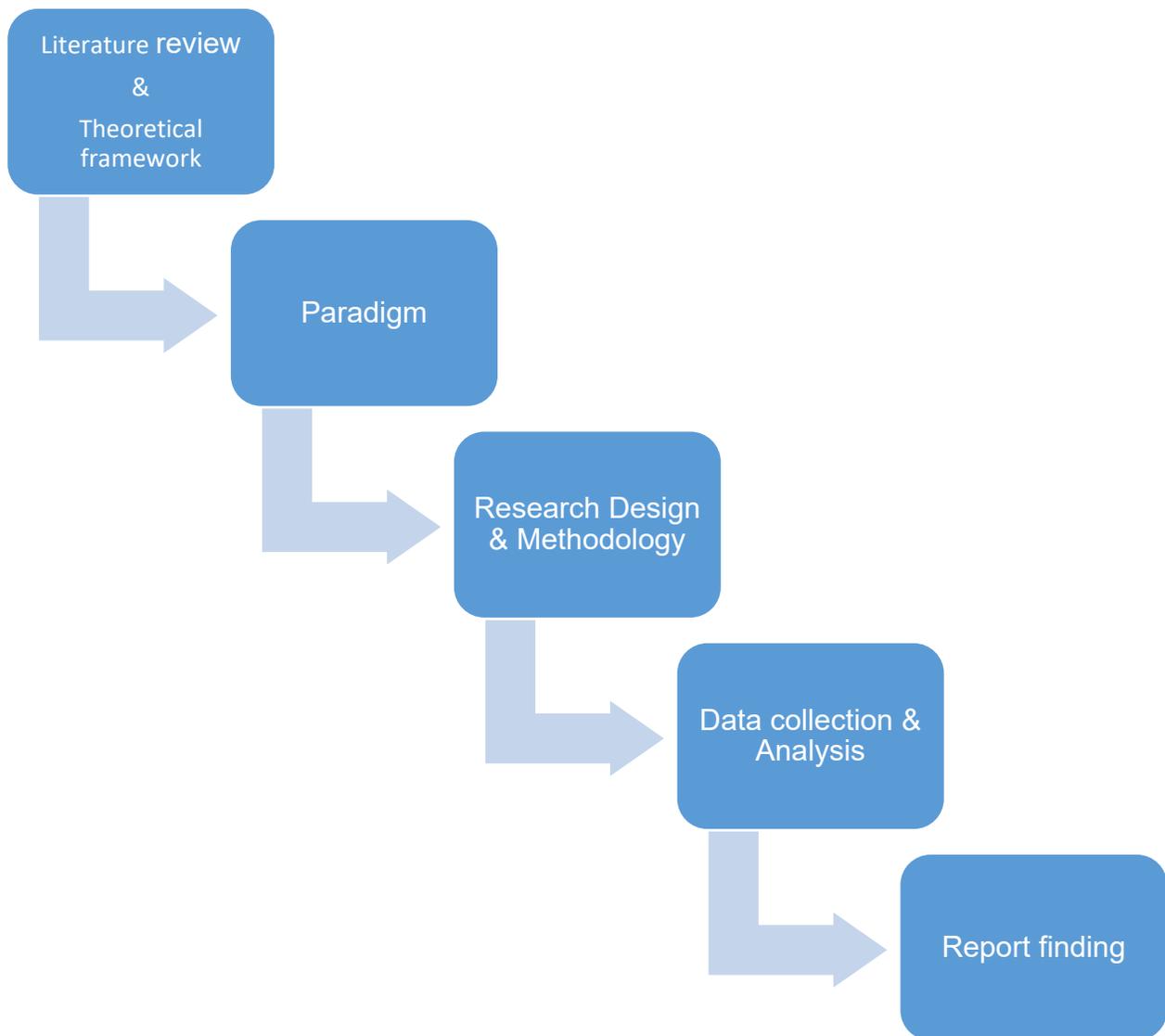
Figure 3.1: Research Plan Framework (own construction)

3.4.1 Target population

A research population comprises individuals with common characteristics or traits (Explorable, 2020). These characteristics are of interest to the researcher (Explorable, 2020). The sample for this study was drawn from the population of clothing retailers situated in Cape Town. Casteel and Bridier (2021:344) state that an effective research population should be distinctive, reachable, and well-informed about the research phenomenon. The participants in this study consisted of owners, managers, and

32

supervisors of selected retail companies operating in the clothing sector in Cape Town

3.4.2 Sampling method and sampling technique

In this study, a non-probability method was used involving purposive and convenience sampling. Purposive sampling was used to select participants working in the participating clothing companies. In addition, convenience sampling was applied to identify those willing and available to participate in the study. The participating clothing stores were selected from a list of clothing retailers operating in Cape Town. Clothing retailers that responded to a request for them to participate in the study were included. Three clothing retailers agreed to participate in this study and hence data collection were collected from these three clothing retailers. The HR departments of the participating retail companies indicated that they had approximately 1,000 employees at the managerial level. Unfortunately, they did not indicate how many employees there were per department.

3.4.3 Sample size

The sample size is considered an important factor when it comes to sampling as it contributes to the reliability and validity of the study (Maree, 2016:198; DiStefano et al., 2018:453-466). To determine the sample size, the population size, a margin of error and confidence interval are used (Taherdoost, 2017:237). The following formula was used to determine the sample size:

$$n = \frac{z^2 \times \hat{p}(1-\hat{p})}{\varepsilon^2}$$

where
  z is the z score
  ε is the margin of error
  N is the population size
  p̂ is the population proportion

A 95% confidence interval and a margin of error of 5% are generally used in research (Taherdoost, 2017:237). Using the above formula, a sample size of 132 was determined

based on the calculation below.

Result

Sample size: 132

This means 132 or more measurements/surveys are needed to have a confidence level of 95% that the real value is within ±5% of the measured/surveyed value.

Confidence Level:	95%
Margin of Error:	5 %
Population Proportion:	50 % Use 50% if not sure
Population Size:	200 Leave blank if unlimited population size.

As the targeted sample size was 132, this was however not achieved due to challenges in getting responses from the selected respondents. Out of the 132 questionnaires distributed to potential respondents, the researcher received feedback from 100 respondents. Out of the 100 questionnaires received, 88 were used for data analysis as the other 12 questionnaires did not have valid responses and were erroneously completed.

3.4.4 Data collection

Data collection is considered an important part of any study as it is the process responsible for gathering relevant and meaningful information to address the research objectives and answer the research questions (Paradis et al., 2016:3; Kabir, 2016:202). For a successful study, the researcher needs to understand the key data collection methods used in the field of study (Flick, 2017:7).

Data collection instruments are critical and choosing the correct instrument enables the researcher to collect data to answer the research questions or test the research hypotheses (Saunders et al., 2016; Dåderman et al., 2020). Without the support of proper and valid data-gathering devices, a scientific study is set for failure. The ability of a

researcher to compile suitable data collection procedures determines the accuracy of the data (Castleberry & Nolen 2018:811). Tests, questionnaires, inventories, interview schedules or guides, rating scales, survey plans, or other forms that are used to collect information on roughly identical items from 10 or more respondents are considered data-collection instruments (Dåderman et al., 2020:107).

A questionnaire is a data-gathering tool consisting of questions and other prompts designed to collect information from respondents (Yeong et al., 2018:2711). Questionnaires can be open-ended or closed-ended (Baburajan et al., 2022:2). Open-ended questions require the respondent to explain the answer in a short essay or paragraph, while closed-ended questions provide the respondents with options to choose from (Bhandari, 2023). Closed-ended questions are often phrased as statements requiring a response from a Likert scale of options (Bhandari, 2023). As this research was quantitative and followed a positivist approach, a closed-ended questionnaire was adopted. Questionnaires were given to 100 respondents in September 2022.

3.4.5 Questionnaire guide development

A questionnaire guide is a list of topics and aspects that have a bearing on the given theme and should be raised by the interviewer during the interview (Opie, 2019:179). For this study, the questionnaire guide was divided into two sections.

Section A: Biography

Closed-ended questions in the questionnaire guide determined the participant's profile. This section covered personal information: the respondent's demographics, position, and years of employment by the company. The section determined whether the respondent was qualified to participate in the study. Using information from section A, the researcher selected individuals who qualified to participate in the study – owners, managers, and supervisors of the selected retail companies operating in the clothing sector in Cape Town.

Section B: Likert Scale

This section was structured according to the objectives of the study. Once the respondents had completed section A, they were requested to complete section B, which comprised statement-type questions with answers ranked on a scale ranging from 1 – 5, where 1 meant strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 neutral, 4 agree, and 5 strongly agree. These questions were designed to gather information from the employees' perspective about the phenomenon under investigation.

3.5   Pilot study

A pilot study is a small-scale preliminary study that researchers conduct to help them decide how to execute a large-scale research project (Van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2002). In this research, the researcher carried out a pilot test of the questionnaires before implementing the actual fieldwork. This was achieved by approaching ten individuals working in retail clothing shops in Cape Town who matched the description of the participants to be included in the sample of this study. The draft questionnaires were also administered to some fellow students. This exercise aimed to determine if the participants could understand the questions. It revealed the ambiguity of some questions and aided in clarifying other questions. The results of the pilot study were excluded from the final data analysis.

3.6   Reliability and validity of data

Reliability and validity are used to assess the quality of research (Valera-Calero et al., 2021:197) by ensuring the integrity of whatever measurement instrument(s) it uses (Mohajan, 2017:78). The reliability and validity of a method, methodology, or test show how well it measures what it sets out to measure (Schimmack, 2021:410). Validity is concerned with a measure's precision, while reliability is concerned with its consistency (Riezler & Hagmann, 2021). When a researcher is designing a study, arranging procedures, and writing up their findings, it is critical that they consider dependability and validity, especially in quantitative research (Pathiranage et al., 2020:369).

3.6.1 Reliability

Reliability or dependability refers to how consistently a method measures something (Hayes & Coutts, 2020:20). If the same result can be obtained using the same procedures under the same conditions frequently, the measurement is considered dependable (Funder & Ozer, 2019:166). The goal of establishing reliability in research is to ensure that the data is correct.

For this study, the researcher measured the reliability of the instruments to determine their consistency in testing what was intended to be measured. This was done through pilot testing to ensure that the questions in the questionnaire guide were simple, sufficient, and precise for the participant to understand. In Manerikar and Manerikar (2015:48)'s opinion, although it is possible to acquire negative results, the values of Cronbach's alpha, which checks for reliability, vary from 0.00 (no reliability) to 1.00 (perfect reliability). According to Cronbach's alpha test of reliability, a result of 0.9 is outstanding (for high-stakes testing), 0.7 is good (for low-stakes testing), 0.6 is acceptable, 0.5 is bad, and 0.5 is undesirable (Manerikar & Manerikar, 2015:48). Response data in MS Excel were tested for ANOVA and the Mean Square Error and the Mean Square for the rows were taken to calculate the Cronbach value from the formula below:

$$Cronbach\ value = \ 1 - \left(Mean\ Square\ Error \middle/ Mean\ Square\ Error\ Rows \right)$$

3.6.2 Validity

Validity refers to how well the data collected covers the actual field of research or "measures what is intended to be measured" (Taherdoost, 2016:3). To ensure the validity of the data for this study, four aspects were considered:

(a) Research method

The research method that the researcher selected reflects the type, format and depth of the data to be collected so as suitably to answer the research questions. The method used in this study is derived from various comparable studies that provided examples and precedent to serve as a guideline (Taherdoost, 2016:3).

(b) Question content

The type of questions asked, and their precise wording can influence the validity of a research project. Quantitative research is usually unmoderated and therefore ambiguous questions do not accurately reflect what the researcher intends to ask, there being no opportunity to provide further explanations or for respondents to ask questions. Questions must therefore be free of jargon, straightforward, and must mean the same thing to all respondents. The questions asked were carefully prepared by the researcher to ensure the validity of the information elicited.

(c) Sample size and type

The group taking part in this research was representative of the target population and is therefore in possession of the information that the research is seeking. The sample size was determined through the standard methods of using a margin of error and confidence interval. This ensured that the researcher had an adequate sample size capable of providing sound answers to the research questions (Taherdoost, 2016:3).

(d) Pilot study

The researcher undertook a pilot study that entailed administering questionnaires to managers of retail clothing shops in Cape Town. This was done to ascertain whether the questions needed to be corrected before submission to the target population sample. The findings from the pilot study assisted the researcher in identifying repeated or similar questions in the questionnaire guide. These findings were used to improve the guide, which improved the study's validity.

3.7   Data analysis

The data gathered was imported into MS Excel and coded for identification. The data was combined using MS Excel's COUNTIF function to produce useful information for further analysis using statistical software application. The data was analysed using STATISTICA

software (Statsoft, Inc., version 7.1), and it was verified for normality using the Shapiro-Wilk test before deciding whether to employ parametric or non-parametric statistics. The data were not normally distributed, and non-parametric tests that include Kruskal-Wallis test were used.

3.7.1 Analysis of Section A of the questionnaire

The data in this section was analysed and presented using the COUNTIF function, frequency tables, charts, and graphs. It consisted of the respondents' demographic information, educational background, years of experience, and position in the company.

3.7.2 Analysis of Section B of the questionnaire

This section elicited information that answered the study objectives. Respondents chose options between a range from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" in response to a series of statements. The COUNTIF function was used to quantify the data for analysis. Responses that "agreed" were combined to represent a dataset which was compared with a "disagreed" combined dataset.

3.7.3 Comparison of responses

Responses were compared using a Kruskal-Wallis test with a Dunn test post-hoc, with P-values adjusted for multiple comparisons using Holm-Bonferroni corrections.

3.8   Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance was obtained from the CPUT Ethics Committee (Clearance Certificate No. FBMSCREC 082) in respect of the ethical standards required of social science research.

3.8.1 Informed consent

Informed consent is a process in terms of which the researcher informs the prospective participants about all the procedures involved before obtaining their consent to participate (Nijhawan et al., 2013). Informed consent is important for the participants as it allows

them to make a voluntary decision on whether they want to participate in the study or not (Nijhawan et al., 2013). The informed consent of all the participants in this study was obtained by the researcher. They were all reminded that their participation in the study was voluntary, and that they were allowed to withdraw at any time. After the participants had agreed to participate in the study, they signed the consent letter (Appendix 2).

3.8.2 Confidentiality

Confidentiality refers to the researcher's protecting the privacy of information about the participants in research and maintaining the standards of confidentiality throughout the research process (Kaiser, 2009). In this study, the participants were not expected to share confidential information, but all the information gathered was nevertheless protected at all times so that others could not access it. All the data collected was used only for the purposes of the study.

3.8.3 Anonymity

Anonymity means that all participants in the research study remain anonymous (Musikavanhu, 2017). The researcher ensured that all the data collected was captured anonymously to hide the participants' identities. The researcher was honest throughout and followed accepted ethical principles in conducting the study. This includes the content of the declaration of originality.

3.9 Limitations

One significant limitation of the study was the unwillingness of the participants to provide information for fear of it being made public or endangering their current employment. To address this issue, the researcher repeatedly assured the respondents that they would remain anonymous. The researcher also explained that the research would not in any way jeopardise their jobs as the study was for academic purposes only. This study's concentration on just three retail companies in the Western Cape Province was another limitation. In the three retail companies, the researcher ensured that a sufficient sample size was collected so as to give a representation of retail shops in Cape Town. Data from

other localities and provinces would have enriched the data set for this study, but the information obtained was nevertheless sufficient to provide useful insights into e-tailing in the retail industry. More information might have been collected by adding a qualitative component to make a mixed methods approach.

3.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter has described in detail the research methodology employed in the execution of the research. To determine the factors affecting the adoption of e-tailing in retail clothing stores in Cape Town, the study used a questionnaire to collect information from managerial staff. Data was collected following ethical protocols and making use of a quantitative approach from the data collection process through to the analysis and interpretation of the data. Non-parametric statistics were implored as the data did not meet normality requirements. The succeeding chapter presents the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter reports the study's findings regarding the factors affecting the adoption of e-tailing in retail clothing stores in Cape Town. As presented in the previous chapter, closed-ended questionnaires were used to collect information from individuals in the retail clothing industry. A quantitative approach characterised the research process, from data collection to the analysis and interpretation stages. This chapter presents the results obtained in frequency tables, charts and graphs. The reliability of the results is discussed first, followed by the results themselves in relation to the study objectives.

4.2 Reliability of results

Table 4.1 below shows the ANOVA results for the reliability of the questionnaire data. Values in bold were used to compute the reliability, which was calculated as 0.60. According to the Cronbach scale, this value is acceptable.

Table 4.1: Reliability results for the questionnaire

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Rows	228.4187	87	**2.625502**	2.480103	7.53E-12	1.271669
Columns	929.0335	18	51.61297	48.75467	5.1E-137	1.610443
Error	1657.809	1566	**1.058626**			
Total	2815.261	1671				

4.3 Normality of Data

The Shapiro–Wilk test of normality rejected the null hypothesis that the data were normally distributed (w = 0.82, $p < 0.03$) and hence parametric tests were used in this study.

4.4   Section A Results: General Information of Respondents

4.4.1   Gender

The number of male respondents (n = 52) was higher than the number of female respondents (n = 36) as illustrated in Figure 4.1 below.
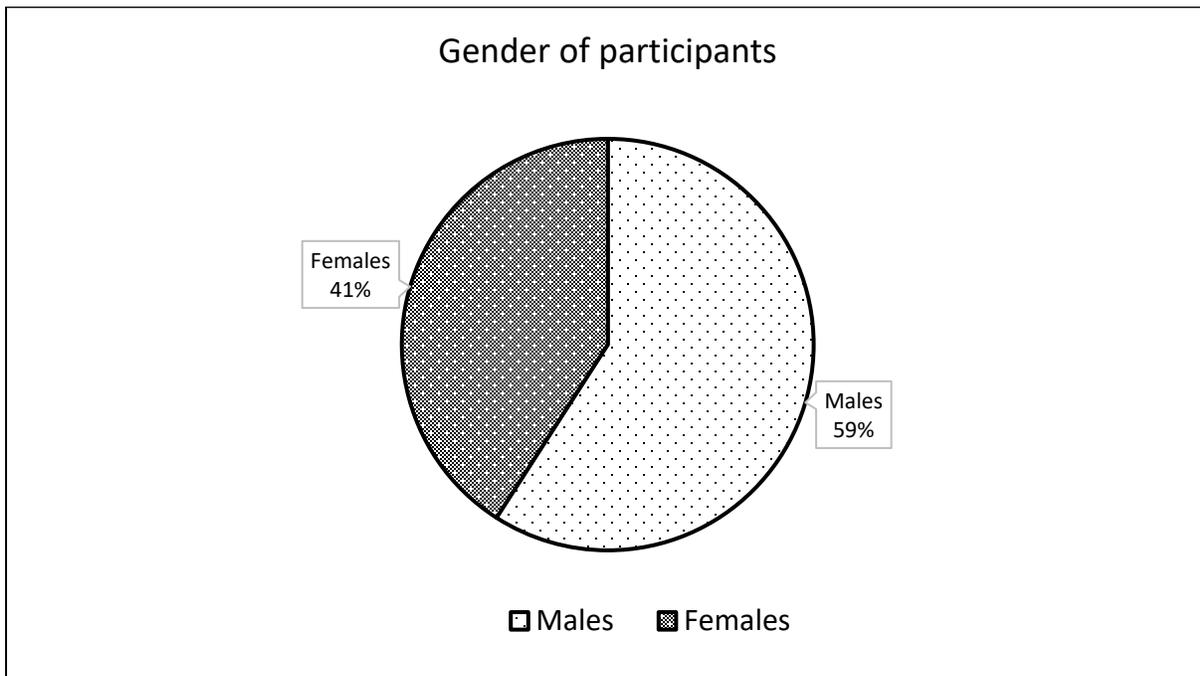
Figure 4.1: Gender of respondents

4.4.2   Age

The age range of the respondents is shown in Figure 4.2, below. The 25-34 age range was the modal group with 35 respondents (40%). This was followed by the 35-44 age group with 21 respondents (24%), < 25 age group with 16 respondents (18%), 45-54 age group with 14 respondents (16%) and the > 55 age group, which comprised 2 respondents (2%).
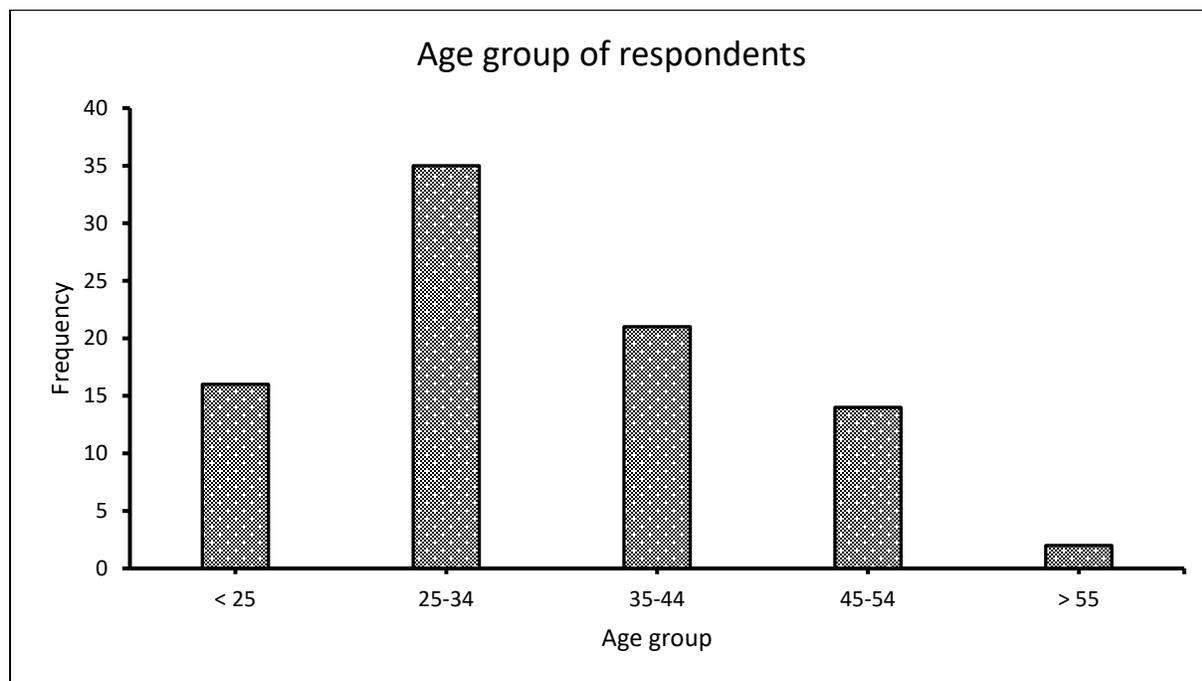
Figure 4.2: Age group of respondents

4.4.3 Position of the respondents in the retailer

The range of positions or posts held by the respondents is shown in Figure 4.3, below. Most respondents were managers (50%). Other positions (executive, owner, online administrator and others) contributed less than 23% of the total respondents.
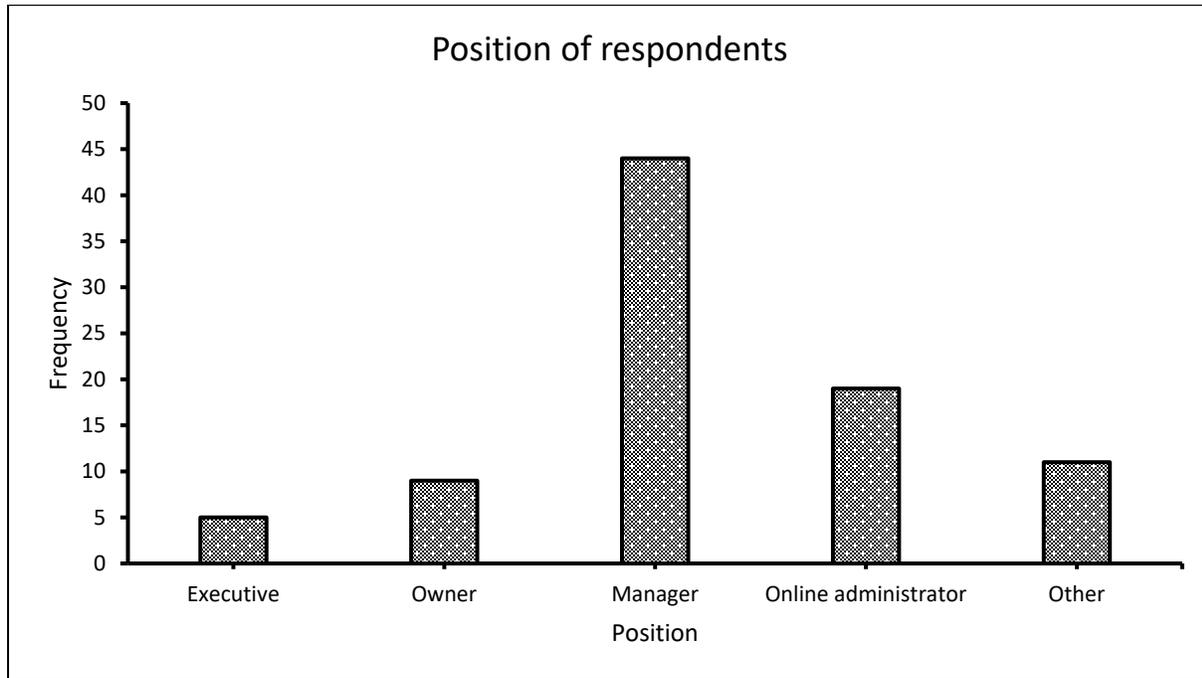
Figure 4.3: Position of respondents

4.4.4 Years of experience in the retail industry

The years of experience of the respondents are shown in Figure 4.4, below. Respondents with fewer than 5 years of experience constituted the modal group of 37 individuals (42%). This was followed by the 5-10 years' experience group with 22 respondents (25%), the 11-15 years group with 20 respondents (23%), the 15-19 years group with 7 respondents (8%) and the > 20 years group, with 2 respondents (2%).
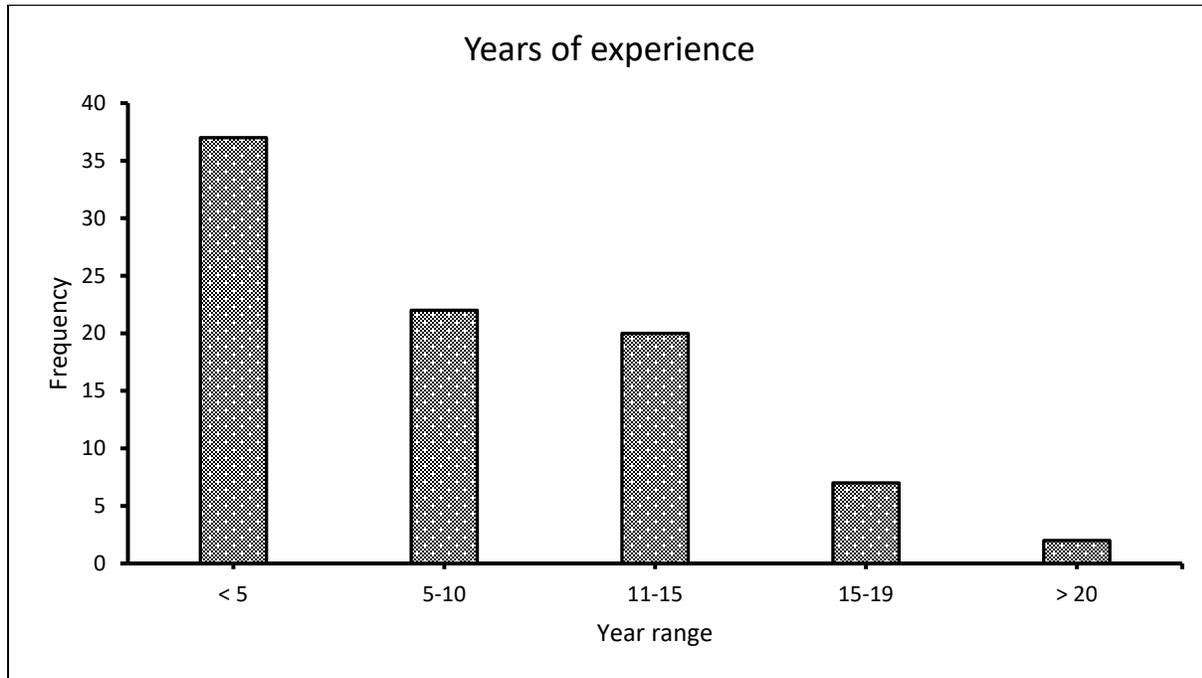
Figure 4.4: Years of experience of the respondents in the retail industry

4.4.5 Language of respondents

The home language of the respondents is presented in Figure 4.5, below. The modal group with the highest frequency was that of Afrikaans speakers, with 46 respondents (52%). This was followed by English (21, 24%) IsiZulu (10, 12%), IsiXhosa (9, 11%), and other languages (2, 2%).

.
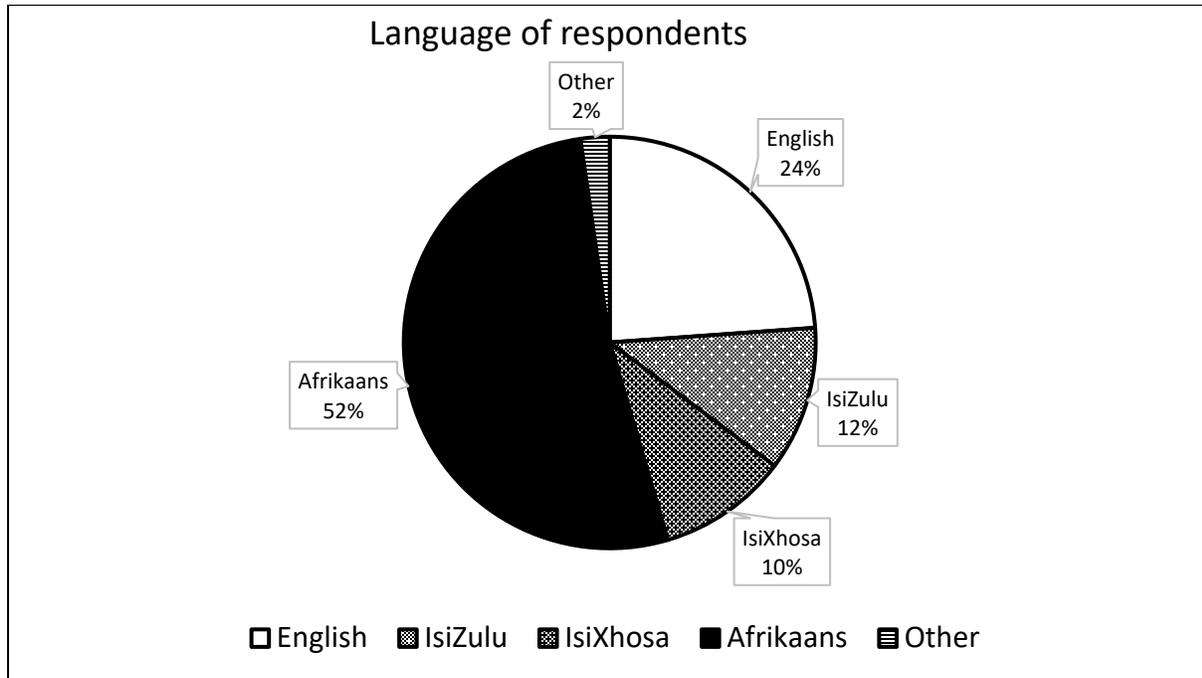
Figure 4.5: Language of the respondents

4.4.6 Category of Retail Company

Illustrated in Figure 4.6, below, is the category or size of the retail company according to responses from the participants. The modal group with the highest frequency was that of large retail companies, which had a frequency of 47 (53%). This was followed by medium and small retail companies, with frequencies of 17 (19%) and 16 (18%), respectively. Micro retail companies had the lowest frequency of 7 (8%).
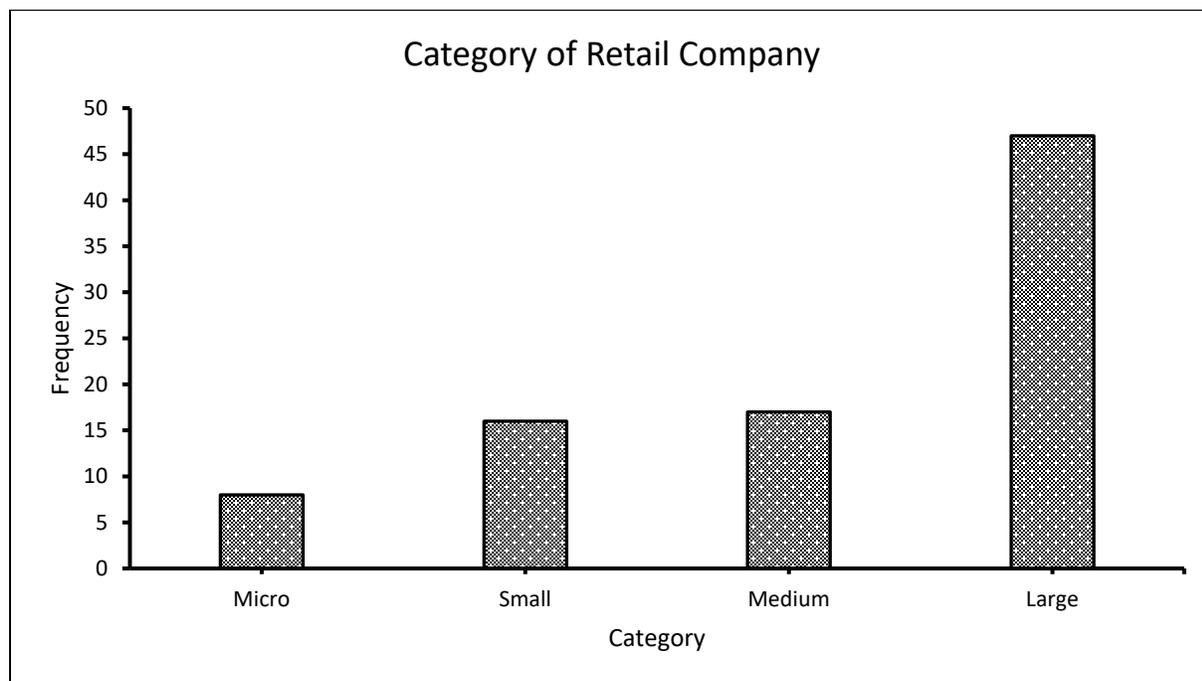
Figure 4.6: Category of Retail Company

4.5   Section B Results

4.5.1 General factors affecting the adoption of e-tailing in clothing retail

Table 4.2 presents the responses for the general factors affecting the adoption of e-tailing in clothing retail. Values in bold represent the responses that had the highest frequency per construct.

Table 4.2: General factors affecting the adoption of e-tailing in clothing retail. Values are in percentage.

Construct	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral/ unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
Factors that hinder the business from adopting e-tailing	7.95	9.09	11.36	**54.55**	9.09
There is lack of resources needed by the company for e-tailing	7.95	**38.64**	3.41	22.73	27.27
The size of a business affects e-tailing adoption process	18.18	12.50	18.18	**37.50**	13.64
The e-tailing business model is not appropriate for the type of business we operate in	25.00	17.05	21.59	**32.95**	3.41
There is lack of knowledge and awareness about the e-tailing platform	9.09	9.09	**42.05**	28.41	11.36
The adoption process of e-tailing is expensive	9.09	9.09	11.36	**61.36**	9.09
E-tailing is less attractive due to face-to-face preference	7.95	23.86	2.27	**39.77**	26.14
E-tailing platform has high security risks that inhibit the company from adopting it	2.27	**38.64**	4.55	28.41	26.14
Our target market is not technologically inclined	13.64	13.64	23.86	**35.23**	13.64

According to the Kruskal-Wallis Test, the responses in Table 4.2 differed significantly (K-S, = 17.68; p = 0.001). Significant differences according to the post-hoc test were detected

between "Strongly Disagree" and "Agree"; "Agree" and "Unsure"; and "Strongly Agree" and Agree (Table 4.3).

Table 4.3: Post hoc analysis of general factors affecting the adoption of e-tailing in clothing retail responses.

One-way ANOVA	Residuals	Tukey's pairwise	Kruskal-Wallis	Mann-Whitney pairwise	Dunn's post hoc

Bonferroni corrected p values

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral/unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
Strongly Disagree		1	1	0,0007825	1
Disagree	1		1	0,167	1
Neutral/unsure	1	1		0,01638	1
Agree	0,0007825	0,167	0,01638		0,04596
Strongly Agree	1	1	1	0,04596	

4.5.2 The level of adopting e-tailing within the clothing retailer

Table 4.4 presents the responses for the level of adopting e-tailing within the clothing retailer. Values in bold represent the responses that had the highest frequency per construct.

Table 4.4: The level of adopting e-tailing within the clothing retailer. Values are in percentage.

Construct	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral/ unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
The retailer currently uses e-tailing as a trading platform	0.00	10.23	5.68	**72.73**	11.36
Online transactions increase sales due to providing convenience to customers	0.00	1.14	4.55	**54.55**	39.77
The retailer finds e-tailing very beneficial for future growth	4.55	0.00	2.27	34.09	**59.09**
Working with this platform is satisfactory	0.00	0.00	9.09	**45.45**	**45.45**
The top managerial structure is fully in support of new advanced technologies	0.00	6.82	4.55	39.77	**48.86**
Our employees are fully aware and have the expertise to use this platform	0.00	14.77	10.23	**42.05**	32.95
We have enough experience with the e-tailing trading platform	3.41	11.36	17.05	**51.14**	17.05

According to the Kruskal-Wallis Test, the responses in Table 4.4 differed significantly (K-S, = 26.62; *p*> 0.001). Significant differences according to the post-hoc test were detected between "Strongly Disagree" and "Agree"; "Strongly Disagree" and "Strongly Agree"; "Agree" and "Disagree"; and "Strongly Agree" and Agree (Table 4.5).

Table 4.5: Post hoc analysis of general factors affecting the adoption of e-tailing in clothing retail responses.

One-way ANOVA	Residuals	Tukey's pairwise	Kruskal-Wallis	Mann-Whitney pairwise	Dunn's post hoc

Bonferroni corrected p values

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral/unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
Strongly Disagree		1	1	0,0001211	0,001451
Disagree	1		1	0,01665	0,1024
Neutral/unsure	1	1		0,0548	0,2774
Agree	0,0001211	0,01665	0,0548		1
Strongly Agree	0,001451	0,1024	0,2774	1	

4.5.3 Benefits of adopting e-tailing

Table 4.6 presents the benefits of adopting e-tailing within the clothing retailer. Values in bold represent the responses that had the highest frequency per construct.

Table 4.6: Benefits of adopting e-tailing within the clothing retailer. Values are in percentage.

Construct	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral/ unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
E-tailing enables a high level of interaction between customer and retailer	0.00	6.82	4.55	37.50	**51.14**
E-tailing enhances the competitiveness of the retailer	0.00	0.00	11.36	36.36	**52.27**
E-tailing enables high return on investment for the retailer	0.00	0.00	1.14	48.86	**50.00**
E-tailing enables the business to reach customers in different geographical areas	0.00	0.00	0.00	39.77	**60.23**
E-tailing enhances the business image	0.00	0.00	0.00	35.23	**64.77**
E-tailing improves the business sustainability	0.00	4.55	0.00	37.50	**57.95**
E-tailing increases the business market share compared to its competitors	0.00	0.00	4.55	29.55	**65.91**
E-tailing reduces marketing and advertising costs	0.00	3.41	7.95	23.86	**64.77**

According to the Kruskal-Wallis Test, the responses in Table 4.6 differed significantly (K-S, = 26.44; *p*> 0.001). Significant differences according to the post-hoc test were detected between "Strongly Agree" and "Disagree"; "Strongly Agree" and "Unsure"; and "Agree" and "Disagree" (Table 4.7).

Table 4.7: Post hoc analysis of general factors affecting the adoption of e-tailing in clothing retail responses.

One-way ANOVA	Residuals	Tukey's pairwise	Kruskal-Wallis	Mann-Whitney pairwise	Dunn's post hoc
		Bonferroni corrected p values			

	Disagree	Neutral/unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
Disagree		1	0,02749	3,144E-05
Neutral/unsure	1		0,1206	0,0003148
Agree	0,02749	0,1206		0,5128
Strongly Agree	3,144E-05	0,0003148	0,5128	

4.6   Summary

This chapter has presented the research findings regarding each question asked in the survey, in the form of tables, charts and graphs. The data was not normally distributed and hence non-parametric statistics were used. The data was presented in two sections (A and B), the first being devoted to demographic information and the second to responses in line with the study's objectives (as set out in Chapter 1). The following chapter discusses the research findings presented in this chapter.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to identify factors affecting the adoption of e-tailing by selected retail clothing companies in Cape Town, South Africa. The study made use of a questionnaire to collect information from company employees and had recourse to a quantitative approach to analyse the data thus gathered. The chapter before included tables, charts, and graphs to show the research findings. This current chapter offers a discussion of these findings.

5.2 Reliability of results

The value of Cronbach's alpha for the reliability of the results was 0.60, which was acceptable (Manerikar & Manerikar, 2015:48). The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is a frequently used technique in research to describe the degree of questionnaire reliability (Taber, 2017).

5.3 Discussion based on Section A

5.3.1 Gender

It seems that management in the retail industry is dominated by males, according to the findings of this study. Males accounted for 59% of the respondents, and females 41%. Gender bias in the workplace is one of many variables that lead to gender inequality in the globe (Martínez et al., 2021:1). Numerous people draw incorrect assumptions, form preconceptions, and harbour prejudice as a result of well-known cognitive biases. For instance, when applying for jobs, female candidates are assumed to have lower performance, self-confidence, and retention rates than male candidates (Heilman, 2012). The International Labour Organisation recognises gender prejudice as one of the main reasons why people with the same credentials and qualities are not hired or promoted.

The fact that there is a significantly lower percentage of females in the study sample suggests that gender inequality prevails in this sector. These results cannot, however, be generalised, partly because of the size of the sample and partly because there may be several other factors contributing to the gender imbalance.

5.3.2 Age

The 25-34 age range, which made up 40% of the sample, was the age modal group with the highest frequency. This age group comprises of young energetic people who can potentially provide a variety of advantages to organizations, including as growing their own staff, increasing competitiveness, giving their employer's brand a young touch, and addressing skills shortages (CIPD, 2015:5). Young employees generally have the potential to grow and develop (CIPD, 2015:6). On the other hand, older generations have more experience of and knowledge about the retail industry.

5.3.3 Position of respondents in the retail company

Most respondents (50%) were managers of the companies concerned. As the aim of this study was to identify the factors affecting the adoption of e-tailing by selected clothing retail companies, a fair representation of managers in the sample served as a reasonable guarantee that information relevant to the study would be forthcoming. Managers tend to be more knowledgeable about a company's operations than more junior staff.

5.3.4 Language and years of experience in the retail industry

Afrikaans-speaking individuals were in the majority, amounting to 52% of the sample of respondents. Three other languages – English, IsiZulu and IsiXhosa – were prominently represented. One can hypothesise that the dominance of Afrikaans can be attributed to the high proportion of Coloured people resident in Cape Town and the Western Cape generally.

5.3.5 Years of experience in the retail industry

The sample was dominated by respondents who had less than 5 years of experience. This result correlate with the age group that dominated the respondents' sample and it was expected that they also have work experience of less years. The sample was biased towards respondents who worked for/or owned large retail companies. However, there was a possibility individuals from the same company could have differentially categorised the same retail company. The next section discusses findings from Section B of the questionnaire.

5.4 Discussion based on Section B

5.4.1 General factors affecting the adoption of e-tailing in clothing retail

Most respondents (55%) agreed that there were factors hindering the business from adopting e-tailing. By combining those that agreed (strongly agreed and agreed), a percentage total of 64% results. This research did not explore these factors because of the nature of the questionnaire chosen for the study. Nonetheless, the findings corroborate those reported by the literature on e-tailing, e-commerce, and online shopping, which has identified various factors limiting the adoption of e-tailing. Retailers, especially smaller businesses, still face challenges to the adoption to e-tailing in that they lack access to the necessary resources and requisite technologies (Amornkitvikai et al., 2022:3).

In India, the majority of retailers' store operations and financial accounts are still physically maintained (Kapuria & Nalawade, 2021). Their heavy reliance on cash and manually managing stock limit the capacity of such companies to adopt e-retailing (Singh et al., 2020). While the Covid-19 pandemic accelerated the shift to the digital market, retailers still faced difficulties with adapting to e-tailing (Misra et al., 2022:1640). These are attributed to a general lack of awareness about e-tailing, shortages of expertise and technical resources, security concerns and financial constraints (Misra et al., 2022:1640). However, contrary to the literature, the question of a lack of resources drew divergent responses in this study. Respondents who disagreed with the construct that "lack of

resources affects the adoption of e-tailing" reveal the highest frequency of 39%. This suggests that the retail clothing shops are well-resourced, though it may be that the respondents were not fully apprised of the costs of introducing e-tailing. However, if the responses are aggregated (strongly agree + agree = individuals that agreed; strongly disagree + disagree = individuals that disagreed), respondents that disagreed had a total of 47% and those that agreed had a total of 50% which corroborates with various sources.

Respondents who agreed with the construct that the size of a business affects e-tailing adoption had the highest frequency of 37.5%. If the responses are as described in the previous paragraph, respondents that disagreed had a total of 30.68% and those that agreed had a total of 51.14%. It is in most cases the large and established retailers that are able to invest in technologies as they are well-resourced. It is advised that small retail businesses re-examine their current business strategies to upgrade their skill sets in order to keep up with the ever-increasing demand for change and create a dynamic business environment (Ledwaba et al., 2019). Conducting business online has emerged as a potential venue for small businesses to operate efficiently, improve networking and collaboration, and create avenues for sustainable competitive advantage (Satar & Alarifi, 2022). Despite the opportunities offered by technology, a substantial percentage of small businesses are still reluctant to exploit the opportunities offered by e-tailing (Ramdani et al., 2022). Satar and Alarifi (2022) reiterate all the factors affecting the adoption of technology by small businesses – including lack of resources, lack of knowledge, security concerns, negative perceptions of e-business, lack of management commitment and the centralised decision-making of small business owners.

The issue of security risk as a factor challenging the adoption of e-tailing was according to the aggregated data, a real issue for the respondents as 54.55% agreed to this construct. E-tailing is generally prone to online attacks, viruses, malware, and other phishing ransomware which can compromise the e-retail business if it is not well protected (Sukumar et al., 2023:1). Throughout 2022, cyber security threats that include credit card fraud, account takeover, API abuses, web scraping, distributed denial of service attacks

and Grinch bots were a persistent challenge for global e-tailing, threatening online sales and customer satisfaction (Security, 2022; Threat Intelligence, 2023).According to a report by the *African Cyber Threat Assessment* of 2021, South Africa had the highest number of cyber business attacks in Africa (Matlhabe, 2022). Similarly, the 2022 *State of Email Security* report revealed that more than 75% of South African business organisations had encountered an increased number of email-based threats. In 2016, cybercrime cost the South African economy $573 million and in 2021, South Africa had the third-highest number of cybercrime cases in the world, costing the economy R2.2 billion (Matlhabe, 2022). The prevalence of cyber security breaches means that the adoption of e-tailing is bound to be affected as per the fears of the majority above.

With regard to the cost of establishing an e-tailing platform, most respondents (70%) agreed that it was generally expensive for a retail business to establish an e-tailing platform. This challenge loomed largest for small businesses as they lacked the resources to invest in e-tailing. The technologies required to establish an e-tailing platform include a domain name, secure SSL certificate, web hosting, e-retail platform, internet merchant account, payment service provider and social media (Conway, 2018). Research into low-cost technologies can assist small businesses in adopting e-tailing and conducting virtual operations to keep up with the changing business environment and the possibility of more pandemics (Akpan et al., 2020).

The literature has varying views on whether e-tailing is more or less attractive than face-to-face business. In this study, the highest frequency of respondents based on aggregated data (66%) preferred face-to-face business. This finding is contrary to findings from other parts of the world, particularly the developed world, where most prefer e-tailing. E-tailing platforms provide many conveniences and usually cheaper prices than ordinary stores (Arifin et al., 2022:31). Payments are easily made by transferring money through a reputable platform and the seller delivers the ordered goods. Traders are increasingly turning to e-tailing as they feel that it is an easier way of doing business that does not require rented premises (Arifin et al., 2022:31). Nevertheless, it seems that this 'brick or

click' debate (Barnard, 2016) will continue, as different consumers also have different retailing preferences. Some businesses and customers prefer traditional brick-and-mortar companies, which afford them opportunities to build face-to-face relationships. Other retailers prefer to have both, perhaps starting with brick-and-mortar stores and expanding into e-tailing to make their business more widely accessible, including to customers who are only able to shop after hours. The next sub-section discusses the level of adopting e-tailing within the retail clothing business concerned.

5.4.2 The level of adopting e-tailing within the clothing retailer

Most respondents (84%) agreed (strongly agreed + agreed) that their clothing retail business currently uses e-tailing as a trading platform. This is commendable as literature discussed in the previous sections as well as in Chapters 1 and 2 has shown the wide benefits of e-tailing in a dynamic business environment. As indicated above, though, despite the growing trend towards e-tailing, many consumers prefer face-to-face business from physical retail spaces (Asong, 2021), and online brands, such as the gigantic e-business Amazon, are currently opening physical stores to cater for such customers (Asong, 2021).

Most respondents (94%) also agreed (strongly agreed + agreed) that online transactions increase sales due to providing convenience to customers. They regarded e-tailing as very beneficial for future growth, as customers were increasingly at ease shopping in the comfort of their homes. Online transactions are especially important in times of epidemics and natural disasters to prevent the loss of lives. The Covid-19 pandemic was a wake-up call for most businesses, as online transactions became more common than face-to-face ones. In the USA, digital purchases during the Covid-19 pandemic quickly surpassed the incidence of e-shopping during the Christmas holidays as the amount of money spent via digital means rose by 200% (Zamboni et al., 2021:1). In the Czech Republic during the Covid-19 pandemic, research showed that e-tailing and the percentage of goods purchased online increased more than threefold (Svatosova, 2022:156). African countries

experienced a similar increase in online shopping during the Covid-19 pandemic. According to a survey conducted between 2020 and 2021, online shopping increased by 81%in Nigeria, 79% in Kenya, and 68% in South Africa and the Ivory Coast (Galal, 2023). The findings from South Africa suggest that customers will continue to make use of e-tailing and e-shopping services (Cullen et al., 2022:14).

Lack of support from owners and top management has been cited as one of the factors deterring retail businesses from adopting e-tailing (Satar & Alarifi, 2022). It seems that when managers/owners come to realise the advantages of e-tailing, they tend to strongly support its acceptance; but conversely, when managers/owners are unsupportive, its acceptance fails to produce significant outcomes (Marei et al., 2021:1122). Hence, top management is a key change factor in terms of IT innovation. This is especially common in small retail businesses where there tends to be centralised decision-making (Satar & Alarifi, 2022). The results from this study reveal that top managerial structures are fully in support of new and advanced technologies, including the adoption of e-tailing, with 89% of the respondents agreeing (strongly agreed + agreed). Support from top management to cope with technological advances is vital for a retail business to achieve its goals and stay afloat in a competitive business environment. Support from top management is also reflected in the high frequency (75%) of respondents' (strongly agreed + agreed) claims that employees are fully aware of e-tailing and have the expertise to use electronic platforms, as well as the high frequency of respondents (69%) (strongly agreed + agreed) asserting that they were sufficiently versed in the practice of e-tailing trading. Well-trained and experienced employees are a valuable asset in e-tailing. The next sub-section discusses the benefits for clothing retailers of adopting e-tailing based on the responses from the respondents.

5.4.3 Benefits of adopting e-tailing within the clothing retailer

In this section, the 'strongly agreed' response had the highest frequency, with the frequency in the other constructs being< 51%. Thus, most respondents (89%) agreed (strongly agreed + agreed) that e-tailing enables a high level of interaction between

customer and retailer. This has been documented as a limitation in most studies, as e-tailing does not in fact provide much interaction between the customer and the retailer (Barnard, 2016). In the retail clothing business, customers in a face-to-face set-up can physically try on the products and choose those that fit them best. In the e-tailing scenario, customers do not have this opportunity and there is inevitably less interaction between customer and retailer. The respondents, however, deemed the level of interaction to be adequate. Respondents strongly agreed that e-tailing enhances the competitiveness of the retailer. This is corroborated by the literature, as the world is going digital and digitally prepared retail companies are equipped to cope with the dynamics of contemporary business (Marei et al., 2021:1121). The clothing industry itself thrives on dynamic traits as fashion is constantly changing (Da Giau et al., 2020:1509). A clothing business must constantly research current fashion trends so as to supply the desired products to potential customers and advertise them on their website and social media pages (Da Giau et al., 2020:1509).

All the respondents (100%) agreed (strongly agreed + agreed) that e-tailing enables the business to reach customers in different geographical areas. This is one of the strengths of e-tailing as one can order a product of choice online from anywhere not only in South Africa but in the entire world. It is then the responsibility of the clothing business to make necessary arrangements with online payment platforms and courier companies so that the e-tailing process goes smoothly, even though the total cost (courier included) will be on the customer.

To sum up the responses to this section of the questionnaire, most respondents strongly agreed that e-tailing enables a high return on investment for the retailer; e-tailing enhances the business's image and sustainability; e-tailing increases the business's market share over that of its competitors; and e-tailing reduces marketing and advertising costs. The responses in this section all support the hypothesis that adopting e-tailing within the clothing retailer is associated with an array of benefits. The next section summarises the discussion as a whole.

5.5   Chapter Summary

The study findings that were reported in Chapter 4 have been discussed in this chapter. The discussion was organised around the various sections of the questionnaire and sought to respond to the research objectives. The first part of the chapter discussed the demographic information about the respondents, then moved on to examine general factors affecting the adoption of e-tailing in retail clothing, the level of adopting e-tailing within the particular clothing retailer, and the benefits of adopting e-tailing within the clothing retailer. Most respondents acknowledged that e-tailing platforms were a feature of their business. Most respondents also strongly agreed that adopting e-tailing is associated with a wide range of benefits that include a high return on investment for the retailer, enhancement of the business's image and sustainability, increased business market share, and reduced marketing and advertising costs. The succeeding chapter concludes the study and provides recommendations for the retail clothing industry

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This study sought to identify factors affecting the adoption of e-tailing by selected retail clothing companies in Cape Town, South Africa. The data collection tool consisted of a questionnaire that was administered to 88 employees from selected retail businesses. A quantitative approach to the data was assumed throughout. This chapter reflects on the objectives and hypotheses laid out in Chapter 1 to provide a set of conclusions to this study. It also furnishes recommendations both for the retail clothing industry and for future research.

6.2 Objective-based Conclusions

6.2.1 To establish the factors that affect the adoption of e-tailing by the selected clothing retail companies in the Cape Town clothing industry

This study succeeded in determining the factors affecting the adoption of e-tailing by the retail clothing business. Respondents generally acknowledged that there were factors that hindered the business from adopting e-tailing. This study did not pursue these factors because they are widely described in the existing literature. Respondents agreed that the size of the business affects the e-tailing adoption process. It is small businesses that usually struggle with implementing technological advances as they lack resources and are often not motivated to invest in technology. Most respondents agreed that the process of introducing e-tailing is expensive because of all the requirements that need financing: the domain name, secure SSL certificate, web hosting, e-retail platform, internet merchant account, payment service provider, and social media for promotion. Most respondents also agreed that the adoption of e-tailing is affected by the fact that some individuals find it less attractive than face-to-face trading.

6.2.2 To measure the extent to which e-tailing adoption is adopted in the clothing retail industry

It was interesting to note that a significant number of respondents agreed that they used e-tailing as a trading platform at their work. It would have been a matter of concern if the respondents did not use an e-tailing platform because it would have indicated that the sector is lagging behind with regard to technological advancement. E-tailing enables customers to shop and transact from anywhere in South Africa. The study revealed that top management was in favour of technological advancement and that employees were well-trained and experienced in the use of e-tailing. These factors are important, as they contribute to the smooth flow of operations. Nothing works if there is no support from the top management or when the workers are not well trained and not satisfied. This is supported by Marei et al. (2021:1122) and Satar and Alarifi (2022). The results corroborate the finding that when business managers/owners acknowledge the benefits associated with e-tailing, they strongly support it (Marei et al., 2021:1122; Satar & Alarifi, 2022). The respondents for the retailers in this study on the whole found e-tailing to be highly beneficial for the growth and development of the retail business, which is in line with world trends (Mohsin, 2022:1).

6.2.3 To determine the benefits of adopting e-tailing in selected clothing retail companies in Cape Town

The benefits of e-tailing were endorsed by the findings of this study. Respondents strongly agreed that e-tailing enhanced the competitiveness of the retailer. Competitiveness for a retailer is vital as the clothing industry is dynamic and must make available products that are trending or in high demand. Most respondents strongly agreed that e-tailing enables the business to reach customers in different geographical areas. All the customer needs is a phone or computer to access the website of the clothing retailer to order a product of choice, and this can be done from any geographical location. While e-tailing has an array of benefits, retailing online does not provide the customer with the opportunity to physically try on the clothes and hence the customer has to know the specific sizes of the

products they wish to buy. Lastly, most respondents strongly agreed that e-tailing enhances the business's image and its sustainability, increases the business's market share over to its competitors, and reduces marketing and advertising costs.

6.3   General Conclusion

E-tailing has attracted considerable attention across most industries globally because of its ability to transform business structures, processes and models (Neykova, 2019). The understanding and broad awareness of e-tailing adoption in retail clothing businesses are therefore crucial, particularly for small businesses that seem to be lagging behind with technological advancement. While e-tailing allows small and large businesses to compete within the same area, larger businesses have more resources and advantages than smaller businesses in terms of funds, human resources, supply chain management, merchandising skills, procedural capabilities and after-sales service. The current study complements the empirical work that has been conducted in this particular field, specifically in the context of South African clothing stores.

The primary aim of this study was to identify the factors affecting the adoption of e-tailing by selected retail clothing companies in South Africa. The study has successfully met the three objectives formulated in Chapter 1 by using a quantitative research approach. The study established the factors affecting the adoption of e-tailing by the selected clothing retail companies in the Cape Town clothing industry. The study measured the extent of this adoption and determined its benefits for the selected retail clothing companies in Cape Town. Since technological innovation in respect of online trading is a trend worldwide, this study makes a timely contribution to academic research in the field of retail management. The next section provides certain recommendations based on the research findings.

6.4   Recommendations

Industrialisation and global competition have placed a burden on many businesses, particularly in the developing world. Businesses must continue to be innovative to endure

in a dynamic business environment. This study provides the following recommendations in this regard:

Retail Clothing Businesses

- Retail businesses should provide both face-to-face trading and e-tailing so as to cater for customers' varied shopping preferences. Some customers will continue to prefer the traditional physical method of shopping and digitising completely will result in a significant percentage of customers being lost.

- Retail businesses should continue to research recent technological advances in their business area so that they can become globally competitive. The business sector is dynamic and needs to utilise technological innovation to stay afloat and competitive.

- Retail clothing businesses should develop strategies for responding to enhanced consumer influence, preference and power, possibly with initiatives such as growing their brand and marketing via websites and social media networking sites (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok); diversifying their product offerings; and working tirelessly to ensure that their websites and social media sites provide consumers with a reliable and enjoyable shopping experience.

- Retail businesses should conduct far-reaching campaigns to educate citizens on how to utilise e-tailing platforms. This is particularly important in the event of lockdowns, such as those consequent on the Covid-19 pandemic that disrupted business activities globally.

Employees

- Employees should develop a positive attitude towards technological advances as findings from this study revealed that they had the necessary support from management.

Government

- The government should subsidise small businesses as they are lagging behind in e-tailing. Grants, funding and loans would assist these small businesses to invest in e-tailing to become competitive on local, national and global levels. Small businesses are important as they contribute significantly to the country's GDP and

help to curb unemployment.

Directions for further academic studies

- This research focused on retail businesses in the clothing sector in the city of Cape Town. Its contribution could be expanded if future research focused on other businesses, as different retail formats have specific categories and prices for products and business processes.

- There is little doubt that e-retailing will remain a significant focal point for research as the whole world is going digital. Despite the valuable contributions that have been made by studies like this thus far, what is also needed is some exploration of the attitudes of consumers towards recent technological advances.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Ethics approval

Office of the Chairperson Research Ethics Committee	**FACULTY: BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES**

P.O. Box 1906 | Bellville 7535
Symphony Road Bellville 7535
South Africa
Tel: +27 21 4603291
Email: fbmsethics@cput.ac.za

The Faculty's Research Ethics Committee (FREC) on 16 November 2021, ethics APPROVAL was granted to Masibulele Bentlanu (216117356) for a research activity for Master of Retail Business Management at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

Title of project:	**FACTORS AFFECTING THE ADOPTION OF E-TAILING BY SELECTED CLOTHING RETAIL OUTLETS IN CAPE TOWN** Researcher (s): Dr V Mugobo / Mr S Chomunorwa

Decision: APPROVED

Signed: Chairperson: Research Ethics Committee	**18 November 2021** Date

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 CPUT Policy on Research Ethics.

2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study requires that the researcher stops the study and immediately informs the chairperson of the relevant Faculty Ethics 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, notably compliance with the Bill of Rights as provided for in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (the Constitution) and where 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 and/or other legislations that is relevant.

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 two (2) years for Masters and Doctorate research project from the date of issue of the Ethics Certificate. Submission of a completed research ethics progress report (REC 6) will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Clearance Certificate No | 2021 FBMSREC 082

Appendix 2: Letter to the respondent

Cape Peninsula
University of Technology

<div align="right">

Keizersgracht Street
Zonebloemu
Cape Town
7925

</div>

June, 2021

Dear respondents:

As the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT) Master's student of Retail Business Management. I am currently conducting a study/survey entitled *"Factors affecting the adoption of e-tailing within selected clothing retail companies in Cape Town."*

This is in partial fulfilment of the requirements for me in obtaining a Master's degree in Retail business management (RBM). The study seeks to identify the factors affecting the adoption of e-tailing by selected clothing retail companies in South Africa.

In this regard, I have chosen you to be one of our respondents for this study and I would like to ask for your cooperation by answering the questionnaire honestly and completely. Rest assured that any information that you will provide shall be treated with the strictest confidentiality and subjected to ethical standards in doing research. Lastly, please sign the letter of respondent in the space provided: _____

I shall be anticipating receiving the accomplished forms by _____ (date).

Thank you.

_____
Masibulele Bentlanu
(Researcher)

Appendix 3: Questionnaire

PLEASE MARK APPLICABLE BOX WITH AN X

1. **Please indicate your gender**

Male	Female

2. **How old are you? Please indicate your age range in the boxes below by ticking the appropriate box below.**

< 25 years old	25-34 years old	34-45 years old	46-55 years old	> 55years old

3. **What is your position in the clothing retailer?**

Executive	Owner	Manager	Online administrator	Other

If other, please specify…………………………………………………………………………...

4. **How long have you been working in the retail industry, please indicate below?**

1-5 years	6 -10 years	11 - 14 years	15- 19 years	20+ years

5. **Which language do you speak**

English	IsiZulu	IsiXhosa	Afrikaans	Other

6. **If other please specify ……………………………………………………………………**

7. **How would you categories your retail company?**

Micro	Small	Medium	Large

SECTION B

Please rate the following statement below with;

NB: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Not Sure; 4 = Agree; 5 = strongly agree.

	Section 2: General factors affecting the adoption of e-tailing in clothing retail.	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly agree
1	There are factors that hinders the business from adopting e-tailing	1	2	3	4	5
2	There is a lack of resources needed by the company to adopt e-tailing	1	2	3	4	5
3	The size of our business affects the e-tailing adoption process	1	2	3	4	5
4	E-tailing business model is not appropriate for the type of business that we operate in	1	2	3	4	5
5	There is a lack of knowledge and awareness about e-tailing platform	1	2	3	4	5

6	The adoption process of e-tailing is expensive	1	2	3	4	5
7	E-tailing is less attractive due to face to face preference / traditional retailing	1	2	3	4	5
8	E-tailing platform has high security risks that inhibit the company from adoption it.	1	2	3	4	5
9	Our target market is not technologically inclined	1	2	3	4	5
The level of adopting e-tailing within the clothing retailer						
10	The retailer currently uses e-tailing as a trading platform	1	2	3	4	5
11	Online transactions increases sales due to providing convenience to customers	1	2	3	4	5
12	The retailer finds e-tailing very beneficial for future growth.	1	2	3	4	5
13	Working with this platform is satisfactory	1	2	3	4	5
14	Top managerial structure is fully in support of new advance technologies	1	2	3	4	5

15	Our employees are fully aware and have the expertise to utilize this platform	1	2	3	4	5
16	We have enough experience with the e-tailing trading platform	1	2	3	4	5
Benefits of adopting e-tailing						
25	E-tailing enable high level of interaction between the retailer and its customers	1	2	3	4	5
26	E-tailing enhance the competitiveness of the retailer	1	2	3	4	5
27	E-tailing enable high return on investment for the retailer	1	2	3	4	5
28	E-tailing enables the business to reach customers in different geographical areas.	1	2	3	4	5
29	E-tailing enhances the business image	1	2	3	4	5
30	E-tailing improves the business sustainability					
31	E-tailing increases the business market share compared to its competitors	1	2	3	4	5

32	E-tailing reduces the marketing and advertising costs.	1	2	3	4	5

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION