THE IMPACT OF ELECTRONIC SERVICE QUALITY DIMENSIONS ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

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Promoter: Dr. Oren Dayan
DECLARATION

I, Samantha Michelle Van Der Merwe, hereby declare that:

- The work in this paper is my own original work;
- All sources used or referred to have been documented and referenced to the best of my knowledge;
- This paper has not been previously submitted in full or partial fulfillment of the requirements for an equivalent or higher qualification at any other recognised educational institution.

_____________________________
Samantha Michelle Van Der Merwe

Port Elizabeth

November 2010
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CHAPTER 1

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Online purchasing is becoming increasingly common as a purchasing mode. At the onset of e-commerce it was thought that success was guaranteed merely by being present on the internet and offering low prices. Currently customer service has proved itself to be a key element for achieving good results in a website (Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Malhotra, 2002b). In this context, the study of commercial website quality has emerged as an area of strategic importance. As in traditional stores, service quality and customer satisfaction seem to play vital roles in the success and survival of Internet sites.

Traditional viewpoints for examining how consumers evaluate services rely heavily on the personal aspects of the service encounter. It is a current trend for services to be delivered in a non-traditional fashion, such as the internet, without any person to person interaction occurring (Long & McMellon, 2004). Therefore, particular characteristics of Internet sales outlets differentiate them from traditional sales modes. Impulsive buying is a significant proportion of sales in many areas of traditional retailing but impulsive purchasing on the Internet, faces many obstacles (For example, lack of sensory stimulation and concerns about security and privacy). As Madharavan and Laverie (2004) suggest, website effectiveness or quality elements can influence impulse purchasing behaviour. If the Internet is to succeed as a major distribution channel, a key factor will be the utilisation use of its potential to satisfy customers by delivering high service quality and to stimulate impulsive buying.

The purpose of this study is to identify the dimensions of service quality in an online context. It aims at investigating how these dimensions contribute to customers satisfaction and behavioural intent.
1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The main objective of this study is to identify the service quality dimensions in an online context and to understand how these dimensions can contribute to or influence customer satisfaction and behavioural intent through the investigation of: how airlines perform in terms of the electronic service quality dimensions; which, if any, of the service quality dimensions are more significant in achieving service quality; which, if any, of the service quality dimensions are more significant in influencing buying intent; if behavioural intentions are positively or negatively influenced through electronic service quality; if electronic service delivery of airlines is lacking by identifying service quality gaps and lastly to investigate how electronic service quality can be improved.

1.2.1 Background to the study

Website quality has emerged as an area of strategic importance. Service quality, customer service and customer satisfaction play a vital role in the success and survival of Internet sites and are key elements for achieving good results on a website. Online purchasing is becoming increasingly common as a purchasing mode and if a website is to succeed, it must satisfy customers and deliver high quality service to increase online buying. The purpose of this study is to identify the dimensions of service quality in an online context and to try to understand how these dimensions contribute to customer satisfaction and behavioural intent. Additionally, the study aims at determining which specific dimensions of electronic service quality and consumer satisfaction best promotes buying impulses in customers.

Aspects of traditional service quality (For example, dimensions, related variables) have been studied extensively over the past two decades; however, the study of the electronic service quality of websites is still in its early stages. While traditional service quality is defined by Parasuraman, et al. (1988: 15) as “an overall evaluation or an attitude relative to the superiority of the service”, Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Malhotra (2002a) defined electronic service quality as “the extent to which a website facilitates efficient and effective shopping, purchasing, and delivery of products and services.” Evaluation of transactional quality entails an assessment of
pre- and post-service experiences. Comparisons can then be made to traditional service quality to clarify the similarities and differences. Due to the intangibility of services it is far more difficult for customers to evaluate. However, one element should be present in both online and offline transactions and that is that service cues should be present both in pre- and post-transactions (Zeithaml et al., 2002a).

The most important and probably the most evident differences between traditional and electronic service quality is the replacement of interpersonal interaction with human-machine interaction. This distinction raises many questions concerning the types of dimensions that can or must be considered to assess service quality in the e-commerce context. With no human interaction present when online transactions take place, certain applicable dimensions must be present in order to accurately assess the service quality on a web site (Madu & Madu, 2002). Websites need to be effective in the sense that they should have accurate product related information available for internet shoppers as this could lead to a purchase. Likewise, if information is insufficient, purchases could be lost.

The specific characteristics of online commerce make direct application of the dimensions of service quality developed in other environments inappropriate. These dimensions cannot be expected to capture all of the subtitles of the evaluation of service quality of commercial websites (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Malhorta, 2005). Online and offline purchase environments create different shopping experiences, even when the same products are being purchased. Online shopping is more impersonal, more automated, supplies fewer direct sensory stimulations and immediate bonuses, and contains more legal uncertainties and opportunities for fraud or abuse (Bressolles, Durrieu & Giraud, 2007). Due to the nature of online commerce and the differences between an online and offline purchasing environments, the usual dimensions used to measure service quality such as tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy are unsuited. Online shopping can be regarded as more impersonal as the customer will not experience any human interaction, however they can more easily compare alternatives than offline customers. Online shopping can alter customer expectations about services as they will have access to more information, they will be able to better determine what type of service they will be receiving and will less likely be dissatisfied with the service received. Online environments could decrease a customer’s satisfaction when it comes to a perceived lack of
privacy and financial security, perceived lack of human contact and poor interface design (Meuter, Ostrom, Roundtree & Bitner, 2000).

In addition to other factors, such as stiff competition among rivals and entrenched customer shopping habits, failure of online retailers is primarily due to poor quality services rendered to their customers (Zeithaml, 2002). To survive in fierce industry competition, many practitioners in the service quality field have focused on improving their online services to attract potential customers and retaining current customers. Zeithaml, et al. (2002a) have emphasised that companies should focus on online service encompassing all cues and encounters that occur before, during and after the transaction and if properly utilised the internet can be a powerful service-offering tool. Researchers have also pointed out that service quality is one of the key determinants of online success (Zeithaml et al, 2000b) and this is based primarily on the following two reasons: Firstly, the service quality of online retailers greatly influences customer satisfaction and the intention to shop online in the future. Secondly, online retailers’ service quality is critical in attracting potential customers (Cai & Jun, 2003). So therefore to attract and retain customers, online retailers or airlines, need to have a clear understanding of what internet users expect for service quality.

Airline websites are designed to provide a one-stop service and be not only informative, but also functional, in that they allow internet users to book flights online, make hotel and car reservations, register for package tours and carry out other key functions (Chu, 2001). In response to the fast pace information age, many airlines have worked hard to develop their own websites to facilitate e-commerce transactions. In terms of online purchasing versus offline purchasing, online purchasers benefit by receiving information directly from the website without having to seek out a sales person (Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Malhota, 2002a). Internet users make use of the web in order to minimise their search costs, which have been identified as one of the key benefits of online shopping (Ariely, 2000; Lynch & Ariely, 2000). A large amount of freely available information - if well organised and easily accessed - is frequently mentioned by consumers as an important reason to purchase on the internet (Vanitha, Lepkowska & Tao, 1999). Wolfinbarger and Gilly (2001) state that the availability of information is one of the most important aspects of online purchasing. Therefore, when an airline website is designed, ample, correct and relevant information should be available to customers to enable them to compare
products so that they can make an informed decision / choice. Customers will not be making an informed decision if the website contains insufficient information.

Long & McMellon (2004) have measured both expectations and perceptions of online service quality and revealed that consumer expectations are not being met on the internet and found that without person-to-person interaction the technical and logical aspects of an online transaction take on a heightened importance for the customer (Long & McMellon, 2004). This could lead to a decline in customer satisfaction and could eventually affect sales as there is no human interaction when an online transaction takes place which makes it even more vital that organisations ensure that their website is efficient as mentioned before. For example, if information is not readily available to the customer, no comparisons from other web sites will be possible, which could result in the user abandoning the transaction/sale.

There are numerous factors that might be fuelling passenger growth, but according to Bamford & Xystouri (2005) and Rhoades & Waguespack (2005, 2008) there is no doubt that service quality plays a critical role in the success of the airline industry. Numerous studies show that profitability is linked to service delivery (Bates, Bates & Johnston, 2003) and to the general importance of quality service in organisations (Gustafsson, Nilsson & Johnson, 2003; Di Mascio, 2007).

Parasuraman and Grewal (2000) underline the existence for specific dimensions for the evaluation of perceived quality of service interactions mediated by technology. The five classic dimensions of traditional service quality are tangible elements, reliability, reactivity, assurance, and empathy of the service provider (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, & Berry, 1990). To date, however, there is no agreement concerning the dimensions of electronic service quality (see table 1.1), although some proposed dimensions reappear fairly systematically: quality and quantity of information, ease of use, Website design, reliability, security/privacy, and interactivity/personalisation (Yoo & Donthu 2001; Barnes & Vidgen, 2002; Wolfinbarger & Gilly 2003; Parasuraman et al., 2005; Bressolles 2006). For a website to be successful certain elements must be present: quality and quantity of information, ease of use, design, reliability, security, privacy and finally, interactivity and personalisation (Bressolles, 2006). If these
elements are not present, it could cause frustration and dissatisfaction for the customer and the organisation could loose sales which will negatively impact on their revenue.
Table 1.1: The different scales for measuring electronic service quality

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<th>Scale</th>
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<th>Dimensions</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sitequal</td>
<td>Yoo and Donthu (2001)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>– Ease of use</td>
<td>– Attitude toward site</td>
<td>94 students were asked to visit and interact with three Internet shopping sites of their own selection.</td>
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<td>– Aesthetic design</td>
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<td>– Processing Speed</td>
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<td>– Information</td>
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<td>– Interaction</td>
<td>– Loyalty intentions</td>
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<td>eTailQ</td>
<td>Wolfinbarger and Gilly (2003)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>– Website design</td>
<td>– Global quality</td>
<td>Online survey on 1013 customer members of a panel.</td>
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<td>– Fulfillment/ reliability</td>
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<td>– Security/Privacy</td>
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<td>– Customer service</td>
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<td>e-S-Qual</td>
<td>Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Malhotra (2005)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>– Efficiency</td>
<td>– Perceived value</td>
<td>A respondent has to have visited the site at least three times during the past three months and made at least three purchases from the site during that period <a href="http://www.amazon.com">www.amazon.com</a> [653 respondents] and <a href="http://www.walmart.com">www.walmart.com</a> [253 respondents].</td>
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<td>– Fulfillment</td>
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<td>– System Availability</td>
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1.2.2 The problem and its setting

Internet consumer loyalty is difficult, costly and requires a level of quality service that satisfies the consumer (Van Riel, Liljander & Jurriens, 2001). The literature on service marketing includes much research on the service quality satisfaction relationship, in both the traditional and online contexts (Wolfinbarger & Gilly, 2003). Satisfaction is an ex post evaluation of a customer’s experience with a service, and is captured as a positive, indifferent, or negative feeling. Oliver (1997) defines satisfaction as “the perception of pleasure fulfillment of a service” and loyalty as “deep commitment to the service provider”. Customer satisfaction need not be viewed in the same light as service quality. Service quality does not necessarily lead to customer satisfaction and customer satisfaction is not necessarily an antecedent of service quality (Gardiner, 2004). Furthermore Gardiner (2004) adds that customer satisfaction is a short-term transaction-specific measure, whereas service quality is a long-term overall evaluation of a service. Hence the perception of service quality by a customer is formed over time through a number of dealings during which either satisfaction or dissatisfaction was achieved (Hoffman & Bateson, 2002).

In the e-commerce context, Wolfinbarger and Gilly (2003) identify a positive link between six electronic service quality’s dimensions (information (SQ1), ease of use (SQ2), design/graphics (SQ3), reliability (SQ4), security/privacy (SQ5), interactivity/personalisation (SQ6)) and customer satisfaction. The following hypothesis can be formulated:

\( H_0: \) Service quality exerts no influence on satisfaction which comprises of the six sub-dimensions of electronic service quality (information, ease of use, design, reliability, security/privacy & interactivity/personalisation)

1.2.3 Behavioural Intentions

The quality of websites has become a key indicator of how well a company is likely to satisfy its customers. Another new challenge is the rapid increase in expectations and level of sophistications of the e-customers. In recent years, research efforts have been directed at understanding how e-customers perceive the quality of e-service as well as how these
perceptions translate into customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions. Adding to the challenges of managing e-customers, it has become crucial to understand how individual customer differences in terms of information technology (IT) skills influence their online experience, behaviour and attitudes (Udo, Bagchi, & Kirs, 2008).

Several studies on service quality in physical encounters concluded that some factors are responsible for customers’ perceptions of quality which are likely to lead to customer satisfaction and which, in turn, may lead to behavioural intentions to purchase. Some authors (Zeithaml, Berry & Parasuraman, 1996; Zhang & Prybutok, 2005) found in their studies that behavioural intentions may predict behaviour, implying that behavioural intention constructs are relevant to customer service. Given that satisfied customers are more likely to stay with a company for long periods, service quality has an effect on customer satisfaction and a company’s profitability (Anderson, Fornell, & Lehmann, 1994). Hence, quality service dimensions can affect a customer’s satisfaction which determines whether or not they will return to the same company for their future business.

After a considerable period in which consumers were assumed to make largely rational decisions in purchase behaviour, marketing scholars are increasingly examining the influence of emotions evoked by marketing stimuli (Laros & Steenkamp, 2004). Emotions are responses to causal-specific stimuli that are generally intense and more enduring, especially if emotional traces are stored and retrieved (Cohen & Areni, 1991). The distinction between feelings and emotions is important since feelings are also responses to causal-specific stimuli, yet less intense and more fleeting when compared to emotions (Agarwal & Malhotra, 2005).

According to Chatzigeorgiou, Christou, Kassianidis, and Sigala, (2009) customers can be classified into emotionally satisfied and rationally satisfied. Both types of customers are extremely satisfied with the products or services a company may provide, however, there is a distinctive element between the two, which is the emotional connection of customers. Emotionally satisfied customers can have a strong emotional attachment to a company, while rationally satisfied customers, in contrast, lack the above mentioned emotional attachment. Furthermore, emotionally satisfied customers tend to spend more money at a company and become repeat consumers of the same brand while rationally satisfied customers behave in a
similar manner to a dissatisfied customer (Chatzigeorgiou, Christou, Kassianidis, & Sigala, 2009).

Emotions can be divided into positive and negative ones (Tu, 2004). People tend to consider negative emotions to be those that influence the thinking process without realising that positive emotions have a possible impact on thought processes. Negative emotions derive from three sources: the consumer (shame, guilt), other behaviour (anger, hate) and situational causes (fear, sadness) (Oliver, 1993). Customers who experience negative emotions attributed to other agencies such as staff, have lower levels of satisfaction than those whose negative emotions attribute to the customer or specific situations (Sigala, 2003; Tu, 2004). Positive emotions, however, do not have the same effect as negative ones. If emotions such as happiness, interest or enthusiasm remain unchanged throughout the service provision, the customer is more likely to positively evaluate the experience regardless of the emotional source of origin (Pham, 1996). Therefore, customers tend to evaluate a service positively when they are happy and negatively when they are sad, regardless of whether the specific information about a service is favourable or unfavourable (Adaval, 2003).

Research on online customer behaviour suggests that website satisfaction is fundamental to establish long-term relationships with customers and to ensure long-term profitability of online operations (Chiou & Shen, 2006). A company’s website is the primary medium available to persuade online customers during their initial visit. The initial visit gives customers the experience with a new web-based service provider when making a transaction and website satisfaction is crucial for a successful transaction. A customer’s initial transaction is important for the following two reasons:

Firstly, the initial transaction can be influenced primarily by the customer’s response to the website, whereas subsequent transactions will be influenced by the actual delivery and consumption of the product/service relating to the initial transaction. Secondly, acquisition costs are significantly higher than retention costs (Reichheld & Schefter, 2000).

As such, converting first time visitors into actual buyers is a major challenge for a web-based service provider (Ranaweera, Bansal, & McDougall, 2008). Fransi and Viadiu (2007) also state that ‘reaching’ a new customer is not enough; it is also necessary to retain them and earn their
loyalty. A report by Healey & Baker consultancy (Global e-tailing 2000, 2000) noted that a significant proportion of attempts by customers to purchase via the internet actually fail. According to the report 46% of transactions are cancelled, and in some countries such as Spain, this failure rate can be as high as 75%. The causes of these extraordinary failure rates are likely due to problems such as technical, which results in the deficiencies of the vendor’s communication networks or the consumers’ connection. Another example of which is a personal problem, including a lack of experience in the use of internet by the customer (Fransi & Viadiu, 2007).

Without a strong emotional bond, satisfaction is meaningless (McEwen & Fleming, 2003). Most people have a sense that can affect their moods, feelings and emotions which can influence their decisions and thought process under certain circumstances. However, it is usually assumed that such influence is irregular or unusual; that only strong and infrequent feelings could have such an effect and that most often only negative feelings such as anger, sadness or fear would have an impact on the thinking process. Furthermore, most people assume that when affect plays a role in their decision process, such influences are disruptive and tend to make their decisions irrational and less appropriate (Adaval, 2003; Christou, 2003).

H0²: The six sub-dimensions of electronic service quality exerts no influence on behavioural intent.

1.2.4 Purchase intentions and actual purchase behaviour

Various studies, for example, Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988, 1994); Boulding, Kalra, Staelin, & Zeithaml (1993); Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman (1996); and Liu, Sudharshan, and Hamer (2000), have found perceived service quality to have had an effect on several types of behavioural intentions. The difference in purchase intentions between online and offline channels serve to indicate a channel-switching tendency. Consumers tend to switch to online channels if their online purchase intentions are higher than their offline purchase intentions. Essentially, consumers express preference (stated purchase intentions) based on utility maximisation in terms of the costs and benefits of the retail formats presented to them (Alba et al., 1997). Thus, the utility
obtained from on-line shopping needs to be greater than the utility provided by the traditional format in order to cause the consumer to switch to an online environment.

The theory of reasoned action (TRA) asserts that behavior is influenced by behavioral intentions (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Research in social psychology suggests that intentions are the best predictor of behavior because they allow each individual to incorporate all relevant factors that may influence actual behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Several studies have examined the relationship between intentions and purchase behaviour for durable and non-durable goods, revealing that the relationship between intentions and purchase is generally positive and significant. Since Internet shopping behaviour shares the vokitional nature of the phenomena that TRA tries to explain and predict (Jarvenpaa, Tractinsky & Vitale, 2000), the degree to which people express their intentions to purchase should be a reasonable predictor of their actual purchase behaviour. Therefore, following different online and offline purchase intentions should be a reasonable indicator of a tendency to switch from offline to online channels. In other words, offline purchase intentions can be used as a point of reference for assessing a consumer’s tendency to switch to online channels. Customer satisfaction is viewed as influencing repurchase intentions and behaviour, which, in turn leads to an organisation’s future revenue and profits. Understanding the interaction between customer satisfaction and customer behavioural intentions is important, because it increases the customer’s tendency to return to the same service provider, whereas ineffective service may reinforce the customer’s dissatisfaction with the service.

**HO³**: Service quality exerts no influence on behavioural intent.

Service quality can also be defined as ‘the difference between a customer’s expectation for service performance prior to the service encounter and their perceptions of the service received’ (Asubonteng, McCleary & Swan, 1996). Customers’ evaluations of service quality are critical to service firms that aim to improve their marketing strategies (Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Ofir & Simonson, 2001; Jain & Gupta, 2004). Firms that provide superior service quality have a more satisfied customer base (Aaker & Jacobson, 1994; Gilbert, Veloutsou, Goode, & Moutinho, 2004; Gilbert & Veloutsou, 2006). However, more and more companies are compelled to assess and improve their service quality in an effort to attract customers (Gilbert & Veloutsou, 2006).
With Internet and technology development, the web site has replaced the physical business unit. Perceived web site usability and new electronic environment is a very significant part of the corporate image and can affect shopping behaviour (Cristobal, Flavián & Guinalíu, 2007).

**HO⁴: Service Quality exerts no positive influence on customer’s behavioural intentions.**

1.3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study are to explore to what extent the dimensions of electronic service quality that are applicable and deemed important in the airline industry. Secondary objectives will be investigated to assist in achieving the primary objective.

1.3.1 Primary objective

The purpose of this study, is therefore, to identify and investigate the dimensions of service quality in an online context and to try to understand how these dimensions can contribute to customer satisfaction and behavioural intent. The functional nature of behavioural intent (buying behaviour) is introduced as a moderator.

The objective here is to determine which specific dimensions of electronic service quality the consumer satisfaction best promotes buying impulses among functional buying customers.

1.3.2 Secondary objective

To achieve the primary objective, the following secondary objectives will be pursued:

- to investigate how Airlines perform in terms of electronic service quality dimensions
- to investigate which, if any, of the service quality dimensions are more significant in achieving service quality
- to investigate which, if any, of the service quality dimensions are more significant in influencing Buying Intent
• to investigate if behavioural intentions are positively or negatively influenced through electronic service quality
• to investigate if electronic service delivery of airlines is lacking by identifying service quality gaps
• to investigate how electronic service quality can be improved.

1.3.3 Research design objectives

The remainder of this paper is organised as follows: The next section of the paper presents a review of relevant literature concerning service quality and electronic service quality, its dimensions and characteristics. Based on the secondary literature review, a questionnaire was constructed to collect primary data on electronic service quality dimensions. The questionnaire was piloted to test for reliability and validity which returned favourable results. An electronic version of the questionnaire was then distributed to a larger base of individuals who had booked and purchased their airplane tickets online. The data retrieved from respondent’s questionnaires was captured on Microsoft Excel and an analysis of the captured data was analysed with the use of the STATISTICA software program. The findings were interpreted and lastly, conclusions and recommendations were made on electronic service quality and the improvement thereof accordingly.

1.3.4 Hypotheses

To address the above-mentioned research questions, the following hypotheses were formulated:

\( H_0^1: \) Service Quality exerts no influence on satisfaction which comprises of the six sub dimensions of electronic service quality (information, ease of use, design, reliability, security/privacy & interactivity/personalisation) and make up the satisfaction dimension.

\( H_0^2: \) The six dimensions of electronic service quality exert no influence on behavioural intent.

\( H_0^4: \) Service quality exerts no positive influence on customer’s behavioural intentions.
**HO³:** Service quality exerts no influence on behavioural intent.

1.3.5 The Theoretical Model

Quality and the quantity of information are elements frequently mentioned as important reasons for online shopping (for example, Barnes and Vidgen, 2003; Wolfinbarger and Gilly, 2003) but have not been investigated directly in evaluations of traditional service quality. The absence of physical contact with the service provider during the online purchase strengthens the need for clarity and precision of information presented online. This dimension measures the perceptions of the Internet user concerning the quality and the quantity of the commercial or technical information on products and services, the service provider, or the sale contract. (Refer to figure 1.1)

Figure 1.1 depicts the overall relationships based on hypotheses.
Transactions using the Internet can seem complex and can intimidate consumers; therefore, the ease of use of a website is an important dimension of the quality of electronic service (Eighmey 1997). ‘Ease of use was’, for a long time, called ‘usability’ in the Internet context (Vanitha, et al., 1999). Usability makes reference, in the physical world, to the structure of the shop and to the design and ease of navigation in the shop (Lohse & Spiller, 1999). On a website, ‘usability’ refers to the way the Internet user perceives and interacts with the site: “Is it easy to navigate on the Website?” (Nielsen, 1999).

The design or the graphic style of a website refers to the integration of colours, graphics, the use of images, icons, animations and video, together with the appropriate size of the web page & other elements (Santos, 2003). These elements contribute to create the virtual atmosphere of the website. As in the traditional world, reliability and respect for commitments are linked to the “capacity of the online retailer to satisfy its promises and to respect the terms of the exchange”. This will include delivering the product ordered, specified by quantity, price, and description, to offer the desired service and to respect promised dates for delivery (Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Berry, 1990).

Security implies protection of the user from fraud and financial losses. Privacy concerns personal data protection and the promise not to share or resell such data collected about customers. This dimension appears to be particularly relevant in the context of online business (Yoo & Donthu, 2001).

Interactivity and personalization are dimensions that refer to the consumer’s ability to define and design themselves a product or service most adapted to their needs, to have a relation privileged with the brand, and to modify the contents and shape of the environment in real time (Steuer 1992). Internet communication can be very impersonal and mass-oriented, as the level of individualisation and interactivity is very low (Mohammed, Fisher, Jaworski, & Paddison, 2003). When a relationship is developed, a level of interactivity is created through the use of interactive applications (Rowley, 2001), which enhances information exchange between parties and increases the range over which goods and services can be personalised (Bitner, Brown & Meuter, 2000).
Figure 1.2 depicts that the six sub-dimensions make up the satisfaction dimension which is labeled as SAT. Also illustrated (HO¹) it is hypothesised to be no relationship between SAT and Service Quality. Figure 1.3 depicts that the six dimensions of Service Quality are thought to influence Behavioural Intent (HO²). Additionally, that Behavioural Intent is a result of Service Quality and Satisfaction which positively influences a customer’s Behavioural Intentions (HO³ + HO⁴).
Figure 1.2: Illustration of relationships (HO1 & HO3)

Figure 1.3: Illustration of relationships (HO2 & HO4)
1.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The main research paradigm used in this study was the positivistic paradigm. The positivistic paradigm deals with the causes of social phenomena, with little or no regard to the subjective aspects of human activity (Collis & Hussey, 2003: 52).

1.4.1 Sampling method

The probability sampling method selected for the purpose of this study was stratified sampling. Stratified sampling overcomes the problem of some members of the population being over- and under-represented (Collis & Hussey, 2003). The main advantages of stratified sampling is that all essential sub-groups are included in the investigation, it is time saving as fewer people are required for the study and can be directed towards a geographical location and relevant individuals. Sampling is cost effective as fewer people and less time are required to collect and analyse data.

1.4.2 Measuring instrument

To determine the impact of service quality dimensions on satisfaction and buying impulse, an online questionnaire was administered during September, October & November of 2010 to customers of leading Airlines sought through their Facebook pages. The researcher’s interest is in the complete online purchasing experience, not just the interaction with the website, so respondents who had made their bookings/payments online were sought after. The initial measuring instrument was adopted from a study conducted by Professor Gregory Bressolles in 2006 entitled NetQual: The proposition for an electronic service quality measurement scale and moderating effects. NetQual was tested to be reliable and valid through an exploratory qualitative study, findings from a literature review and three quantitative data collection stages (Bressolles, 2006). Additional variables were added to each of the six dimensions namely: information, ease of use, design, reliability, security and interactivity. The amended instrument was then piloted to determine successful adoption and returned excellent results proving to be valid and reliable.
1.4.3 Data Analysis

The questionnaire was piloted to test for reliability and validity. The pilot study provided favourable results and therefore an electronic version of the questionnaire was sent out to a larger base of individuals who had booked and purchased their airplane tickets online. Data retrieved from the respondent’s questionnaires was captured on Microsoft Excel and was analysed with the use of STATISTICA software program. The findings were interpreted and lastly, conclusions and recommendations were made on electronic service quality and the improvement thereof accordingly.

1.5 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

The treatise is presented in six chapters in which the theoretical background, methodology, results, conclusions and recommendations are structured. The first chapter outlines the scope of the study, the problem statement, the objectives of the study and research methodology. In chapter two, the nature, importance, benefits, and advantages and disadvantages of electronic service delivery in the airline industry is discussed. Chapter 3 describes the theoretical model, which indicates the relationships between various variables that have been empirically investigated in this study. In chapter four, research methodology has been discussed, as well as the results of the validity and reliability assessments of the proposed measuring instrument that have been used in the study. In chapter five, the empirical results of the study are interpreted, analysed and summarised. The implications are also discussed. Chapter six, the final chapter, includes recommendations for future research arising from the results presented.

1.6 CONCLUSION

Chapter one introduces service quality and electronic service quality to the reader. The purpose was to explain that with services and products now being delivered in non-traditional ways, for a website to be a successful and have a positive effect on a customers buying behavior, service quality and customer satisfaction are extremely important and need to be present in the form of
the six quality dimensions (information, ease of use, design/graphics, reliability, security/privacy and interactivity/personalisation). A brief overview of a range of authors’ views on the topic of e-service quality dimensions and the various measuring instruments created to measure electronic service quality was also discussed. Chapter two addresses the theoretical aspects of service quality, electronic service quality, customer satisfaction, behavioural intent and service quality in the airline industry.
CHAPTER 2
SERVICE QUALITY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to analyse and present the findings of a literature review that determines the factors that influence service quality, the advantages and disadvantages of service quality and the importance of service quality. Many empirical studies have investigated the relationships among the constructs of service quality, customer satisfaction, and behavioural intentions in a variety of industries and cultures. These include studies of the lodging industry in the USA (Olorunniwo, Hsu & Udo, 2006), the audit industry in Malaysia (Ismail, Haron, Ibrahim & Isa, 2006), the banking industry in Taiwan (Lee & Hwan, 2005), the recreation industry in the USA (Tian-Cole, Crompton, & Willson, 2002; Lee, Graefe, & Burns, 2004), the health care industry in South Africa (Boshoff & Gray, 2004), and the airline industry in Korea (Park, Robertson & Wu, 2004).

2.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF SERVICE QUALITY

The contribution that a high level of service quality can make to business performance is unquestioned. An organisation needs a strategy to be successful. Strategy is defined as “an integrated and coordinated set of commitments and actions designed to exploit core competencies and gain a competitive advantage” (Hitt, Ireland & Hoskisson, 2005:7). The key to develop an effective strategy is to understand how to add value for clients. Value is added through competitive priorities that are selected to support a strategy. The competitive priorities are (Davis & Heineke, 2005):

- cost – organisations need to provide low-cost products and services
- quality – organisations need to provide high-quality products and services
- delivery – organisations need to provide products and services quickly
- flexibility – organisations need to provide a wide variety of products and services
• service – organisations need to focus on how products and services are delivered and supported

Efforts in defining and measuring quality have come largely from the goods sector. According to the prevailing Japanese philosophy, quality is “zero defects – doing it right the first time” (Crosby, 1979). Knowledge about goods quality, however, is insufficient to understand service quality. Three well documented characteristics of services must be acknowledged for a full understanding of service quality. They are: intangibility, heterogeneity and inseparability. Firstly, most services are intangible because they are a performance rather than an object. Secondly, services, especially those with a high labour content are heterogeneous in that their performance varies from producer-to-producer, from customer-to-customer and from day-to-day. Consistency of behaviour from service personnel cannot be assured due to the fact that what the firm intends to deliver may be entirely different from what the consumer receives. Thirdly, the production and consumption of many services are inseparable, meaning that services cannot be counted, measured, tested or verified before a sale to ensure that quality is delivered. Therefore, service quality is more difficult for consumers to evaluate than goods quality. Service quality perceptions result from the consumers comparisons of the thier expections with the actual service performance. Evaluations of quality are not made solely on the outcome of a service; they also involve the evaluation of how the service is delivered (Parasuraman, et al., 1985).

Service quality defined by Zeithaml, et al. (1990:19), is “the extent of discrepancy between customers’ expectations or desires and their perceptions”. Quality is also often defined as conformance to specifications, however, this phrase can be misleading. Quality is conformance to a customer’s specifications and it is the customer’s definition of quality that counts (Berry, Parasuraman & Zeithaml, 1988; 1994). Customers assess service quality by comparing what they want or expect to what they actually get or perceive they are receiving. In order to earn a reputation for excellent service quality, an organisation must meet or exceed their customers’ expectations. Because cutomers have increasing expectations it is necessary for companies to continuously improve their quality and hence customers’ experiences with the company. Customers do not experience only one aspect of a company or organisation, but a whole range of aspects. Some of these aspects are concerned with the way customers experience the company.
itself, the way customers experience the physical product and lastly the way customers experience the service the company offers (Van Iwaarden, Van der Wiele, Ball & Millen, 2003).

2.3 MEASURING SERVICE QUALITY

Comparing customers’ expectations and their perceptions of actual performance can be done by making use of the service quality scale (SERVQUAL) created by Berry, Parasuraman and Zeithaml (Zeithaml, et al., 1990) which was specifically designed for use in the service sector. The SERVQUAL research instrument is a relationship survey, which was developed to capture customer perceptions of service quality. This relationship survey comprises of twenty two multidimensional questions about all facets of the relationship of the customer with the service (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2000). Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement or disagreement with the given statements on a seven-point Likert scale. A consumers’ perceptions are based on the actual service they receive, while consumer expectations are based on past experiences and information received (Melisidou & Theocharis, 2010). The SERVQUAL tool has received some criticism, but has been used to measure service quality in a variety of industries with much success. One criticism about the SERVQUAL dimensions was related to more fundamental methodological and conceptual issues, for example, the presence of conceptual inconsistency in the dimensions.

Tangibles and responsiveness are completely different concepts. Tangibles are deemed to be part of a service, but are not a quality dimension. The quality of the Tangibles (For example, availability, operating characteristics) influences the perceived quality as much as the quality of the personnel (For example, appearance, competence). Tangibles, like personnel, are not a quality dimension, but are rather a crucial quality determining element which influences dimensions such as reliability, credibility and others. Originally there were ten determinents or components of service quality. Zeithaml, et al. (1990) described these ten determinants of service quality as:

- Access: The accessibility of the service and it’s delivery within a minimum waiting period, which implies that the service should be easily accessible by telephone; the
waiting time to receive the service is not excessive; and that there are convenient operation hours.

- Communications: The firm need to effectively communicate what services are provided by them, by explaining the service itself and its cost; the trade-off’s between the service and the cost; and assurance that problems will be resolved.

- Competence: The personnel need to possess the necessary skills and knowledge to perform the service.

- Courtesy: The personnel of the service provider must be polite, respectful, considerate, friendly and courteous to clients.

- Credibility: The service provider must be honest and trustworthy. This partnered with contact personnel’s personal characteristics contributes to the reputation of the company.

- Reliability: The ability of the service provider to perform the promised service dependably and accurately. For example, providing accurate billing and performing the service when the organisation says they will perform it.

- Responsiveness: The willingness of the personnel of the service providers to assist clients with their specific problems, for example providing prompt service and returning a customer’s call immediately.

- Security: The service needs to be free from danger and risk, and may involve physical safety, financial security and confidentiality issues such as “Is a customer’s credit card safe from unauthorised use?”.

- Tangibles: This includes the physical evidence of the service and covers. For example, the appearance of physical facilities and personnel; the tools and equipment used to provide the service and the physical representation of the service (a printed copy of a booking confirmation).

- Understanding and knowing the client: The amount of effort the firm spends to know and understand the needs of their clients such as providing individualised attention and getting to know the specific requirements of the client.
Figure 2.1: Customer assessment of service quality
(Zeithaml, Parasuraman, & Berry, 1990:23)

Figure 2.1 illustrates the above mentioned ten determinants of service quality and were found to not necessarily be independent of one another (Zeithaml, et al., 1990). Zeithaml, et al. (1990) discovered a high degree of correlation between communication, competence, courtesy, credibility and security and combined them into one new dimension which they called assurance. Additionally, the same was found for access and understanding and they were put in the empathy dimension. These general criteria were then narrowed down to a total of five service quality dimensions and are as follows:

- **Tangibles**: Appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel, and communication materials.
• Reliability: Ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately.

• Responsiveness: Willingness to help customers and provide prompt service

• Assurance: Knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence.

• Empathy: Caring, individualised attention the firm provides its customers.

2.3.1 Tangibles

Tangible aspects are considered even more important in e-business as there is no face-to-face contact between the customer and employee. The visual aspects of the equipment, namely websites, are the only visual contact that a customer has with an organisation. Therefore, there is a need to have a well-functioning and top quality website. There are a great number of customers who abandon their shopping carts on the Internet because they get frustrated with the technology or the design and layout of the website interface (Hager & Elliot, 2001). The visual aspects of websites are also judged differently by people of different age. While young people may be attracted to flashy graphics, sounds and a high-speed interface, older people do not want blinking texts that are hard to read or animations that distract from the use of the website (Houtman, 2002).

2.3.2 Reliability

Some of the aspects in the reliability factor have to do with what is promised and doing it at the promised time. While many organisations believe the primary reason for consumers shopping online is due to lower prices, this is not always true. There are many customers who shop online due to convenience (Riseley & Schehr, 2000). If customers cannot trust an organisation to do what they ask, then those customers will be dissatisfied (Van Iwaarden, Van der Wiele, Ball & Millen, 2003).
2.3.3 Responsiveness

An aspect in the responsiveness factor is giving prompt service. The responsiveness factor can also be defined as “effective handling of problems and returns through the site” (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Malhotra, 2005: 8). Responsiveness measures the online retailer’s ability to provide appropriate problem solving information to customers, having mechanisms for handling returns, and providing online guarantees. When a customer has a problem, the process of contacting a customer service agent is vital. Previous research has stressed the negative impact on attitudes towards a website caused by unprompted or delayed customer inquiry services (Wolfinbarger & Gilly, 2003).

Convenience and the saving of time have been frequently considered as important reasons to shop online (Ranganathan & Ganapathy, 2002). Difficulty in searching and slow download and display time can lead consumers to leave those sites and visit other sites.

2.3.4 Assurance

The factor “knowledge to answer questions” pertains to customers being able to find everything they want on a website (Bressolles, Durrieu & Giraud, 2007). In a bricks and mortar store, people feel comfortable with a limited inventory, however on the internet, people are not satisfied if they cannot find what they are looking for. Web-shops need to have great depth of inventory and rich and relevant product information (Dayal, French & Sankaran, 2002). Other aspects in the assurance factor include employees being trustworthy and customer’s feeling safe carrying out their transactions (Van Iwaarden, 2003). Website users consider it risky to share personal information with organisations with whom they do not shop. Aspects in the assurance factor that are important in e-business include: availability of a formal privacy and confidentiality policy on a website, secured access to the website that customers are prompted to acknowledge, general reputation of the supplier, certifications or guarantees of assurance, and reports of experiences of other customers. Certifications and guarantees of assurance are important in e-business and organisations are more frequently trying to obtain certification as they are becoming more aware of the advantages of such certification in relation to their customers’ trust in their organisation.
2.3.5 Empathy

In the dimension of empathy there are numerous aspects which are not found on the web site due to the fact that there is no human interaction. Web sites normally do not offer personal attention, but to achieve this, a number of websites have a design that can be personalised by the users of these sites, so that people can have their own version of the Web site. This is aimed at giving consumers the experience of personal attention.

2.4 A SERVICE QUALITY MODEL

The Service Quality model (Zeithaml, Bitner & Gremler, 2009) originally (Zeithaml, et al., 1990) focuses on deficiencies within organisations that contribute to poor service quality perceptions by customers. Organisations do not always meet the expectations of their customers and the differences between the expected and perceived service are referred to as gaps. If an organisation for some reason fails to meet their customers’ expectations, it does not always result in a dissatisfied customer. Figure 2.2 portrays a Conceptual Service Quality Model created by Zeithaml, et al. (1990) which is also found in Zeithaml, Bitner & Gremler’s updated 5th edition (2009).

Gaps demonstrated in Figure 2.2 are narrowed through closing the provider gaps (Zeithaml, et al., 1990; Zeithaml, et al., 2009). These include:

- Gap 1 (Positioning gap) - this pertains to management’s perceptions of consumers’ expectations and the relative importance consumers attach to the quality dimensions. This can be translated into not knowing what the customer wants.

- Gap 2 (Specification gap) - this is concerned with the difference between what management believes the consumer wants, and what the consumers expect the business to provide. This translates into not selecting the right service designs and standards.
- Gap 3 (Delivery gap) – this is concerned with the difference between the service provided by the personnel of the organisation and the specifications set by management. This translates into not delivering to service standards.

- Gap 4 (Communication gap) – exists when the promises communicated by the business to the consumer do not match the consumers’ expectations of those external promises. This translates into not matching performance to promises.

- Gap 5 (Perception gap) – is the difference between the consumers’ internal perceptions and expectations of the services (Zeithaml et al., 1990).

Figure 2.2: Service quality model
(Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Berry, 1990:46)
The factors that contribute to Gap 1 through Gap 4 are as follows (Zeithaml, et al., 1990; Zeithaml, et al., 2009):

Gap 1 is the difference between what customers expect and what management perceives they expect. This Gap occurs because companies overlook or underestimate the need to fully understand their customers’ expectations. Many companies miss the mark by thinking inside out – they think that they know what customers want and then deliver that – rather than outside in. When this occurs companies provide services that do not match customers’ expectations, such as leaving out important features and providing inadequate levels of performance on features. Zeithaml, et al. (1990) research found that various factors contribute to Gap 1. They are: a lack of marketing research orientation, which includes insufficient marketing research, research not focused on service quality, inadequate use of research findings, and a lack of interaction between management and customers; an inadequate upward communication from contact personnel to management; and too many levels of management which separates contact personnel from top managers (Zeithaml, et al., 1990).

Once managers understand what customers expect, they face a second critical challenge of using this knowledge to set service quality standards for the organisation, as depicted in Gap 2. Managers may not be able or willing to put systems in place to match or exceed a customer’s expectations. A variety of factors, such as resource constraints, short-term profit orientation, market conditions or management indifference could account for Gap 2 (Zeithaml, et al., 1990) which is the discrepancy between a manager’s perceptions of customers’ expectations and the actual service quality specifications that they set out for obtaining service delivery. Gap 2 is a wide gap in many companies today and some managers are reluctant to change the company systems of service delivery to enhance customers’ perceptions. To do so would require altering the process by which work is accomplished and investing in costly new equipment and technology (Zeithaml, et al., 1990).

Additionally change requires a willingness to be open to different ways of structuring, calibrating and monitoring the service that is provided. This then necessitates an aligning of executives from different parts of an organisation to collectively understand the bigger picture of service quality, and to additionally understand it from the customers’ point of view. There are four conceptual factors which were found to be the main reasons for Gap 2, namely: inadequate
commitment to service quality including poor, vague and undefined service design, lack of perception of feasibility, inadequate standardisation of tasks, and the absence of goal setting (Zeithaml, et al., 1990).

In some cases management does understand customers’ expectations and does set appropriate specifications (either formally or informally), and still the service delivered by the organisation falls short of what their customers expect. Gap 3 entails the specification of service quality with regards to service delivery. The difference between service specifications and the actual service delivery is the service performance gap, which is when employees are unable and/or unwilling to perform the service at the desired level. Again, this service performance gap is common in service businesses. Service organisations are highly interactive, labour intensive and perform in multiple locations and are especially vulnerable to Gap 3. There are opportunities for mistakes and misunderstandings when providers and customers interact with one another as both customer’s and provider’s experience and respond to each other’s mannerisms, attitudes, competencies, moods and language. Service quality suffers when employees are unwilling or unable to perform a service at the level required. Maintaining service quality then, depends on not only recognising customers’ desires and establishing appropriate standards, but also on maintaining a work force of people both willing and able to perform at specified levels. In light of this, seven key conceptual factors contribute to Gap 3; namely: role ambiguity, role conflict, poor employee job fit, poor technology-job fit; inappropriate supervisory control systems that lead to an inappropriate evaluation/compensation system which creates difficulty in controlling quality and consistency, lack of perceived control on the part of employees, and lack of teamwork (Zeithaml et al., 1990).

Gap 4 is the gap between what a firm promises about a service and what it actually delivers (Zeithaml et al., 1990). Accurate and appropriate company communications, such as advertising, personal selling and public relations that do not overpromise or misrepresent are essential to deliver a service that customers’ perceive as high quality. The potential for service companies to overpromise is high. Service companies promise what people will offer, however, unlike machinery, people cannot be controlled and therefore, communication about the service must be appropriate and accurate. It is the responsibility of both the marketing and operations
departments to communicate the service to customers. Marketing must accurately reflect what the service encounter entails, while operations, in turn, must deliver what marketing has promised in their communications. If the communication medium such as advertising, personal selling or any other external communication method is used, it sets up unrealistic expectations for customers; the actual encounter can be a disappointment to the customer. Gap 4 can also occur when companies neglect to inform customers of any special quality assurance efforts that are not visible to customers as customers are not always aware of everything done behind the scenes to serve them. Customers who are aware that the firm is taking concrete steps to serve their best interest are likely to perceive a delivered service in a more favourable way. There are two key contributing factors that contribute to Gap 4, namely: inadequate horizontal communications which include inadequate communication between advertising and operations, inadequate communication between sales people and operations, inadequate communication between human resources, marketing and operations, and differences in policies and procedures; and a propensity to overpromise (Zeithaml, et al., 1990).

This Conceptual Model of Service Quality helps organisations to understand measure and improve their service quality. Expectations differ between service quality and customer satisfaction. The terms satisfaction and quality are used interchangeably, but researchers have attempted to be more precise about the meaning and measurement of the two. Although the two are different in terms of their underlying causes and outcomes they have things in common. Satisfaction is generally viewed as a broader concept, whereas service quality focuses specifically on dimensions of service. Based on this, perceived service quality is a component of customer satisfaction. Figure 2.3 illustrates the relationship between these two concepts. Service quality is a focused evaluation that reflects the customer’s perception of reliability, assurance, responsiveness, empathy and tangibles. Satisfaction is more inclusive as it is influenced by perceptions of service quality, product quality, price, as well as situational and personal factors (Zeithaml, et al., 2009).
Expectations are customer’s beliefs about service delivery that serve as standards or reference points against which performance is judged. Expectations are reference points against which service delivery is compared. Furthermore, the levels can vary widely depending on the reference point the customer holds (Zeithaml, et al., 2009). Oliver (1981:33, as cited by Parasuraman, et al., 1988:17) stated that “it is generally agreed that expectations are consumer-defined probabilities of occurrence of positive and negative events if the consumer engages in some behaviour”. Expectations in service quality literature are viewed as the desires or wants of the customers and what customers feel the service provider needs to offer, opposed to what firms will offer (Parasuraman, et al., 1988). Customer expectations are influenced by a variety of factors, being: a customer’s desired expectations are influenced by personal needs, lasting service intensifiers, explicit service promised, implicit service promised, word-of-mouth communication, and the customers past experience (Zeithaml, et al., 2009). It is therefore safe to say that the Service Quality Conceptual Model is not applicable to customer satisfaction, but only to service quality.
2.5 CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

The difference between service quality and customer satisfaction has been introduced and briefly discussed. Satisfaction is a response to a perceived discrepancy between prior expectations and perceived performance after consumption. However, customer satisfaction is a biased concept because expectations differ from customer-to-customer.

Any firm that wants to assess its performance needs to distinguish between measuring the following (Van Looy, Gemmel & Van Dierdonck, 2003):

- perceived service quality
- client satisfaction and
- technical quality

2.5.1 Perceived Customer Value

Parasuraman (1988) found that consumers have different conceptions in respect to perceived customer value. However, according to Guertin and Nantel (2007: 4) perceived value can be defined as “the consumer’s overall assessment of the utility of a product based on perceptions of what is received and what is given”. Essentially, value represents a trade off of significant get and give components which are perceived as benefits and sacrifices for any given product or service (Guertin & Nantel, 2007).

According to Woodruff (1997:142), customer value is “a customer’s perceived preference for and evaluation of these product attributes, attribute performance, and consequences arising from use that facilitate [or block] achieving the customer’s goal and purpose in use situations.” Different customers may view the value of the same purchase differently on the Internet, even if they value the item purchased identically. One buyer may feel that shopping online is too complicated and they may find online shopping impersonal, whereas another buyer may find online shopping convenient and quick (Keeney, 1999).
2.5.2 Service Satisfaction Framework

Satisfaction and dissatisfaction are at either end of a continuum, while the actual position is defined by a comparison between expectations and outcome (Van Looy, et al., 2003). A service satisfaction framework is presented in Figure 2.4 and it contains the following concepts:

- satisfied client: this occurs when the outcome of the perceived service quality meets expectations
- delighted client: this occurs when the perceived service quality exceeds the expectations
- dissatisfied client: this occurs when the perceived service quality is below expectations

Figure 2.4: Service satisfaction framework
(Van Looy, et al., 2003: 126)

It can be deduced from this framework that only a certain percentage of clients who are dissatisfied make their complaints heard. Customer satisfaction and complaint management are crucial parts of an organisation’s strategy to increase loyalty in customers and ultimately increase their profits. This is achieved when firms minimise client defections and have effective service recovery strategies that maximise repeat business. Organisations can achieve service through measuring their customers’ satisfaction and managing complaints effectively (Van Looy, et al., 2003).
2.6 BEHAVIOURAL INTENT

Perceptions of service quality influence behaviours and intentions. Good perceived service quality and bad perceived service quality would not lead to the same behaviours and intentions. Both Parasuraman, et al. (1988) and Zeithaml, et al. (1996) stated that a positive relationship exists between perceived service quality and behavioural intentions. Behavioural intentions can be defined as a customer’s biased possibility of acting in a certain way (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). In this regard, three behaviours in particular have been associated with profitability and the market share of a firm; these customer behaviours are:

- word-of-mouth
- repurchase intention; and
- feedback to the service provider

2.6.1 Word-of-mouth

Word-of-mouth is the flow of information regarding a product, service, or company from one customer to another. Therefore, it is safe to say that word-of-mouth is a trusted external source of information that customers can use to evaluate a product or service. The empirical research that has investigated the relationship between customer satisfaction and word-of-mouth has not been consistent. Some researchers have found a positive relationship with satisfied customers who engage in more word-of-mouth and have intentions of returning (Holmes & Lett, 1977; Swan & Oliver, 1989; Oliver, 1997; Ganesh, Arnold & Reynolds, 2000; Antanassopoulos, Gounaris & Stathakopulos, 2001; Bowen & Chen, 2001; Davidow, 2003; Wangenheim & Bayon, 2004; Brown, Barry, Dacin & Gunst, 2005; Babin, Lee, Kim & Griffin, 2005). Other researchers have found negative relationships resulting in dissatisfied customers who engage in more negative word-of-mouth (Bearden & Teel, 1983; Westbrook, 1987; Hart, Heskett, & Sasser, 1990; Singh, 1990; Keaveney, 1995; Smith & Bolton, 1998; Cronin, Brady & Hult, 2000; Huefner & Hunt, 2000; DeWitt & Brady, 2003; Lewis & McCann, 2004). Other studies have not found any significant relationships between the two (Engel, Kegerreis & Blackwell, 1969; Bettencourt, 1997). Additionally, more studies have reported a weak or negative relationship between satisfaction and word-of-mouth, mainly due to the interaction of satisfaction with other
variables, such as affect and commitment (Nyer, 1997; Brown et al., 2005). Even though there are mixed findings about the details of these relationships, there is general agreement about the valence, positive or negative, of the word-of-mouth which is that satisfied customers generate positive word-of-mouth (Bitner, 1990; Ranaweera & Prabhu, 2003; Babin, et al., 2005; Reichheld, 2006), whereas dissatisfied customers generate negative word-of-mouth (Richins, 1983; Weun, Beatty & Jones, 2004; Reichheld, 2006).

Even though studies have concluded that satisfaction is a necessary condition for positive word-of-mouth to take place, it is not always sufficient (Wirtz & Chew, 2002), however, it has been agreed that positive feedback has always been driven by satisfaction. Researchers have claimed that positive word-of-mouth is based on satisfaction and negative word of mouth on dissatisfaction (Richins, 1983; Goldenberg, Libai, Moldovan & Muller, 2007). In particular, positive word-of-mouth has been clearly associated with superior service quality. Bitner, Booms and Tetreault (1990) also found that perceived service quality influences behavioural intentions in terms of word-of-mouth and repurchase intention, and that service quality is an antecedent of customer satisfaction (Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Bitner & Hubbert, 1994; Caruana, 2002; Sureshchandar, Rajendran, & Anantharaman, 2002; Tam, 2004; Yi & La, 2004). Similarly, Dabholkar, et al. (1996) also found a positive association between perceptions of service quality and the likelihood of recommending a product or service.

2.6.2 Repurchase intention

Researchers have found a positive association between quality, satisfaction and repurchase intentions (Bitner, et al., 1990; Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Jones & Suh, 2000; Castro, Armario, & Ruiz, 2007). However, other studies have not confirmed such a relationship (Sivadas & Baker-Prewitt, 2000). In an attempt to explain the above confliction, Rust and Zahorik (1993) suggested that a satisfied customer might switch to an alternative supplier with a view to increase their present satisfaction level, whereas a dissatisfied customer might remain with an existing supplier because no better alternatives are available to them.
2.6.3 Feedback to the service provider

Feedback or customer feedback refers to the communication of negative (complaints) or positive (compliments) information to providers about their services. Information such as this is very useful for providers in that it allows them to identify areas in which adjustments of performance are required. Söderlund (1998) concluded that dissatisfied customers are significantly more likely to provide negative feedback than satisfied customers providing positive feedback, and that customers who provide negative feedback are seeking to achieve some form of compensation for unmet quality of service.

Furthermore, in their study of the links between service quality and behavioural intentions, Parasuraman and his associates (e.g., Parasuraman, et al., 1994; Zeithaml, et al., 1996) identified the five dimensions of behavioural intentions: loyalty to the company, propensity to switch, willingness to pay more, external response to problem, and internal response to problem. Studying the influence of service quality on the five behavioural intention dimensions, they found positive effects with regards to loyalty to a company and a willingness to pay more. Negative effects included a tendency to switch an external response to a problem, and no significant effects with internal response to problems (Parasuraman, et al., 1994; Zeithaml, et al., 1996). In another study (Bloemer, de Ruyter & Wetzels, 1999), the same items were used as by Zeithaml, et al. (1996) and different dimensions for behavioural intentions were found, namely: repurchase intentions, word-of-mouth communication, price sensitivity and complaining behaviour. They also found that relationships between service quality and behavioural intentions had notable differences across industries.

According to Zeithaml, et al. (1996) behavioural intentions can also be captured by such measures as repurchase intentions, word-of-mouth, loyalty, complaining behaviour, and price sensitivity. High service quality, as perceived by the customer, often leads to favourable behavioural intentions, while a low service quality tends to lead to unfavourable behavioural intentions. Zeithaml, et al. (1996) further emphasised that behavioural intentions are relevant to a customer’s decision to remain with or leave a company. When consumers are loyal to a company they are then willing to say positive things about the organisation to others (Srinivasan, Anderson & Ponnavolu, 2002). Loyalty to a company and positive word-of-mouth are both
favourable behavioural intentions. A propensity to switch from providers, negative word-of-mouth, and complaining are unfavourable behavioural intentions (Shaw-Ching Liu, Furrer & Sudharshan, 2001). Other researchers (Richins, 1983; Scaglione, 1988; Singh, 1988) have indicated that when consumers perceive to have experienced worse service performances than expected, they are likely to complain to a third party which is an example of negative word-of-mouth.

Most of the early studies linking either service quality or customer satisfaction to behavioral intentions used a uni-dimensional measure of behavioural intentions (e.g., Woodside, Frey & Daly, 1989; Cronin & Taylor, 1992; Anderson & Sullivan, 1993). These studies found a significant positive relationship between overall customer satisfaction and loyalty or repurchase intention. More recent studies have investigated the effect of customer satisfaction and perceived service quality on various kinds of behavioural intentions, such as loyalty, positive word-of-mouth (Boulding, et al., 1993), intentions toward repeat patronage, and intentions toward communication to others (Shaw-Ching Liu, Sudharshan & Hamer, 2000).

Behavioural intentions have been studied as intervening variables between service quality and financial performance (Zeithaml, et al., 1996). Several studies indicate that upset customers may tell on average 10-20 people about their negative experiences. Shaw-Ching Liu, et al. (2001: 119) stated/predicted that “with the increasing use of the Internet, communication among customers will soar”. Shaw-Ching Liu and his colleagues could not have been more precise. With service quality websites such as HelloPeter.com, customers can state/share their complaints or compliments online. The reality of this is that negative service received from an organisation, spreads speedily on the internet as well as through word-of-mouth. Websites such as HelloPeter.com have led practitioners to place a renewed focus on customer complaint behaviour and customer complaint management. Some organisations listed on HelloPeter.com have taken the opportunity to renew their focus on customer complaint behaviour and customer complaint management by responding to complaints listed by registered users of the website. When customers report on the service of a company who responds (not all companies on the website respond to complaints made) 48 hours after they submit their report, customers are then requested to rate the organisations response to their complaint and are given the option to change their complaint to a compliment.
Behavioural intentions of customers are an important predictor of the profitability of service organisations (Reichheld & Sasser, 1990; Anderson, Fornell, & Lehmann, 1994; Slater & Narver, 1995). There is a strong link between customer loyalty and organisations profitability (Rust & Zahorik, 1993; Loveman, 1998; Gupta, Lehmann & Stuart, 2004; Ho, Park & Zhou, 2004; ). It has been difficult to demonstrate the exact nature of the relationship between the perceptions of customers and their future behaviour (Mittal & Kamakura, 2001; Sun, Wilcox, & Zhu, 2004). Both costs and the revenue of organisations are affected by repeat purchases, positive word-of-mouth and customer feedback. Moreover, there is strong evidence that service quality has either a direct influence on the behavioural intentions of customers and/or an indirect influence on such intentions, mediated through customer satisfaction (Zeithaml, et al., 1996; Cronin, et al., 2000).

![Figure 2.5: The behavioural and financial consequences of service quality](Zeithaml, Berry & Parasuraman, 1996:33)

Given these relationships, it is important for service organisations to measure and monitor service quality and satisfaction with the aim of influencing the behavioural intentions of their customers. Mittal and Kamakura (2001) have contended that customers who display different
personal characteristics also display differences in their future behaviour despite having similar levels of satisfaction with a provider.

Figure 2.5 is a conceptual model created by Zeithaml, et al. (1996) that depicts the behavioural consequences of service quality as intervening variables between service quality and the financial gains or losses from retention or defection of customers. The left portion of the model is at the level of the customer and proposes that service quality and behavioural intentions are related and therefore, that service quality is a determinant of whether a customer will remain with or leave a company. The customers’ assessment of service quality and posits when service quality assessments are high, the customer’s behavioural intentions are favourable, which also strengthens their relationship with the company (Zeithaml et al, 1996). When service quality assessments are low, the customers’ behavioural intentions are unfavourable and the relationship is more likely to be weakened.

2.7 ELECTRONIC SERVICE QUALITY

Both concepts of e-service and e-quality have become increasingly important issues in research. E-service is different from traditional service, which is based on interactive information flow between customers and service providers. Companies are attempting to establish a competitive edge by interacting with their customers over the web. E-service quality has been regarded as having the potential of not only delivering strategic benefits, but also enhancing operational efficiency and profitability (Cronin, 2003; Zeithaml, 2000). Companies are using the web to enhance communications with their customers, to sell more products and services through an alternative channel, and to reduce costs associated with interacting with customers. E-service is becoming even more critical for companies to retain and attract customers. The most experienced and successful companies using the web are beginning to realise that the key determinants of success or failure are not merely web presence or low price, but instead to center on delivering electronic service quality. To encourage repeat purchases and build customer loyalty, companies must split their focus to e-service and all cues and encounters that occur before, during and after the transaction (Zeithaml, 2002).
E-service quality (e-SQ) can be defined as the extent to which a website facilitates efficient and effective shopping, purchasing and delivery (Zeithaml, 2002). Most e-service quality scales are developed based on the SERVQUAL instrument by Parasuraman, et al. (1985, 1988). The SERVQUAL instrument has been used to measure service quality across service industries, and some studies have applied the SERVQUAL model to measure e-service quality and have simply reworded its items. However, the employing the the SERVQUAL scale by merely rewording the items seems to be inefficient in the context of e-service quality (Parasuraman, et al., 2005) and the generic dimensions of the SERVQUAL model need to be reformulated in order to be used meaningfully in the context of e-service, since e-service is quite different from traditional service, with three aspects standing out:

- absence of sales staff: in e-service, there is no service encounters between the customers and the sales staff as in the traditional service
- absence of traditional tangible element: in e-service, service process is almost completed in the virtual environment with some intangible elements
- self-service of customers: in e-service, customers conduct self-service in purchasing and realise control in the business process

Given the differences between traditional service and e-service, the SERVQUAL model is not appropriate for measuring e-service quality (Bressolles & Nantel, 2004). Some studies have been conducted aiming at developing measurement scales that are appropriate to measure e-service quality.
Table 2.1: Studies conducted to measure e-service quality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author[s]</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dabholkar (1996)</td>
<td>website designs, reliability, delivery, ease of use, enjoyment and control</td>
<td>e-service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yoo and Donthu (2001)</td>
<td>efficiency, reliability, fulfillment, privacy, responsiveness, compensation, and contact</td>
<td>online retailing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cox and Dale (2001)</td>
<td>website appearance, communication, accessibility, credibility, understanding and availability</td>
<td>online retailing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yang (2001)</td>
<td>website design, security and information</td>
<td>online retailing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wolfinbarger and Gilly (2002,2003)</td>
<td>website design, reliability, security and customer service</td>
<td>online shopping sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zeithaml, et al, (2002b)</td>
<td>security, communication, reliability, responsiveness and delivery</td>
<td>e-service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madu and Madu (2002)</td>
<td>performance, features, structure, aesthetic, reliability, serviceability, security and system integrity, trust, responsiveness, service differentiation and customisation, web store police, reputation, assurance and empathy</td>
<td>e-service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loiacono, et al. (2002)</td>
<td>information, interactivity, trust, response time, website design, intuitiveness, flow, innovativeness, integrated communication, business process and substitutability</td>
<td>online retailing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yang and Jun (2002)</td>
<td>website design, security, reliability, responsiveness, accessibility and customisation</td>
<td>online retailing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surjadaja, et al. (2003)</td>
<td>security, interaction, responsiveness, information, reliability, deliver and customisation</td>
<td>e-service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santos (2003)</td>
<td>ease of use, appearance, linkage, structure, content, efficiency, reliability, communication, security, incentive and customer support</td>
<td>e-service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yang, Peterson and Cai (2003)</td>
<td>responsiveness, credibility, ease of use, reliability, convenience, communication, access, competence, courtesy, personalisation, collaboration, security and aesthetics</td>
<td>online retailing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author[s]</td>
<td>Dimensions</td>
<td>Context</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yang, Jun and Peterson (2004)</td>
<td>reliability, responsiveness, competence, ease of use, security and product portfolio</td>
<td>online shopping sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field, et al. (2004)</td>
<td>website design, reliability, security and customer service</td>
<td>e-service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kim and Stoel (2004)</td>
<td>web appearance, entertainment, information, transaction capability, responsiveness and trust</td>
<td>online retailing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yang and Fang (2004)</td>
<td>responsiveness, reliability, credibility, comtemence, access, courtesy, communication, information, responsiveness and website design</td>
<td>e-service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gounaris, et al. (2005)</td>
<td>website design, information, trust, responsiveness and reputation</td>
<td>online retailing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parasuraman, et al. (2005)</td>
<td>efficiency, availability, fulfillment, privacy, responsiveness, compensation and contact</td>
<td>e-service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lee and Lin (2005)</td>
<td>website design, reliability, responsiveness, trust and personalisation</td>
<td>online retailing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kim, et al. (2006)</td>
<td>efficiency, fulfillment, system availability, privacy, responsiveness, compensation, contact, information and graphic style</td>
<td>online retailing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fassnacht and Koese (2006)</td>
<td>graphic quality, layout, attractiveness of selection, information, ease of use, technical quality, reliability, functional benefit and emotional benefit</td>
<td>e-service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cristobal, et al. (2007)</td>
<td>website design, customer service, assurance and order management</td>
<td>e-service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sohn and Tadisina (2008)</td>
<td>trust, speed of delivery, reliability, ease of use, customised communication, website content and functionality</td>
<td>online financial service</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With an increase of e-commerce within organisations, the importance of measuring and monitoring e-service quality has been recognised. Some studies have been conducted aiming at developing scale which is adapted to e-service quality field, such as e-service, online retailing, online shopping and online financial service. Most of the studies take a combination of
traditional service quality dimensions and web interface quality dimensions as a point of departure. Dabholkar (1996) conducted a study on the measures of e-service quality and focused on web design, and argues that there are seven basic parameters in the judgement of e-service quality (Dabholkar, 1996). Yoo and Donthu (2001) developed a four-dimensional scale called SITEQUAL to measure online website quality (Yoo & Donthu, 2001). Cox and Cox and Dale (2001) set up a six-dimensional scale to measure online retailing service quality. Loiacono, Watson & Hoodhue (2002) developed a scale called WEBQUAL that measured online retailing service quality, which composed of twelve dimensions. (Lee & Lin, 2005). Wolfinbarger and Gilly (2002) developed an e-service quality scale that focuses on online shopping, which they initially titled COMQ and later it was developed to eTailQ Wolfinbarger & Gilly, 2002; 2003). Sohn and Tadisina (2008) developed a six-dimensional model for e-service quality assessment, which they based on their empirical study on online financial institutions (Sohn & Tadisina, 2008).

There is also growing recognition of different variability in the outcome of e-service quality studies in terms of the measure of e-service quality (Waite, 2006; Kim, Kim & Lennon, 2006) and recent studies on e-service quality show different dimensions in e-service quality (Loiacono, et.al., 2002; Santos, 2003; Surjadaja, Ghosh, & Antony, 2003; Field, Heim & Sinha, 2004; Kim & Stoel, 2004; Gounaris, Dimitriadis & Stathakopoulos, 2005; Fassnacht & Koese, 2006; Kim, et al., 2006; Cristobal, et al., 2007; Sohn & Tadisina, 2008). Madu and Madu (2002) developed a 15- dimensional scale of e-service quality, which is built on better understanding of customers and providing services to meet the needs and expectations of customers (Madu & Madu, 2002). Santos (2003) argues that both active dimensions and incubative dimensions are important in e-service quality and that both should be taken into account in e-service quality evaluations, as well as being put forward on a scale consisting of eleven sub-dimensions (Santos, 2003). Field, et al. (2004) developed a process model for assessing and improving service quality by identifying e-service system entities and transactions between those entities and mapping key quality dimensions onto them (Field, et al., 2004). Gounaris, et al. (2005) suggested that different dimensions of perceived e-service quality are influenced by different antecedents (Gounaris, et al., 2005). Yang and Jun (2002) identifies the differentiation among dimensions between online purchaser and non-purchaser (Yang & Jun, 2002). Yang and Fang (2004) further examine the differentiation of dimensions to online service satisfaction and dissatisfaction. They
argue that there are four significant quality dimensions leading to both satisfaction and dissatisfaction, including responsiveness, reliability, ease of use and competence (Yang & Fang, 2004). As mentioned earlier, Parasuraman, et al. (2005) developed the dimensions for core service delivery and recover services delivery in e-service quality (Parasuraman, et al., 2005). Kim, et al. (2006) extended these dimensions into a nine-dimension scale in e-service quality to evaluate the service quality of websites in the apparel retailing industry (Kim, et al., 2006).

Oliveir, Roth & Gilland (2002) suggest that companies can achieve competitive capabilities by offering good e-services to customers (Oliveira, Roth & Gilland, 2002). Service quality has a strong impact on customer satisfaction and on the performance of companies. Improving e-service quality to satisfy and retain customers is becoming a challenging issue.

2.7.1 Dimensions of e-service quality

According to Zeithaml’s (2002) study, e-SQ has seven dimensions that formed two scales: a core e-SQ scale and a recovery scale. The core scale includes efficiency, reliability, fulfillment and privacy and can be used to measure customer perceptions of service quality.

- Efficiency refers to the ability of the customers to get to the website, find their desired product and information associated with it, and check out with minimal effort.
- Fulfillment incorporates accuracy of service promises, having products in stock and delivering the products in the promised time.
- Reliability is associated with the technical functioning of the site, particularly the extent to which it is available and functioning properly.
- The privacy dimension includes assurance that shopping behaviour data is not shared and that credit card information is secure.

Zeithaml called this the core e-SQ because she found that these are the main dimensions that consumers want in shopping on the internet (Zeithaml, 2002). Three other dimensions that make up the recover scale were found to be significant when online customers ran into problems and they include responsiveness, compensation and contact.
- Responsiveness measures the ability of a company to provide appropriate information to customers when a problem occurs, have mechanisms for handling returns and providing online guarantees.
- Compensation is the dimension that involves receiving money back, return shipping and handling.
- Contact points to the need of customers to be able to speak to a live customer service agent online or through the phone.

2.8 SERVICE QUALITY IN THE AIRLINE INDUSTRY

The airline industry plays an important role in the global economy. It is a vital component of the leisure/tourism industry and remains essential to the conduct of international business. The airline industry represents one of the biggest industries worldwide with global airline revenues exceeding $12.9 billion in 2006 (International Air Transport Association, 2007). This industry has also experienced unprecedented and sustained levels of demand (one exception to this is the September 11th attacks) that is putting a strain on the existing aviation infrastructure (Reed, 2007).

Deregulation and liberalisation in the airline industry has transformed competition and allowed a variety of new entrants into the airline industry. Restrictions on fares have been removed, as well as legislative and regulatory changes to encourage new entrants, have contributed to an altered competitive landscape and allowed for new Low Cost entrants such as Ryanair and Easyjet (Tiernan, Rhoades & Waguespack, 2008).

Prior to deregulation of the airline industry, service quality was a matter of conforming to the standards set by a countries designated Civil Aviation Authority or Board. As deregulation and liberalisation spread throughout the international airline industry, the issue of service quality took on a new focus as well as the measuring of service quality (Rhoades & Waguespack, 2008). A number of studies have addressed service quality issues. The mainstream research has been based on the notion that quality of service is perceived and evaluated by customers (Grönroos,
The most widely used customer-perceived service quality model is the SERVQUAL model developed by Parasuraman, et al. (1985) as previously mentioned.

According to Young, Cunningham & Lee (1994) in the pre-deregulation era airlines service quality was assessed with respect to industry and managerial variables such as flight frequency, load factors, transit times and aircraft type (Jordan, 1970; Douglas & Miller, 1974). However, in the post-deregulation and liberalised environment the provision of superior service quality has been accepted as an important source of customer retention and loyalty, which may ultimately lead to superior competitive performance (Parasuraman, Berry & Zeithaml, 1991a; Berry, et al., 1994; Zeithaml, et al., 1996).

According to Parasuraman, Berry & Zeithaml (1991b), customer loyalty can be achieved by organisations that display consistency, reliability and fairness in the provision of their service. They further argue that organisations making realistic promises about delivery are more likely to capitalise on superior service delivery. Only a few studies have attempted to integrate a scale such as SERVQUAL or SERVPERF into the airline service research (Fick & Ritchie, 1991; Chang & Yeh, 2002). SERVQUAL was also the chosen scale used for an airline context in 1994 (Sultan & Simpson, 2000). Sultan & Simpson found the SERVQUAL factor of reliability (For example, excellent airlines will provide their services at the time they promise to do so) was the most important dimension among air passengers. Young, et al. (1994) also used the SERVQUAL scale on a sample of 105 respondents and found that reliability was the predominant predictor of satisfaction, while both reliability and empathy were found to influence customer retention. However, there has been no longitudinal perceptual study on airline service quality published in the academic realm. This lack of follow-up study or an update of the work done, is common in much of marketing research, not just airline service quality research (Tiernan, et al., 2008).

Several travel-related organisations have conducted international surveys of quality. Two of the most well-known organisations are Frequent Flyer and Conde Nast. Typically, these organisations survey a cross section of frequent flyers to develop a ranking of airlines based on selected and differing areas of customer satisfaction. In general, these surveys indicated that airline service quality is driven by these key factors: online performance, airport check-in,
schedule/flight accommodations, seating, comfort, gate location, aircraft interior, flight attendants, post-flight service, food service, and frequent flyer programs (Glab, 1998).

Although service quality can be one of the key factors in attracting and retaining loyal customers, airlines often find it difficult to offer appropriate service attributes. The Airline Quality Rating Report, 2005, indicated that air travel services have declined and airlines have failed to deliver their self-policed promise to do better in the customer service area (Gursoy, Chen & Kim, 2005).

2.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter presents the findings of the literature review and further introduces the importance and measurement of service quality to the reader. Also introduced in this chapter are the topics of customer satisfaction and behavioural intent, electronic service quality and service quality in the airline industry. Chapter three further introduces the reader to and elaborates on the six electronic service quality dimensions.
CHAPTER 3
THE SIX DIMENSIONS OF SERVICE QUALITY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The value of Internet-based transactions is growing quickly and is estimated to grow twenty-fold over the next five years, reaching $11 trillion by 2010 (Mullaney, 2000). This chapter presents dimensions to measure the quality of an airline website as perceived by customers. As Internet shopping gradually moves from a novelty to a routine way of shopping, the quality of Internet sites will play an important role in differentiating sites. High quality sites will be able to attract more browsers and shoppers than competing low quality sites because quality builds sustainable competitive advantage. Internet shopping sites can be defined as web retail sites in which customers can browse, evaluate, order and purchase a product or service (Yoo & Donthu, 2001). In short, Internet shopping sites are online versions of physical retail stores where all transactions and their relevant activities take place in online cyber space’s. NETQUAL which is designed to capture the perceived quality of a web retail site.

Literature on the quality of traditional retail stores confirmed that consumers use store quality as an indication about the quality of the stores products (Dodds, Monroe & Grewal, 1991). Similarly, high quality Internet sites will attract more attention and visits from consumers by implying that their products are of a high quality. In addition, when consumers are satisfied with a high quality Internet site, they stimulate active and positive word-of-mouth communications for the site. Little research has attempted to develop a sound instrument to measure the perceived quality of an Internet shopping site. The lack of a measure has been a barrier to tracking and improving site quality, and investigating the relationships between customer satisfaction and behavioural intentions (Yoo & Donthu, 2001).

The measurement of website quality is in its early stages and there is no amply accepted and tested scale (Zeithaml, et al., 2002a). Several measuring instruments have been developed with the objective of assessing the quality of websites (Loiacono, et al., 2001; Yoo & Donthu, 2001; Aladwani & Palvia, 2002; Barnes & Vigden, 2002; Wolfinbarger & Gilly, 2002; Zeithaml, et al.,...
Zeithaml, et al. (2002a) provides an excellent review of most of these studies and summarises the main dimensions of website quality as information availability and content (information quality), ease of use, privacy/security, graphic style and fulfillment.

3.2 INFORMATION

The Internet is an innovative form of information technology, yet most commercial websites function as well-defined information systems. Information system quality can be divided into systems and information quality. System quality refers to software development, while information quality embraces accuracy, timeliness, currency, precision, completeness, conciseness, relevance, understandability, meaningfulness, comparability and reliability of information (DeLone & McLean, 1992; 2003).

The concept of information quality is becoming more important as information becomes the very livelihood of organisations today. The operational, tactical, and strategic performance of organisations is tied directly to the quality of their information (Redman, 1998; Gattiker & Goodhue, 2005; Nelson, Todd, & Wixon, 2005). Poor information quality can wreak havoc in organisations by resulting in customer dissatisfaction, increased costs, reduced levels in the effectiveness of decision making, and a diminished ability to plan, implement, and execute organisational strategies (Redman, 1998). For example, poor information quality may result in customers getting charged for products or services that they did not purchase or products being shipped to the wrong addresses. Poor information quality may be the single biggest obstacle to developing sound business strategies (Redman, 1998).

Information is thought to be a multidimensional concept (Fisher & Kingma, 2001; Lee, et al., 2002; Nelson, et al., 2005). Wang and Strong (1996) found four dimensions that are important to customers when they are searching for information. They proposed a framework which included the following: 1) the information must be accessible, 2) the information must be interpretable, 3) the information must be relevant, and 4) the information must be accurate. These four dimensions were labeled as intrinsic information quality, contextual information quality,
representational information quality, and accessibility information quality. Intrinsic information relates to the accuracy, believability and reputation of the information supplied.

Contextual information quality “highlights the requirement that information quality must be considered within the context of the task at hand; that is, information (data) must be relevant, timely, complete, and appropriate in terms of amount so as to add value” (Wang & Strong, 1996). The representational information quality dimension includes both the format of the information and the meaning of the data. The information quality attributes for this dimension, including interpretability, ease of understanding, representational consistency, and concise representation. In the study by Wang and Strong (1996), this dimension is tied to the output of a computer system. The two previous dimensions of information quality, intrinsic and contextual are independent of computer systems and could have resulted from any source.

The last dimension in the typology and accessibility information quality is related to how accessible the information is to find or to discover on a website, given its security features. Before the widespread use of websites, researchers did not consider accessibility as an aspect of information quality because information was disseminated in hard-copy format; thus, getting to the data was not a problem. However, with the use of computers, Wang and Strong (1996) pinpointed accessibility as a major concern. This issue is also related to the ownership of information and how information gatekeepers manage and distribute that information to others (Redman, 1998). This user-friendly information is also based upon the capture of the information in digital format that is accessible to those who need it in a comprehensive format (Angst & Agarwal, 2009). The principal goal of information systems service is to enable customers to function independently and to conduct numerous transactions on their own. In addition, consumers often seek desired product and service information through websites (Yang, Jun, & Peterson, 2004).

Therefore, designers should take care of the information quality related to the products and services supplied on the e-stores website (Huizingh, 2000) and should offer any additional information that could be useful for the consumer (Lohse & Spiller, 1999). Searching for information about products and services is one of the most performed activities that users carry out through the internet (European Interactive Advertising Association, 2007).
Therefore, offering accurate information could be a source of obtaining potential users and customers. Quality information is essential information and must be provided timeously to the customer, because information that is provided after an important decision is made is of no use (Shin, 2004). If information is not relevant enough for individuals when they need to make their decision, individuals will not use it (Lohse & Spiller, 1999). Information made available by websites has been widely accepted as a key component of perceived service quality (Novak, Hoffman, & Yung, 2000; Zeithaml, et al., 2002a; Kim & Lee, 2004). In order to maximize the extent to which the context attached to transferred knowledge is understood, information must be easy to read and comprehensible (Lee, Strong, Kahn, & Wang, 2002; Ong & Lai, 2007), as incomprehensible information for users is neither reliable nor relevant. Furthermore, the meaningfulness of information is critical to information quality. Therefore, the content of information quality should be measured as timelines, relevance, understandability and meaningfulness (DeLone and McLean, 1992; Beverly, Diane, & Richard, 2002; Lee, Strong, Kahn, & Wang, 2002; Wu & Wang, 2006; Michnik & Lo, 2009).

Information is an important dimension of online service quality, and the information related to the shopping process has been emphasised as another critical aspect in order to achieve an effective e-commerce website (Schubert & Selz, 1999; Wolfinbarger & Gilly, 2003). This is particularly true for online apparel retailers because online shoppers cannot try on the garment to check fit, texture, or colour so they rely heavily on the information available to them on the website to aid them in their purchase decision. Hence, unless necessary information for an online purchase is available, online shoppers will exit the site and visit a competitor’s web site (Song & Zinkhan, 2003).

In addition, there are no sales people to answer a shopper’s questions; as a result it is especially critical for online retailers to have necessary information available on the website (Kim & Stoel, 2004). Lynch and Ariely (2000) found that the ability to find necessary information on a website especially about; price and quality, positively influenced satisfaction with the online shopping experience, the product purchased, and patronage intention. It has been proposed that the higher the quality of information, the more online customers would select that website for online shopping (Lee & Kozar, 2006). The matter of whether the quality of information carried on the
websites meets the needs and expectations of users is therefore crucial. Based on past research information, quality can be measured using information relevance, currency and understandability. Information relevance includes relevant depth and scope, and completeness of information. Currency includes updating of the information. Understandability comprises of ease of understanding and clearness of the information. The significant effects of information relevance, currency and understandability on increasing information quality have been exhibited in previous studies (Eighmey & McCord, 1998; Nielsen, 2000; McKinney, Yoon & Zahedi, 2002). Other common criteria for assessing information content includes: accuracy, timeliness, its concise nature and completeness (Jeong & Lambert, 2001; Perdue, 2001; Madu & Madu, 2002).

Novak et al (2000) argues that information quality contributes to delivering a compelling experience, while Francis and White (2002) found that adequate information or product description enhances a customer’s intention. The quality of information that is delivered is a key factor which affects a website’s success; hence website information quality must be relevant, up-to-date and easy to understand to significantly influence online customers’ attitude, satisfaction and their purchase intentions (Feindt, Jeffcoate & Chappell, 2002).

Prior studies have argued that information quality has had a positive impact on perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness (Chang, Li, Hung & Hwang, 2005; Ahn, Ryu & Han, 2007) Lin (2007) argued that information quality is a valuable predictor of perceived ease of use and usefulness. Chang, et al. (2005) found that information quality has had a significant relationship to perceived ease of use and usefulness, and Ahn, et al. (2007) also indicated that information quality has had a positive influence on user perception of ease of use and usefulness in the context of online retailing.

3.3 EASE OF USE

Ease of use is defined as the degree to which a person believes that using an information system would be free of effort (Al-Momani & Noor, 2009), as well as how easy it is for customers to
conduct external searches in cyberspace and internal navigations within the website. External searches refer to the extent to which customers can easily find a website on the Worldwide Web. This dimension contains three aspects. Firstly, navigation deals with how easily users can search for information within a website. It is regarded as the essence of the multidimensional construct of e-travel service quality (Kaynama & Black, 2000). Without interaction with personnel, online customers need to locate information and merchandise by themselves. If they frequently get lost or confused during the search process, they are likely to quit. The design and presentation of a website involving a navigation mechanism affects the relevancy and efficiency of the outcome of searching (Perdue, 2001). It is suggested that navigation plays a dominant role in delivering satisfactory services.

The second aspect, website access, refers to the ability users have to access resources, including travel-related information and service features, on airline websites, and it is related to the ease of connection and speed of downloads (Cox & Dale, 2001). It is likely that online users will quit and click on to other sites because it took too long for them to access a website or download information from the site. Therefore, website access is an important component related to service performance.

The third part of this dimension is the transactional functions, which allow customers to feel that the website is intuitive, simple and user-friendly for completing transactions (Novak, et al., 2000; Kim & Lee, 2004). Several components, including easy ordering, easy payment, and easy cancellations indicate the degree to which customers believe that of the use of the website would involve little or no effort (Armstrong & Hagel, 1996).

Usability is a tool for measuring the quality of a website (Ranganathan & Ganapathy, 2002). Therefore, the ease of use of a system could improve a more complex learning performance and a higher ability to anticipate how that system will perform. More specifically, usability improves a better understanding of the contents and tasks needed for the achievement of a goal (For example, placing an order). This reduces the probability of error and improves the levels of trust (Muir & Moray, 1996).
A website must not only have a good and attractive design but must also provide not only beauty and appeal, but also high levels of usability, since it influences the affective states of the user (Desmet & Hekkert, 2007). Thus, a well designed website should ensure a high level of usability (Cristobal, 2006). An attractive design can evoke feelings of pleasure during the use of a website (Flavian & Gurrea, 2008). As a consequence, an adequate degree of usability, related to a comfortable atmosphere, could create a positive bias in the consumer. A good level of perceived usability could lead to higher levels of satisfaction, trust and loyalty towards a specific website (Flavián, Guinalíu, & Gurrea, 2006; Kim & Eom, 2002; Chen, Wigand, & Nilan, 1999). Two central issues for usability are information organisation and site navigation. Navigation describes a user’s ability to find information efficiently with few barriers. If users cannot quickly understand the nature or structure of a site, they may become frustrated and leave. Users are likely to return to a site that they perceive to include a well-designed navigation scheme (Krug, 2000). Similarly, users need to be able to quickly determine the nature of the information presented at a site, how the information is organised, and how they can locate the information that they seek. Central to website navigation is the need to let users know where they are, where they can go, how they can get there, and where they have been (Nielsen, 2000). When clickable images are informative, they act as navigational cues that communicate all of these usability messages.

An indicator of a site’s overall quality is how easy the site is to use (Boonghee & Donthu, 2002). Usability issues revolve around how easy a system can be learnt (Mills, et al., 1986). Usability is measured by the speed at which a user can accomplish specific task on a site, the number of errors a user makes when navigating a site, and the overall satisfaction the user expresses with the site.

Early conducted research on the adoption of computers has shown that the extent of a user’s experience with technology has an influences on the attitude and behaviour towards that technology (Kraemer, Danzinger, Dunkle, & King, 1993; Thomson, Higgins, & Howell, 1994), more specifically the perceived usefulness of the technology (Venkatesh & Davis, 1996; Venkatesh, 2000). Since the internet is a comparatively new technology, not all consumers are equally familiar with it; even when they mostly use it for seeking information rather than online purchasing (Anckar, 2003; Eurostat, 2004). Furthermore, its particular characteristics and the
skills needed to use it will have an impact on how Website users perceive electronic service quality. For example, a novice may experience greater difficulty in using a site and rate the site’s performance lower than an experienced person. Bruner and Kumar (2000) suggested that the higher the level of a consumer’s experience with the Internet, the more positive their attitude would be towards websites. Similarly, Vrechopoulos, Siomkos, & Doukidis (2001), conducted a study on Internet adoption in Greece and found that consumers with little familiarity of purchasing from the Internet, had different attitudes towards an e-shop than frequent e-buyers.

Past research on consumer adoption of online services found perceived ease of use is a critical antecedent determining the user’s adoption of new web technology (Pikkarainen, Pikkarainen, Karjalouoto & Pahnila, 2004; Wu, Chen & Lin, 2007).

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is one of the most widely used models for predicting and explaining end user behaviour, system use and information technology adoption (King & He, 2006; Venkatesh & Bala, 2008). In other words, it is used to determine whether a firm or individual accepts new technology. It is based on the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) which was proposed by Ajzen and Fishbein (1978). The TAM model is an extension of the TRA model and can be explained by two salient beliefs: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. Perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use are related to the attitude towards acceptance of the new technology, which, in turn affects a customers’ acceptance, intention and consequently, their behaviour. Perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use are considered instrumental in achieving valued outcomes, and thus reflect the useful aspects of information technology usage.

Perceived ease of use is defined as the degree to which the prospective user expects or believes new technologies or systems to be free of effort. Perceived usefulness refers to the prospective user’s personal likelihood that the use of the new technology or system will increase or enhance performance (Davis, 1989). Perceived usefulness assesses the extrinsic characteristics of technology, such as how technology assists users in achieving task related objectives such as task efficiency and effectiveness. Perceived ease of use examines the intrinsic characteristics of technology, such as ease of use, flexibility and clarity of the user interface (Jun & Mohammed, 2007). TAM shows that perceived ease of use has had a direct influence on perceived
usefulness. The easier a system is to use, the less effort will be required to accomplish certain tasks (Kuo & Lee, 2009).

TAM has been tested widely with different samples in different contexts and has proved to be a valid and reliable model which explains new technology system acceptance (Mathieson, 1991; Adams, Nelson, & Todd, 1992; Taylor & Todd, 1995; Venkatesh & Davis, 1996; Legris, Ingham, & Collerette, 2003). Many recent studies have applied TAM when studying the acceptance of Internet-related technologies, such as email (Gefen & Straub, 1997), web (Chen, et al., 2002; Kim, et al., 2008; Shin, 2008), virtual store (Chen, et al., 2002; Gefen, Karahanna & Straub, 2003; O’Cass & Fenech, 2003) and electronic commerce (Cheng, et al., 2006; Ahn, 2007; Chu & Lu, 2007; Cyr, et al. 2007;) found that perceived usefulness had a stronger influence on intention to use and be loyal to online websites. This is supported by Lee (2005), who agrees that perceived usefulness significantly affects intentions towards an online retailer.

3.4 DESIGN/GRAPHICS

Multi-media capabilities are non-verbal cues or features about the product and services that enhance a customer’s feeling of preference for a web site. Graphics, video clips, audio clips and animation used to demonstrate products are examples. Graphic style is an important service dimension for retail websites as they can fulfill individual’s information needs, create trust and facilitate a better learning experience (Chen, 2001). Graphic style is defined as the tangible aspects of the online environment that reflects the look and feel or perceived attractiveness of a website, which can be the offline equivalent of a traditional retail store’s atmosphere (Lohse & Spiller, 1999), and includes colour, layout, print size, number of photographs, graphics and animation. Researchers have found that graphic styles influence and have an effect on consumer perceptions of online shopping, as well as play an important role in attracting, sustaining and retaining customers at the site (Raney, Arpan, Pashupati & Brill, 2003; Nitse, Parker, Krumwiede, & Ottaway, 2004). Non-text elements also enhance communication by helping visitors find or interpret the information presented (Cao, Zhang & Seydel, 2005), however, the downside to this is that the more multi-media content on the site, the longer the content will take.
to download. Thus, designers must find a balance between an attractive design and providing information which is not always easy to read (Huizingh, 2000). Hudson, Keasey & Littler (2000) state that it is unadvisable to go overboard with elaborate graphics that add no more information to the website. People may use the same site frequently and initially graphics may seem impressive when they are first viewed, but quickly become tiresome when they have been viewed many times over (Hudson, Keasey, & Littler, 2000).

In the context of a mock apparel retail website, Eroglu, Machleit and Davis (2003) found that aspects of graphic style affected satisfaction with the site and concluded that an aesthetically pleasing website design may attract customers if it generates pleasurable feelings which are associated with the online experience. Previous research has found that poor graphic design elements and presentation styles can confuse and negatively affect consumers’ willingness to browse or buy through an online channel (Hoque & Lohse, 1999; Nielsen, 1999. Therefore, the perceived attractiveness of a website should be positively associated with online service quality perceptions.

Website design is crucial for online stores (Than & Grandon, 2002). Website design describes the appeal that user interface design presents to customers (Kim & Lee, 2002). The influence of website design on e-service performance has been studied extensively. Design refers to the presentation of a website’s content and information, such as simple, clear and consistent layout, good use of frame, provision of a site map that allows users to skip sections that are of no interest, clear listed menu’s and the company’s logo presented on each page (which is said to also enhance branding), proper use of colour, graphics, images and animations, together with the appropriate size of the web page. The design or appearance of a website is usually the first determinant observed by the user. Website design must assure a high level of usability, which is a high degree of ease of use of different elements. As well as text, information is also provided by appropriate use of graphics. Users do not want to see graphics that they do not need, but they appreciate the opportunity to download larger pictures and different angles of pictures that they would want to see (Wolfinbarger & Gilly, 2001).

Elements of visual design deal with balance, emotional appeal, aesthetics and uniformity of the website’s overall graphical look. This included colours, photographs, shapes, or font type
(Garrett, 2003). In some research, a relationship between the aesthetic beauty of a website and trust was established (Karvonen, 2000), while in other studies visual design of the website did not significantly impact trust (Wang & Emurian, 2005). Furthermore, website aesthetics was considered related to the “overall enjoyable user experience” (Tarasewich, 2003). When a webpage is designed, one must take into consideration different internet servers, operating systems, navigators, resolutions and versions.

Colour is a common differentiator by culture and holds different meanings (Barber & Badre, 2001; Simon, 2001). Red means happiness in China but danger in the United States. Users from collectivist cultures such as China have strong preferences for visuals, whereas users from more individualistic cultures like Germany prefer a logical and structured page layout (Baron & Kenny, 1986). In a study that compared Canadian, U.S, German and Japanese users, Japanese favoured a more visual approach, which also appeals to a user’s emotions (Cyr, Bonanni, Bowes & Ilsever, 2005).

Navigation design refers to the navigational scheme used to help or hinder users as they access different sections of a website (DeWulf, Schillewaert, Muylle, & Rangarajan, 2006; Garrett, 2003). Navigation tools, such as: menus, directories, frames, buttons, site maps, subject trees, a search engine, image maps and colours (Clyde, 2000) should help users to maintain a mental map of where they are, and how various sections/pages are related to each other. Hudson et al (2000) states that it is helpful to have a site map that web site users can use to see the layout on a particular site and to maneuver around it. Clyde (2000) suggested one way to mitigate this problem is to include a search engine on the site. Yoon (2002) found navigation design resulted in website satisfaction. It is expected that for multiple countries, users expect to effectively navigate a website and in so doing, experience trust and satisfaction.

According to Kotler (1974), atmospheric cues such as colours, graphics and design produce certain emotional effects on the consumer that enhance purchase probability. In a similar vein, Ko and Rhee (1994) suggested that displaying products can lure consumers into making impulse purchases. Montoya-Weiss, Voss & Grewall (2003) found that graphic styles of websites influence online channel use and overall satisfaction by reducing security risk perceptions.
Attractiveness relates to whether a webpage is fun to read and individually pleasing. Watson, Akselsen & Pitt, (1998) coined the concept of attractors. They used the metaphor to label/group websites into different potential attractors (For example, entertainment parks and clubs). They argued that the overall appeal is a key component of website quality. No matter how well the content is portrayed or how reliable and easy the website is to search, if users do not find the site appealing they won’t spend their time there (Smith & Merchant, 2001). Watson, et al. (1997) also suggested that online users seek gratification in escape, entertainment and interaction, which suggests that there is a need for web designers to cultivate pleasure in site design by motivating customers to participate, promoting customer excitement and concentration, and to include charming features to attract customers and to help them enjoy the visit (Liu & Arnett, 2000). This will then lead to an increase in customer activities (Schmidt, 1996).

3.5 RELIABILITY

Reliability has proved to be more significant within e-commerce based platforms than in more generic interfaces, which do not use the Internet as a direct platform for conducting transactions or sales (Jun & Yang, 2008). Reliability refers to the ability to perform the promised service accurately and consistently, including: frequency of updating the website, prompt replies to customer enquiries, and accuracy of online purchasing and billing, prompt deliveries and keeping personal information secure (Parasuraman, et al., 1988; Van Riel, Semeijn & Janssen, 2003; Janda, Trocchia & Gwinner, 2002; Kim & Lee, 2002; Lee & Lin, 2005). For companies that offer online shopping facilities, the accuracy of online purchasing and billing is important. This element is noted by Yang (2001) as being a determinant of reliability for online service quality. The importance of reliability has been emphasised by the information technology-based service. Moreover, Zhu, Wymer and Chen (2002) argued that reliability dimension has a direct positive effect on perceived service quality and customer satisfaction. Online stores must provide mistake-free services and secure online transactions to make customers feel comfortable using online shopping (Lee & Lin, 2005).
Availability refers to the extent to which the services provided by the website can be obtained and used, and the correct technical functioning of the site (Parasuraman et al., 2005). This dimension deals with the extent to which online information resources are equipped for providing customers with the wanted products/services that are easy to locate. These services also take the difficulty out of linking web pages, and facilitate the making of purchasing decisions (Jeong & Lambert, 2001; Madu & Madu, 2002). However, according to Fram and Grady (1995), technical software issues are problems related to purchasing on the internet. When consumers use a website for browsing or purchasing, functional problems such as missing links and non-working buttons leads to frustration and exiting from the site (Fram & Grady, 1995), and as a result the online retailer looses a valuable opportunity to build customer loyalty (Wachter, 2002). According to Santos (2003), the avoidance and elimination of broken links and links to websites that no longer exist or that are under construction are related to total e-service quality.

The variety of information and the comprehensiveness of its coverage are considered to be primary indicators (Wan, 2002). One of e-commerce challenges on the web is when users experience intolerably long waits for a website’s page to load. Researchers have studied the significance of waiting time in service evaluations of websites (Roslow, Nichollas, & Tsalikis, 1992) but Weinberg (2000) concludes that in terms of the waiting time on the internet, it is best if the homepage loads relatively fast, and that efforts exerted towards achieving this will be rewarded.

Delivery fulfillment refers to a website’s success in delivering products/services and its willingness to correct mistakes that occur during transactions. It overlaps to some extent with the reliability dimension of Zeithaml, et al. (2002b), which has been identified as an important factor in e-service quality. Wolfinbarger and Gilly (2003) places emphasis on error-free ordering process and on-time delivery of an order for online customers. A website that makes an effort to minimise the dissatisfaction with the services provided will receive a higher level of quality evaluation from its customers. Fulfillment is one of the most crucial factors related to judgments concerning the quality of an online site (Wolfinbarger & Gilly, 2003).

According to Zeithaml, et al. (2002a), having products in stock, delivering the products within the time frame promised, and the accuracy of service promises are incorporated into this
dimension and are of importance. Yang and Fang (2004) indicated that accurate order fulfillment and keeping service promises are primary service quality elements which lead to customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Research conducted by Kim and Lennon (2004) showed that when shoppers are notified about stock that has sold out after selecting an item to purchase, they exhibit stronger negative emotions and lower purchase intent than when notified before the selection. Lee & Lin (2005) have ascertained that reliability has a direct positive effect on perceived service quality and customers’ satisfaction.

3.6 SECURITY/PRIVACY

This dimension deals with how a website proves to be trustworthy for its customers. Trust is a commonality within the security/privacy dimension and is based primarily in industries using e-commerce platforms that incorporate online transactions (Van Riel, et al., 2003). The privacy dimension is defined as the degree to which the site is safe and protects customer information (Parasuraman, et al., 2005). The issue of privacy has been a critical issue in online retailing and consumers are very weary in this regard due to the dangers and risks of releasing personal information to unknown sources (Van Riel, et al., 2003; Sharma & Sheth, 2004). As a result of risk-related misuse of personal information, many people are still unwilling to purchase products from the Internet and due to these heightened concerns with privacy, online retailers are now more aware of the importance of providing consumer privacy policies (Ranganathana & Ganapathy, 2002). The security/privacy dimension has been rated most critical when influencing non-purchasers’ perceptions of service quality and has also been shown to have a strong impact on a customer’s intention to purchase (Loiacono, et al., 2002; Van Riel, et al., 2003), satisfaction (Szymanski & Hise, 2000), and over all site quality (Yoo & Donthu, 2001). While security addresses the technical specifications of a website’s security and payment methods, this dimension also incorporates company reputation, confidence and general confidentiality among consumers and those operating from within the company, engaging in the communication process (Shaohan & Minjoon, 2003; Van Riel, et al., 2003).
Trust has been labeled as “a fundamental ingredient of the relationship between a seller and a buyer” (Gounaris, Dimitriadis & Stathakopoulos, 2005). This dimension is defined as “trustworthiness, believability and honesty of the service provider” and alludes to the idea that the online party will “behave with integrity and will fulfill its promises” (Jun, Yang, & Kim, 2003). Trust is believed to set the tone in the consumer’s mind around the reliability of the company’s website, privacy and security issues, the brand name, customer relationships and loyalty, company reputation and ultimately the performance of the company. Consumers are highly concerned about the levels of privacy, security and anonymity within the online environment, and when the principles of a company with regards to this are not clearly announced, consumers become increasingly weary (Jun & Yang, 2008). Madu and Madu (2002) suggest that online services are delivered and operated in a highly reliable and dependable manner in order to build trust and convey confidence to customers. However, due to the lack of a physical entity and interpersonal contact while purchasing online, customers are especially concerned with the transaction’s safety (Gounaris, Dimitriadis & Stathakopoulos, 2005). Consumers cannot be sure as to the existence, credibility and trustworthiness of the company behind an online interface, especially when brand awareness around the company is low as it can play an important role in mitigating issues around trust and security.

Privacy has received considerable academic attention in online retailing (Yoo & Donthu, 2001; Loiacono, et al., 2002; Madu & Madu, 2002). Although privacy and security have been found by some not to influence perceptions of website quality significantly (Wolfinbarger & Gilly, 2003) or satisfaction with a website (Kim & Stoel, 2004), there has been much research that does support the importance of security/privacy in online retailing (Barnes & Vidgen, 2000; Szymanski & Hise, 2000; Ranganathan & Ganapathy, 2002; Santos, 2003). Security is perceived to be a critical dimension in terms of service quality or satisfaction, and is unique to the Internet environment (Szymanski & Hise, 2000; Yoo & Donthu, 2001). A lack of assurance of security has been regarded as the main barrier preventing customers from shopping online as was also found by Ranganathan and Ganapathy (2002), where privacy and security were found to have a significant impact on purchase intent. Moreover it has been proven that trust in the company and the e-service quality environment positively influences both service quality as a whole and customer satisfaction (Lee & Lin, 2005).
Security also refers to the attributes of privacy that are imperative for making transactions online (Zeithaml, et al., 2002b). Customers may worry that their personal and transactional information can be accessed or used over the Internet by third parties and this has been shown as major consumer concerns in previous studies (Hoffman, Novak, & Peralta, 1999). Privacy is a theme that has been picked up by a variety of authors such as Zeithaml, et al. (2002b) and they describe privacy as one of the key dimensions that consumers use to evaluate the quality of a website (or quality of e-service). In a similar vein, Stewart and Pavlou (2002) recognised concerns about privacy/security as being crucial for thinking about the effectiveness of interactive media (Parasuraman & Zinkhan, 2008). The ease of use of a website will affect a user’s intention in spite of a perceived increase in risk (Stem, Royne, Stafford & Bienstock, 2008). For example, to protect a user’s password from not being stolen, a company may ask users to set their password by mixing numerals and letters, in addition to changing their password regularly. This may however, increase the difficulty for users and deter their use intention (Arning & Ziefle, 2007; Hasan & Ahmed, 2007).

There is much academic discourse surrounding security, promise fulfillment, and confidence (Lynch & Lundquist, 1996; McCole, 2002; McKinsey & Co, 2002). Wilson (2000) found that many consumers consider that lack of security is the main inhibiting factor to adopting online purchase behaviour. Studies suggest that e-buyers’ trust is based upon their confidence in the relationship with the exchange partner (Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Urban, et al., 2000). Online retailers should stress the importance of the security and privacy concerns along the commercial transactions (Torkzadeh & Dhillon, 2002; Ranganathan & Ganapathy, 2002). Thus, it is natural to conclude that security is a crucial component of quality when considering online transactions.

3.7 INTERACTIVITY/PERSONALISATION

Interactivity relates to how the website responds to their customers in an online environment (Kaynama & Black, 2000; Madu & Madu, 2002; Zeithaml, et al., 2002a). For example, how queries or questions from customers are answered; be it quickly and efficiently. How can
customers’ needs and complaints be responded to via e-mail in a courteous way? Responsiveness can be defined as ‘effective handling of problems and returns through the site (Parasuraman, et al., 2005), as well as the willingness to help online customers. It can be measured by the time taken before replying to a customer’s inquiry (Watson, et al., 1998). Responsiveness measures online retailer’s ability to provide appropriate problem solving information to customers, having mechanisms for handling returns and providing online guarantees. Advances in the internet and computer technology leave little excuse for any delay in responding (Wan, 2000). Wan (2000) believes the issue of responsiveness can be seen in two ways: load time and search time. Search time mostly relies on the size of a database. Load time can be a problem, and most designers take this into consideration when designing web pages. Responsive website proves to be highly important to end-users and consumers expect online stores to respond to their inquires promptly (Robbins & Stylianou, 2003). Responsiveness describes how often an online store voluntarily provides services that are important to its customers (Parasuraman, et al., 1988; Yang, 2001; Kim & Lee, 2002).

Loiacono, et al. (2005) found that interactivity also predicts intentions and that it creates a dialogue between the customer and the website. Interactivity can be defined as “the extent to which users can participate and modify the form and content of a mediated environment in real time” (Steuer, 1992:84), and keeping customers informed and communicating with them in a language in which they understand (Santos, 2003). In other words, the extent to which a website can tailor-make services to fit individual customers’ needs or the extent to which the customised content of the website can provide a user with the relevant and up-to-date information that will meet the specific needs. This customisation dimension could involve individual designs for clients in accordance with their pattern of consumption and preferences which also results in an optimum online service, saves the customer time and increases their perception of service quality (Madu & Madu, 2002; Srinivasan, Anderson, & Ponnavolu, 2002). As well as activities such as e-mail, live customer services are available through chat, co-browsing and page pushing, as well as conventional channels such as telephone, fax and postal communications (Santos, 2003; Shaohan & Minjoon, 2003).

There is a lack of real-time interaction in the e-service environment. Personalisation or customisation results in media that better creates a virtual experience and stronger attitude; in
addition, interactivity and vividness are strong predictors of telepresence, an antecedent of flow, productivity and satisfaction (Coyle & Thorson, 2001; Mathwick & Rigdon, 2004). Examples of personalisation could involve sending post purchase e-mails and creating a personalised interactive environment online for each individual customer. Other aspects of personalisation involve means of customer interaction such as message boards and customer hotlines (Lee & Lin, 2005).

Personalisation is becoming more important to online service quality. Personalisation can be understood as the empathy dimension of SERVQUAL (Zeithaml, et al., 2002a). Giving customers personal attention, understanding the specific needs of customers, and providing service related to convenience can be considered as personalisation. Another aspect of the importance of information to customers involves the interactivity of some e-commerce sites. For instance, when making plane reservations, online buyers feel that they can more fully investigate options than they can offline. In addition, information can be printed out and saved, something that cannot be done based on a phone conversation with a travel agent (Wolfinbarger & Gilly, 2001).

The lack of real time interaction tends to prevent potential customers from purchasing through online shopping (Yang & Jun, 2002). Personalisation involves individualised attention, personal thank you notes from online stores, and the availability of a message area for customer questions or comments (Yang, 2001). Previous studies have examined the influence of the customer service provided by internet retailers on customer perceptions of service quality and satisfaction (Wolfinbarger & Gilly, 2003), however it has been found that personalisation in an online environment does not significantly increase overall e-service quality or customer satisfaction which has been linked to the fact that people are wary of providing personal information online for fears of it being used elsewhere. This has severely reduced the possibilities for personalisation as increasing levels of personalisation will be seen without high levels of trust (Lee & Lin, 2005). Table 3.1 below is illustrates the criteria which consists of particular points for each dimension that should be adhered to in order to have a successful website in the airline industry.
Table 3.1: Electronic service quality dimension criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information</th>
<th>Accurate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Timely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Current</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Precise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conscience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Understandable</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Meaningful</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reliable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Easily comparable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Value adding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Well presented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accessible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of Use</td>
<td>High usability (easy to use)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Easy to connect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Easy to download</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Speedily downloads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Simple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>User friendly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Easy ordering, payment &amp; cancellations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Free of effort to use/navigate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Easy navigation within website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Locate merchandise &amp; information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Design</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>---</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graphic style</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Look and feel of the website</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aesthetically pleasing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Colour</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Layout</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Print size</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Photographs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Animation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Presentation of content and information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Reliability</strong></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Performing promised service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Accurately</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Consistently</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequent updating of website</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prompt replies to customer enquiries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mistake free service
- Accurate online purchasing & billing
- Correction of errors

Delivery fulfillment (prompt delivery)

Ensuring links & buttons function correctly

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Security/Privacy</strong></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Promote security and privacy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide secure security &amp; payment methods</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operate reliably and dependably</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide assurance and confidentiality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be trustworthy, believable &amp; honest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protect customers information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide customer privacy policies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.8 CONCLUSION

Chapter three further elaborated on the six electronic service quality dimensions (information, design, ease of use, reliability, security/privacy & interactivity/personalisation). If a website wishes to be a success, they must ensure that all six of these dimensions are present for their customers. There have been various studies conducted on electronic service quality that emphasise that dimensions are important in one way or another. It is also important to note that of the six dimensions, some could be deemed more relevant and important depending on the industry. For the purpose of this study, elements deemed important and applicable in the airline industry for each particular electronic service quality dimension, have been identified and illustrated in Table 3.1.
CHAPTER 4
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter discussed the Service Quality Model and quality dimensions. This chapter presents the research design followed, the hypotheses and the selection of the research instrument used; its reliability and validity, sample choice, pilot study, data collection, response rate and the analysis and interpretation of data collected.

4.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Science is defined by the Webster’s Comprehensive Dictionary as “Knowledge as of facts, phenomena, laws, and proximate caused, gained and verified by exact observation, organised experiment, and correct thinking; also, the sum of universal knowledge. And also as an exact and systematic statement or classification of knowledge concerning some subject or group of subjects” (Webster’s comprehensive dictionary, 1998:1127). Neuman (2000) added a dimension by stating that science refers both to a system for producing knowledge and to the knowledge produced from that system. This system has evolved over many years and is slowly but constantly changing. It combines assumptions about the nature of the world and knowledge, an orientation towards knowledge, and sets of procedures, techniques and instruments for gaining knowledge. The outcome of scientific research, namely, scientific knowledge can be defined as the body of propositions (factual statements, hypotheses, models, theories, laws) which, at a specific time, is accepted by the scientific community as being valid and reasonably correct (Mouton, 1996).

There are two main research paradigms used in academic research, namely the positivistic and the phenomenological paradigm. The positivistic approach, also known as quantitative, objective, scientific, experimentalist and traditionalist approaches, consists of establishing a relationship between one or more variables, and then link the identified variables to theory, or
the findings of the empirical research (Collis & Hussey, 2003; De Vos, Strydom, Fouche, & Delport, 2005). In terms of the quantitative approach, hypotheses are formulated about the relationship/s between the variables. Data about these variables is collected through methods such as questionnaires, focus groups, interviews, case studies and experiments (Dayan, 2003). The relationships between the variables are measured by means of statistical methods such as multiple regression analysis, structural equation analysis and correlation analysis (Struwig & Stead, 2001).

The phenomenological paradigm, also known as qualitative, subjectivist, humanistic and interpretivist approaches, is concerned with the understanding of human behaviour from the participant’s own frame of reference, in other words, the study attempts to understand peoples’ perceptions, perspectives and understanding of a particular situation or reality within them, and therefore the act of investigating the reality has an effect on that reality. This qualitative approach stresses the subjective aspects of human activity by focusing on the meaning, rather than the measurement of a phenomenon (Collis & Hussey, 2003). Qualitative research methods used under this approach are “an array of interpretative techniques which seek to describe, translate and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world” (Van Maanen, 1983: 9). Qualitative research concerns itself with approaches, such as ecological psychology, symbolic interactionism and postmodernism, and employ statistical methods, such as observation, archival source analysis, interviews, focus groups and content analysis (Struwig & Stead, 2001).

The research objective of this study was to identify and investigate the dimensions of service quality in an online context and to try to understand how these dimensions could contribute to customer satisfaction and behavioural intent. The two above mentioned research paradigms were taken into consideration and the positivistic or quantitative approach was selected.

The methodology of this study is concerned with the following six main issues, namely: why certain data was collected, what data was collected, from where was the data collected, when the data was collected, how the data was collected and how the data will be analysed.

- why certain data was collected: specific data was collected to address the studies research objectives
what data was collected – the data collected was the respondent’s personal assessment or rating of their chosen airline’s website

from where the data was collected – the data was collected from distributed questionnaires (hardcopy and electronic copy) that were tested for reliability and validity, as well as also ethically cleared by the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University Ethics Committee

when the data was collected – data was collected during the months of September – November 2010

how the data was collected – hard copies of the questionnaire were printed and distributed to willing individuals (passengers) at the Port Elizabeth International Airport, who were waiting to board their flight, to business individuals who fly regularly for work purposes, as well as to individuals who are in the travel and tourism industry

how the data will be analysed – the data collected will be analysed by way of statistical analysis with the aid of the SPSS software program.

4.3 PILOT STUDY

The amended questionnaire was piloted to test for reliability and validity and was circulated to 20 individuals who included Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University MBA students, as well as individuals known by the researcher who had recently purchased an airline ticket via an airline’s website. An e-mail was circulated with the help of Mrs. Luella Van Wyk the MBA course coordinator at the NMMU Business School to MBA students. The e-mail had a brief message requesting students who met the study’s criteria to take a few minutes to complete the attached questionnaire. Attached to the e-mail the students found a Microsoft Word and Adobe PDF version of the questionnaire and were encouraged to make use of the version which best suited them. For example, respondents who opted to make use of the Word document highlighted their answers and returned the completed questionnaire and returned it to the researcher via e-mail. The data collected from the 20 respondents was then entered into an Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and calculations were conducted with the use of the SPSS software.
The reliability of the questionnaire was tested by the calculation of its Cronbach alpha coefficients. The following Cronbach alpha coefficients were returned (also presented in Table 4.1), namely; information (0.91); design (0.92); ease of use (0.93); security/privacy (0.90); interactivity/personalisation (0.75); reliability (0.89); satisfaction (0.98); and behavioural intent (0.86). A few respondents who took part in the pilot study freely supplied some friendly feedback on the questionnaires. The main topic that was highlighted was that it seemed as if some of the questions asked the same thing, however in a different way. The researcher was well aware of this fact, yet, in light of the Cronbach alpha results the amended measuring instrument produced, did not feel that any further amendments were required.

Table 4.1: Pilot study reliability results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Alpha</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>0.913</td>
<td>27.31</td>
<td>5.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>0.925</td>
<td>28.73</td>
<td>6.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of Use</td>
<td>0.933</td>
<td>29.21</td>
<td>6.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>0.891</td>
<td>39.47</td>
<td>8.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security / Privacy</td>
<td>0.900</td>
<td>28.95</td>
<td>5.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactivity / Personalisation</td>
<td>0.750</td>
<td>24.00</td>
<td>5.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>0.982</td>
<td>24.36</td>
<td>5.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioural Intention</td>
<td>0.869</td>
<td>27.55</td>
<td>5.46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.4 THE MEASURING INSTRUMENT

During the literature review, various measuring instruments were researched and reviewed. However, in light of the nature of this study only one was found to be appropriate for use and
that was the NetQual measuring instrument, constructed to measure online service quality created by marketing Professor Gregory Bressolles at the Bordeaux Management School in France. The original NetQual instrument is made up of multiple scale items of which reliability and validity were found to be high in numerous studies (Bressolles, 2006; Guertin & Nantel, 2007). The original questionnaire contained two sections. Section one comprised of 31 questions, which addressed the service quality dimensions, namely; information, design, ease of use, security/privacy, interactivity/personalisation, reliability and satisfaction. Responses were measured on a five-point likert scale ranging from 1=Strongly Disagree to 5= Strongly Agree. Section two comprised of 15 questions that addressed and gathered various information on the respondents’ internet and online purchasing behaviour, as well as other personal information, such as gender, age, profession, marital status, nationality and annual income. Respondents were requested to select the option which was most applicable to them.

Due to the nature of the study, various elements in the original questionnaire were not thought to be applicable, such as offer, customer value and past experiences on a site, and were therefore removed. A further dimension of buying intention was added. Each dimension varied with the amount of questions it contained and on some valuable advice from her supervisor the researcher ensured that each dimension contained at least eight questions. For the most part, this was achieved, apart from the seventh dimension of buying intention of which there were only seven questions and the satisfaction dimension of where two questions were added totalling six questions for the satisfaction dimension. Section one of the amended questionnaire comprised of 64 questions which addressed the service quality dimensions, namely; information, design, ease of use, security/privacy, interactivity/personalisation, reliability, satisfaction and behavioural intention. Responses were measured in an anchored five-point likert scale ranging from 1=Strongly Disagree to 5= Strongly Agree. Respondents who fulfilled the study’s criteria were asked to indicate on the questions below the extent to which they honestly agreed or disagreed with each statement, which addressed various elements related to website quality.

The amended section two was made up of eight questions that addressed and gathered various information on each respondent’s’ internet and online purchasing behaviour, as well as very limited personal information, such as gender, age, profession, marital status and education level.
Respondents were requested to select the option which was most applicable to them. The amended measuring instrument is attached as Appendix A.

Table 4.2 illustrates the questionnaire items which were kept from the original NetQual questionnaire, which items were adapted / modified from other studies, and the items that were created by the researcher and her supervisor for this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Original/New item</th>
<th>Adapted / Modified from:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Information</strong></td>
<td>This site provides detailed information about the product/s or service/s offered</td>
<td>original item</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The information on this site is relevant</td>
<td>original item</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The information on this site is precise</td>
<td>original item</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The information on this site fulfils my needs</td>
<td>original item</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The information on this site is easy to understand</td>
<td>original item</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The information on the site is easy to find</td>
<td>new item</td>
<td>Parasuraman, Zeithaml, Malhotra, 2005 (modified)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The information on the site is always available</td>
<td>new item</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The information on the site is consistent</td>
<td>new item</td>
<td>Park &amp; Kim, 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Design</strong></td>
<td>This site shows creativity</td>
<td>original item</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This site offers good illustrations of the products (or services sold)</td>
<td>original item</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This site is visually attractive</td>
<td>original item</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The design is appropriate for this type of site</td>
<td>original item</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension</td>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Original/New item</td>
<td>Adapted / Modified from:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>----------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The user interface on the airline website has a well-organised appearance</td>
<td>new item</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It is simple, easy and quick] to complete a transaction on the website</td>
<td>new item</td>
<td>Parasuraman, et al., 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The site is pretty</td>
<td>new item</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The site is colourful</td>
<td>new item</td>
<td>Yoo &amp; Donthu, 2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of Use</td>
<td>This site is easy to use</td>
<td>original item</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It is easy to search for information on this site</td>
<td>original item</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It is easy to navigate and to find what you are looking for on this site</td>
<td>original item</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The organisation and layout of this site makes it easier to search for information</td>
<td>original item</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The layout of the site is clear and simple</td>
<td>original item</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It is easy to access the results of my search</td>
<td>new item</td>
<td>Guertin &amp; Nantel, 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I can complete my transactions quickly</td>
<td>new item</td>
<td>Parasuraman, et al., 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The site enables me to get onto it quickly (loads fast)</td>
<td>new item</td>
<td>Yoo &amp; Donthu, 2001 (modified)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security/Privacy</td>
<td>I trust the overall security of the site</td>
<td>original item</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This site offers functionality which makes it more secure</td>
<td>original item</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I think that my private life and my financial information are protected on this site</td>
<td>original item</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I trust this site not to misuse my personal information</td>
<td>original item</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The site protects information about my shopping behaviour</td>
<td>new item</td>
<td>Chiu, Chang, Cheng &amp; Fang, 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension</td>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Original/New item</td>
<td>Adapted / Modified from:</td>
</tr>
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<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The site provides detailed information about security</td>
<td>new item</td>
<td>Park &amp; Kim, 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am afraid that my private information will be used in an unwanted manner</td>
<td>new item</td>
<td>Park &amp; Kim, 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I feel confident that goods/services will be delivered as promised</td>
<td>new item</td>
<td>Parasuraman, et al., 2005(modified)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactivity / Personalisation</td>
<td>I can interact with this site to receive personalized information</td>
<td>original item</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This site has interactive functions which help me to navigate</td>
<td>original item</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This site records my preferences and offers me extra services or information based on these preferences</td>
<td>original item</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I can contact the company easily through this site</td>
<td>original item</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I have fun when interacting with the website</td>
<td>new item</td>
<td>Chiu, Chang, Cheng &amp; Fang, 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The website offers the ability to speak to a live person if there is a problem</td>
<td>new item</td>
<td>Chiu, Chang, Cheng &amp; Fang, 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The website tells me what to do if my transaction is not processed</td>
<td>new item</td>
<td>Chiu, Chang, Cheng &amp; Fang, 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The website has customer service representatives available online</td>
<td>new item</td>
<td>Chiu, Chang, Cheng &amp; Fang, 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>This site provides information about delivery dates</td>
<td>original item</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This site gives indications of product availability (quantities in stock)</td>
<td>original item</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This site offers several types of delivery</td>
<td>original item</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This site explains the stages of the order process in detail</td>
<td>original item</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This site provides the contact details for customer services (e-mail, phone)</td>
<td>original item</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The information on the website is reliable</td>
<td>new item</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension</td>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Original/New item</td>
<td>Adapted / Modified from:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I feel safe logging on the website</td>
<td>new item</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The website is available for business</td>
<td>new item</td>
<td>Parasuraman, et al., 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The website launches and runs straight away</td>
<td>new item</td>
<td>Chiu, Chang, Cheng &amp; Fang, 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The website does not crash</td>
<td>new item</td>
<td>Chiu, Chang, Cheng &amp; Fang, 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The website has adequate security</td>
<td>new item</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Satisfaction</strong></td>
<td>Would you say that overall this site…?</td>
<td>original item</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Would you recommend this site to a friend?</td>
<td>original item</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Would you like to visit the site again in the future?</td>
<td>original item</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Would you like to purchase from this site again?</td>
<td>original item</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I am satisfied with the product[s] and service[s] offered on this site</td>
<td>new item</td>
<td>Guertin &amp; Nantel, 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I strongly recommend that others use the online website</td>
<td>new item</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Buying Intention</strong></td>
<td>If I could, I will continue using the website to purchase product/s and service/s</td>
<td>new item</td>
<td>Chiu, Chang, Cheng &amp; Fang, 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It is likely that I will continue to purchase products from the website in the future.</td>
<td>new item</td>
<td>Guertin &amp; Nantel, 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I intend to continue purchasing products from the website in the future</td>
<td>new item</td>
<td>Guertin &amp; Nantel, 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I will visit this website when I want to compare prices</td>
<td>new item</td>
<td>Dr. Oren Dayan, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I will visit this website when I want to purchase air tickets</td>
<td>new item</td>
<td>Dr. Oren Dayan, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I will consider this website to be my first choice for future transactions</td>
<td>new item</td>
<td>Dr. Oren Dayan, 2010</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 4.5 RELIABILITY OF THE MEASURING INSTRUMENT

Reliability is concerned with the findings of the research and if the research findings can be repeated, it is then considered to be reliable (Collis & Hussey, 2003). There are three common methods used to test for reliability of questions in questionnaires, namely: the test re-test method, the split-halves method and the internal consistency method.

#### 4.5.1 Test re-test method

To determine the test re-test reliability of a measuring instrument, a single instrument is developed and administered to members of a sample group on two or more occasions, with a reasonable period of interval between the occasions. If the instrument is consistent, it will return the same results and is then said to have test re-test reliability. The time that lapses between the administrations should be long enough to ensure that respondents do not remember or cannot recall their initial answers given, however it should not be too long as to prevent any real and permanent changes from taking place that will affect the measurement of the attribute (Welman, Kruger, & Mitchell, 2005).

#### 4.5.2 Split-halves method

To determine the split-halves reliability of a measuring instrument, a single instrument is developed and then divided into two equal halves. Each half is administered to the same group on different occasions and the scores of one half of the test are correlated with the scores for the other half of the test. When the correlation coefficients are calculated and analysed, and the two halves correlate highly with each other, the instrument is then said to have split-half reliability (Welman, et al., 2005).
4.5.3 Internal consistency method

Internal consistency is the extent of an instrument and the different items within that instrument to measure the same variables. Every item was correlated with every other item across the entire sample, and the average inter-item correlation was taken as the index of reliability. To determine the reliability of a measuring instrument by using the internal consistency method, the test was administered only once to a large representative sample. Data was analysed with Cronbach’s coefficient alpha, which is a measure of the internal consistency of a measuring instrument. The purpose was to show the degree to which all items in the measuring instrument, measured the same attribute. Although this approach is a popular method, the reliability of the results, where questions have been used as the basis of the data collection method, requires substantial computing facilities and software (Collis & Hussey, 2003; Welman, et al., 2005).

4.5.4 Cronbach Alpha Coefficient

Cronbach’s Alpha Coefficient measures the reliability of an instrument. Reliability can be expressed in terms of stability, equivalence, and consistency. Unlike other methods used to determine stability, only a single test is needed for estimating internal consistency. Cronbach Coefficient Alpha is a measure of squared correlation between true scores and observed scores (Yu, 2001). The value of Alpha ($\alpha$) can range from 0 and 1 and the closer Alpha is to 1, the higher the internal consistency (Sekaran, 2003). The Cronbach Alpha Coefficient was used to calculate the internal consistency of the measuring instrument in the present study.

4.6 VALIDITY OF THE MEASURING INSTRUMENT

Validity is the extent to which the research findings accurately represent what is really happening in the situation, or if the data collected is a true picture of what is being studied. Positivistic studies focus on the correctness of measurement and the ability to be able to repeat an experiment’s outcome. So, if errors occur such as, faulty research procedures, poor samples and inaccurate or misleading measurement occur, validity will then be low (Collis & Hussey, 2003). Validity has two aspects: the instrument actually measures the concepts in question, and the
concept is measured correctly (De Vos, et al., 2005). There are various ways in which validity can be measured and include, content validity, face validity, criterion validity and construct validity.

4.6.1 Content validity

Content validity is concerned with the representativeness of the content of an instrument (De Vos, et al., 2005), in other words content validity ensures that the items on/in the measuring instrument fit or match with the aims or objectives of the study. According to Monette, Sullivan and DeJong (2002), it has to do with whether the measuring instrument covers the full range of meanings or forms that would be included in a variable being measured. In other words, a valid measuring instrument would provide an adequate, or representative, sample of all content, or elements, or instances of the phenomenon being measured (DeVos, et al., 2005). For the purpose of this study content validity was used.

4.6.2 Face validity

Gravetter and Forzano (2008) suggested that face validity is the simplest and least scientific definition of validity and it is concerned with the superficial appearance or face value of a measurement method. Methodologists claim that face validity is not technically a form of validation, since it does not refer to what an instrument actually measures but rather to what it appears to measure, in other words it appears relevant to those who will complete or administer it. Therefore, it is important to structure the measuring instrument so that it not only accurately measures the attributes under consideration, but also appears to be a relevant measure of those attributes (De Vos, et al. 2005). According to Gebeshuber (2008) there are certain elements that enhance the measuring instruments face validity namely; correctness of language and grammar, avoidance of unnecessary technical errors and ensuring that the measuring instrument is professionally presented and reflects the subject matter under investigation. For the purpose of this study face validity was used.
4.6.3 Criterion validity

Criterion validity provides more objective evidence of validity (De Vos, et al., 2005). This method involves comparing the results from the developed research instrument with other research instruments used in previous studies that are known to measure the same concept being studied. It is essential in this approach to validation that there be one or more external or independent criteria against which the scores can be compared. If the same or similar results are achieved when compared to the external criteria, then the instrument is said to have criterion related validity.

4.6.4 Construct validity

Construct validity is perhaps the most difficult validity to establish because it involves determining the degree to which an instrument successfully measures a concept or idea. It is concerned with the meaning of an instrument, for example, what it is measuring and how and why it operates the way it does. It involves not only validation of the instrument itself, but also the validation of the underlying theory (De Vos, et al., 2005). To establish construct validity, the meaning of the construct must be understood and that all items in the instrument taken together are explicitly based on one or more theoretical frameworks that underpin the subject matter of the investigation.

4.7 INTERNAL RELIABILITY OF MEASURING INSTRUMENT

Table 4.3 below shows the measuring instrument Alpha Coefficient values for the pilot study and post pilot study. The lowest score returned was for the interactivity/personalisation dimension and was 0.84. The Information dimension produced an Alpha Coefficient of 0.92; the design dimension produced and Alpha Coefficient of 0.88 which is lower than the pilot study value of 0.92. The ease of use dimension returned an Alpha Coefficient of 0.91; the security/privacy dimension returned an Alpha Coefficient of 0.89; the reliability dimension returned an Alpha Coefficient of 0.87 and lastly; the satisfaction dimension returned an Alpha Coefficient of 0.89.
Table 4.3: Cronbach Alpha Coefficient values of measuring instrument

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measuring Instrument Dimensions</th>
<th>Pilot study values</th>
<th>Post pilot study values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>information</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>design</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ease of use</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>security/privacy</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interactivity/personalisation</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reliability</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>satisfaction</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>behavioural intent</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The concepts of reliability and validity are important to understand and observe in the development and the administration of an instrument, as the results of research can be rendered useless and meaningless if the instrument used for data collection is not valid or reliable (in-text).

Table 4.4: Reliability results of distributed questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std Deviation</th>
<th>Alpha</th>
<th>Standardised Alpha</th>
<th>Inter-Item correlation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>information</td>
<td>31.54</td>
<td>5.75</td>
<td>0.920</td>
<td>0.916</td>
<td>0.583</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>design</td>
<td>29.40</td>
<td>5.60</td>
<td>0.883</td>
<td>0.887</td>
<td>0.501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ease of use</td>
<td>34.25</td>
<td>6.42</td>
<td>0.913</td>
<td>0.915</td>
<td>0.552</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reliability</td>
<td>40.58</td>
<td>7.34</td>
<td>0.870</td>
<td>0.878</td>
<td>0.405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>security / privacy</td>
<td>29.00</td>
<td>5.91</td>
<td>0.887</td>
<td>0.887</td>
<td>0.507</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Std Deviation</td>
<td>Alpha</td>
<td>Standardised Alpha</td>
<td>Inter-Item correlation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interactivity / personalisation</td>
<td>25.48</td>
<td>5.98</td>
<td>0.844</td>
<td>0.845</td>
<td>0.409</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>satisfaction</td>
<td>24.23</td>
<td>4.92</td>
<td>0.953</td>
<td>0.954</td>
<td>0.782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>behavioural intent</td>
<td>27.64</td>
<td>5.28</td>
<td>0.888</td>
<td>0.891</td>
<td>0.546</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.8 DATA COLLECTION

Data collection was carried out in the form of a questionnaire survey addressing the electronic service quality of airline websites. The pilot study testing was accomplished by administering the questionnaire to MBA academics as well as individuals who were known to have recently made use of an airline’s website to book their ticket. Results obtained from the pilot study were highly favourable, however, minor changes were made to the instructions given to the respondents.

4.8.1 Sample

Based on the airline industries size and the entire passenger airline population, which according to Flight International (2004) comprises of approximately 1 200 airlines, the sampling method selected for the purpose of this study was stratified sampling. Stratified random sampling is suitable for heterogeneous populations because it ensures the inclusion of smaller subgroups (Van der Walt, 1984). Stratification consists of the population being divided into a number of strata which are mutually exclusive, and the members of which are homogeneous with regard to some characteristics such as gender, language and age (Glicken, 2003; Mitchell & Jolley, 2001). Stratified sampling overcomes the problem of some members of the population being over-and underrepresented (Collis & Hussey, 2003). The main advantages of stratified sampling include that all essentional sub-groups are included in the investigation, it is time-saving , fewer people are required to participate in the study, as well as it being directed towards particular geographical
locations and individuals available. Sampling is cost effective as less time and fewer people are required to collect and analyse data.

4.8.2 Questionnaire distribution

The amended questionnaire was distributed to 185 respondents in total. Questionnaires distributed at the Port Elizabeth International Airport were collected over the course of one day. The handouts distributed to various parties, respondents at FNB, ABSA, Flight Center and Virgin Active were collected over the course of four days. Online requests and friendly reminders to relatives and friends were sent out via e-mail during the months of October and November. Questionnaires had to be distributed by hand and electronically to individuals as previous methods to obtain respondents were unsuccessful. Refer to figure 4.1.

![Questionnaire Distribution](image)

**Figure 4.1: Questionnaire distribution**
Table 4.5 presents the demographic characteristics of the study sample. The sample population had more females (52.43\%) than males (47.56\%). The ages of the respondents ranged from 18 to 65\+ years old and the largest category was from 25 – 34 years of age (36.21\%), followed closely by the category of 34 – 44 years of age which had a response of 32.43\%.

With regard to respondent profession, 34.07\% were currently in lower management, 27.37\% of respondents were retired and 18.99\% of respondents were staff. Six respondents did not indicate their current profession. Education was the next category, and 35.13\% of respondents had completed their doctorates, 27.56\% had completed their undergraduate studies, and 18.9\% of respondents had completed high school.

Of the total sample, 36.21\% were single living with a child/children, and 23.78\% of respondents were living with their partner and child/children. 35.67\% of respondents were currently residing with their partners, while 4.32\% of the respondents were presently single.

Table 4.6 presents the respondents online activity data. 84.54\% of respondents reported that they had made use of the Internet for longer than five years, while 28.26\% reported making purchases over the Internet for the last four to five years. 23.91\% reported making purchases over the net for five to eight years, and 21.73\% said that they had been making purchases online for over eight years. One respondent did not indicate if, or for how long they had made use of the internet to make any purchases online.

Table 4.5: Characteristics of study sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Variable</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>47.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>52.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographic Variable</td>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>185</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Under 18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18 – 24</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25 – 34</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>36.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>34 - 44</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>32.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45 - 54</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>15.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>55 - 64</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>65 and over</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>185</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profession</td>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>18.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lower management</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>34.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Middle management</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Higher management</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>27.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>185</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Level</td>
<td>High School</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>18.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>27.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Demographic Variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>35.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to say</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>185</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Marital Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single with child/children</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>36.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living with partner</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>35.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living with partner and child/children</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>23.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>185</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

Table 4.6: Respondents online activity characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Variable</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internet Duration</td>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 to 2 years</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 to 3 years</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 to 5 years</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographic Variable</td>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More than 5 years</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>80.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>185</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase Duration</td>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 to 2 years</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 to 3 years</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 to 5 years</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>28.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 to 8 years</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>23.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More than 8 years</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>21.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>185</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Purchases</td>
<td>1 to 2 times</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>23.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 to 5 times</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>31.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 to 10 times</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>31.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More than 10 times</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>185</td>
<td>100 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
With regard to online purchases made in the last 12 months, two categories scored identical results. 31.69% of respondents reported that they had made between three and five purchases over the Internet in the last 12 months, while 31.69% of respondents reported that they had made between five and 10 purchases over the Internet in the past 12 months. 23.49% of the sample reported making between one and two online purchases in the 12 month period, while 13.11% had made more than 10 online purchases in the past 12 months. Two respondents did not indicate the amount of purchases, if any made over the 12 month period.

4.10 DATA ANALYSIS

Data retrieved from questionnaires was analysed in three ways. First, the response rate and overall validity of the results was analysed. According to Collis and Hussey (2003) “validity is the extent to which the findings of the research accurately represent what is actually happening.” Secondly, an assessment of the internal consistency of the measuring instrument was conducted using Cronbach’s Alpha Coefficient Analysis. Reliability concentrates on the findings of the research, and represents the trustworthiness of the findings. Therefore, research findings are considered reliable if they can be repeated (Collis & Hussey, 2003). Thirdly, correlation and regression analysis were performed on collected data.

4.11 RESPONSE RATE

The desired response rate sought was 1000 respondents. However, the initial methods employed to obtain respondents turned out to be fruitless. Other distribution methods were employed and 200 questionnaires were printed and distributed. A total of 186 questionnaires were returned. Of the 186 returned questionnaires, 185 were comprehensively completed and were usable for statistical analysis. Figure 4.2 illustrates the response rate.
4.11.1 Potential Reasons for Low Response Rate

The following are potential reasons as to why the response rate was lower than expected, namely; that passenger and potential respondents who were approached were unwilling to complete the questionnaire; passengers and potential respondents who were approached were unable to complete the questionnaire as they did not meet the study’s criteria by booking their ticket online, potential respondents may have found the questionnaire to be too lengthy, potential respondents, particularly respondents who were approached at the airport, may have been pressed for time and lastly; the internet penetration rate in SA is low and therefore could be a main contributing factor to why many travelers still make use of an agents service and not the internet.

Figure 4.2: Questionnaire response rate
This chapter discussed the research methodology. More specifically, the processes employed and the results of the pilot study, the validity and reliability of the distributed measuring instrument as well as the data collection and analysis methods. The pilot study revealed strong Cronbach Alpha Coefficient results which further established the measuring instruments reliability and validity. Also presented in this chapter are the respondent’s demographic and online characteristics. The empirical results are presented and discussed in Chapter 5.
5.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study is to investigate and identify the dimensions of online service quality and to understand how these dimensions contribute to customer satisfaction and behavioural intent. To achieve this, hypotheses were formulated about the possible relationships between the variables. The previous chapter discussed the methodology employed to test the formulated hypotheses. In chapter 5, the empirical results are presented and analysed. The data collected from respondents was thoroughly tested with SPSS in order to generate statistical results which could then be easily analysed and interpreted. The main statistical methods used were the determination of Cronbach Alpha Coefficients, Reliability Reports, Correlation and Regression Analysis.

5.2 THE EMPIRICAL RESULTS

The first step taken to test the electronic service quality was to perform an item reliability analysis. An item-reliability analysis is apt for testing of this nature as it gives the researcher a clear indication of the internal reliability of the constructs and helps to ascertain whether the variables are in fact all testing the same underlying construct. This is particularly important in the field of exploratory research where models, concepts and constructs are to a large degree previously untested. Included in this studies initial analysis, were all variables relating to the constructs.

A correlation analysis was conducted to understand the relationships between the variables and to assist in providing explanations for the regression analysis results. Lastly, a regression analysis was used to test the formulated hypotheses illustrated on the theoretical model with the use of SPSS computer software. The six electronic service quality sub-dimensions (information,
design, ease of use, reliability, security/privacy, interactivity/personalisation) were all grouped together to make up the satisfaction (SAT) dimension. The reason for this was simple; the better each sub-dimension was fulfilled, meaning that all important elements in that sub-dimension were present, the more that particular sub-dimension would contribute to the overall satisfaction experienced.

5.3 SERVICE QUALITY AND SATISFACTION

$H0^1$: Service Quality exerts no influence on satisfaction which comprises of the six sub dimensions of electronic service quality (information, ease of use, design, reliability, security/privacy and interactivity/personalisation) and make up the satisfaction dimension.

The hypotheses addressed the issue of whether a relationship exists between service quality and customer satisfaction. To establish if this hypothesis is true or false a correlation analysis was performed between overall service quality and satisfaction. The results illustrated in Table 5.1 indicate that there was a positive association between the two variables of service quality and satisfaction. So the better the airlines online service quality, the more satisfied the consumer would be. The correlation coefficient returned was 0.866, $p < 0.05$. Both Cai and Jun (2003) and Zeithaml, et al. (2000) stated that service quality is one of the key determinants of online success and bases it on the following: the service quality of online retailers greatly influencing customer satisfaction and the intention to shop online in the future, and online retailer’s service quality being crucial in attracting potential customers. Service quality and customer service and satisfaction play a vital role in the success and survival of internet sites and are key elements in achieving success. Wolfinbarger and Gilly (2003) also identified a positive link between satisfaction and service quality.
Table 5.1: Correlation analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>INFO</th>
<th>EOFU</th>
<th>DES</th>
<th>RELB</th>
<th>SEC</th>
<th>INTER</th>
<th>SAT</th>
<th>SAT-SQ</th>
<th>BINT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INFO</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.783</td>
<td>0.783</td>
<td>0.827</td>
<td>0.685</td>
<td>0.694</td>
<td>0.907</td>
<td>0.820</td>
<td>0.872</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EOFU</td>
<td>0.902</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.880</td>
<td>0.845</td>
<td>0.700</td>
<td>0.754</td>
<td>0.943</td>
<td>0.853</td>
<td>0.856</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DES</td>
<td>0.783</td>
<td>0.880</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.766</td>
<td>0.652</td>
<td>0.778</td>
<td>0.902</td>
<td>0.807</td>
<td>0.760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELB</td>
<td>0.827</td>
<td>0.845</td>
<td>0.766</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.788</td>
<td>0.749</td>
<td>0.922</td>
<td>0.805</td>
<td>0.779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEC</td>
<td>0.685</td>
<td>0.700</td>
<td>0.652</td>
<td>0.766</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.677</td>
<td>0.837</td>
<td>0.691</td>
<td>0.667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTER</td>
<td>0.694</td>
<td>0.754</td>
<td>0.778</td>
<td>0.749</td>
<td>0.677</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.867</td>
<td>0.689</td>
<td>0.689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT</td>
<td>0.907</td>
<td>0.943</td>
<td>0.902</td>
<td>0.922</td>
<td>0.837</td>
<td>0.867</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.866</td>
<td>0.858</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT-SQ</td>
<td>0.820</td>
<td>0.853</td>
<td>0.807</td>
<td>0.805</td>
<td>0.691</td>
<td>0.689</td>
<td>0.866</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BINT</td>
<td>0.872</td>
<td>0.856</td>
<td>0.760</td>
<td>0.779</td>
<td>0.667</td>
<td>0.689</td>
<td>0.858</td>
<td>0.853</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.945</td>
<td>0.708</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.685</td>
<td>0.702</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>0.738</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>0.677</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.612</td>
<td>0.737</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.153</td>
<td>0.757</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.639</td>
<td>0.645</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.045</td>
<td>0.817</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.924</td>
<td>0.787</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Marked correlations are significant at p < .05
The results of the multiple regression analysis are illustrated in Table 5.2. The table shows that service quality was significantly related to satisfaction (r = 0.997, p < 0.000). This regression equation accounted for 99.5% of the variance of the dependent variable SAT-SQ. Two of the independent variables, Reliability (p < 0.006) and Interactivity (p < 0.009), had a statistically significant and therefore positive relationships with the overall service quality. This means that if these two factors are emphasised more strongly, airline websites will achieve higher levels of satisfaction. The null hypothesis (HO¹) that service quality exerts no influence on satisfaction is rejected, while the hypothesis H1 is accepted as service quality influenced satisfaction which comprises of the six sub dimensions of electronic service quality (information, ease of use, design, reliability, security/privacy & interactivity/personalisation) which make up the satisfaction dimension.

Table 5.2: Regression analysis (SQ-SAT)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>Adjusted R²</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Std Error of Estimate</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SAT-SQ</td>
<td>0.997</td>
<td>0.995</td>
<td>0.995</td>
<td>6.179</td>
<td>0.5013</td>
<td>8.92</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To re-cap the reliability dimension is made up of three smaller sub-dimensions. Firstly, reliability refers to the ability to perform the promised service accurately and consistently, which includes frequently updating the website, prompt replies to enquiries and prompt deliveries as well as keeping personal information secure (Janda, et al., 2002; Kim & Lee, 2002; Van Riel, et al., 2003). It is imperative for companies that offer online shopping facilities to do two things. Firstly, they must be accurate when it comes to billing, updating details of their website as well as when dealing with customer enquiries. Secondly, to be prompt when delivering their service. Online stores must provide mistake free service (billing for correct products ordered) and secure online transactions in order to make their customers feel comfortable when making use of a websites online shopping facilities which will encourage their return and re-use of the website (Lee & Lin, 2005).
The second element addresses Availability and refers to the extent to which the services provided on or by the website can be obtained and used, as well as the correct technical functioning of the site (Parasuraman, et al., 2005). This refers to how well equipped the website is in providing customers with their wanted products/services that they are trying to locate through the use of listing useful links to other webpages which will help facilitate the customers purchase decision. Fram and Grady (1995) found that when customers are viewing a website for browsing or purchasing purposes, missing links, non-working buttons and long waiting periods for a website’s page to load will lead to frustration (Appendix C). Weinberg (2000) found that when a site’s loading times exceeds the time that the web user is willing to wait, the user will then redirect the web browser to another website or quit using the website all together.

The last sub-dimension refers to delivery fulfillment and is related to a websites success in delivering products/services as well as it’s willingness to correct mistakes that occur during transactions. When customers are notified that the item they have already selected is out of stock, they will then display strong negative emotions and lower purchase intent than if they had been notified before their selection (Kim & Lennon, 2004) so therefore the filling of orders accurately and keeping service promises were primary service quality elements that lead to a customer being satisfied as found by Yang & Fang (2004). An example of this would be to indicate on the airlines website which flights have been sold out before the customer makes their selection (Appendix D). Various studies have ascertained that Reliability has a direct positive effect on customer satisfaction and service quality (Zhu, et al., 2002; Lee & Lin, 2005) therefore adding more validity to the studies findings.

Interactivity relates to how the website responds to it’s customers in an online environment, so how customers queries, questions and complaints are answered and dealt with in a courteous manner as well as the degree to which a dialogue can be generated between the customer, the website and company and the extent to which users can participate and modify the content of a website in real time. (Kaynama & Black, 2000; Madu & Madu, 2002; Zeithaml, et al., 2002a). It is important for users to be able to modify, tailor or customise services to fit their individual needs for example a customer who purchases an airline ticket through the airlines website should be able to select the date and time that they wish to fly as well as a payment method.
(Appendix E & F). Other options which are now made available to customers through airline websites is the choice of booking rental cars or holiday packages at discounted rates. This dimension overlaps to some extent with the responsiveness dimension of Zeithaml, et al. (2002). Robbins and Stylianou (2003) found that responsiveness is highly important to website users and consumers and they expect online stores to respond to their inquiries promptly therefore initiating interactivity which was found to predict customer intentions by Loiacono, et al. (2002).

The results of the regression analysis on customer satisfaction are displayed in Table 5.3. The model explained a high 99.6% of the variance in service quality. The results of the regression analysis shows that SAT (0.998, p < 0.000) positively affects service quality which provides support in rejecting the hypothesis. This indicates that customer satisfaction is an important element when one wants to achieve service quality.

Table 5.3: Regression analysis (SAT-SQ)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>Adjusted R²</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Std Error of Estimate</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SAT</td>
<td>0.998</td>
<td>0.996</td>
<td>0.996</td>
<td>1.184</td>
<td>0.414</td>
<td>234.53</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>β*</th>
<th>Std of error β*</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>Std error of β</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.998</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>0.996</td>
<td>0.004</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.4 SERVICE QUALITY AND BEHAVIOURAL INTENT

**H0²**: *The six dimensions of electronic service quality exert no influence on behavioural intent.*

The results of the regression analysis are illustrated in Table 5.4. This regression analysis explains 73.61% of the variance of the electronic service quality dimensions of satisfaction. A p-value of 0.00 showed a strong relationship between the electronic service quality dimensions and
their influence on behavioural intent. Several studies on service quality in physical encounters were identified and it was found that some factors are responsible for a customer’s perception of quality which could be likely to lead to customer satisfaction which in turn could lead to behavioural intentions to purchase (Zhang & Prybutok, 2005). Both Parasuraman, et al. (1988) and Zeithaml, et al. (1996) found a positive relationship between service quality and behavioural intentions. High service quality as perceived by customers was found to often lead to favourable behavioural intentions while low service quality tends to lead to unfavourable behavioural intentions (Zeithaml, et al., 1996). The more positive the customers experience, the more likely the customers are satisfied with the service quality they receive, and the more likely they will re-use the service (Zhang & Prybutok, 2005).

One dimension, ease of use scored considerably high (0.853) which indicated that this dimension is particularly important when influencing behavioural intent. This makes sense and as reported earlier, if customers find a website difficult to use or not user friendly, they will more likely move on to another website. Another dimension which scored high and is therefore important when influencing service quality was the information dimension (r = 0.820, p < 0.000). Providing sufficient information is important because the more information the customer has, the more able they are to make better informed decisions. The null hypothesis (HO²) that the six electronic service quality dimensions exerted no influence on behavioural intent is therefore rejected, while the alternative hypothesis (H2) that the six dimension of electronic service quality influences behavioural intent is accepted.

Table 5.4: Regression analysis (SQ-BI)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>Adjusted R²</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Std. Error of Estimate</th>
<th>t- value</th>
<th>p-value &lt; 0.000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SAT</td>
<td>0.858</td>
<td>0.737</td>
<td>0.736</td>
<td>(1.182)</td>
<td>0.404</td>
<td>22.61</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.4.1 Relationship between information and behavioural intent

Poor information quality can wreck havoc in an organisation and result in a dissatisfied customer. In a study conducted by Wang and Strong (1996), four dimensions were identified that customers considered important when searching for information. They include: information must be accessible, information must be interpretable, and information must be relevant and accurate. Customers must be able to find and access information they are searching for as well as be able to interpret and understand what they are reading. In the same light, information must be relevant and accurate to the particular context. While adequate information enhances a customer’s intentions (Francis & White, 2002) the quality of the information delivered is the main key factor that affects the websites success through the positive influence of customers’ behaviour intentions (Feindt, et al., 2002).

5.4.2 Relationship between ease of use and behavioural intent

Ease of use is the degree to which a person believes that using an information system is free of effort (Al-Momani & Noor, 2009) as well as how easy it is for them to conduct external searches in cyberspace and internal navigation within the airlines website. Ease of use has three aspects namely, navigation, website access and transactional functions. Navigation deals with how easily a user can search for information within a website and their ability to find information efficiently. If users cannot understand the structure of the site and what they can find there, they may become frustrated and leave the site altogether. A websites access relates to how easily the user can connect to the site and its speed of download. If users have to wait due to long waiting periods it is likely that they will quit and move to another website. Transactional functions give customers the impression that the website is simple and user friendly when completing transactions (Novak, et al., 2000; Kim & Lennon, 2004). A adequate degree of usability can create a positive bias in a customer and higher levels of satisfaction (Chen, Wigand, & Nilan, 1999; Kim & Eom, 2002; Flavián, et al., 2006).
5.4.3 Relationship between Design and Behavioural Intent

Design and graphics is an important dimension for websites as they can fulfill an individual’s information need by the presentation of a website’s content and information. The design or appearance of a website is the first thing a user will observe and should be highly user friendly which links to the ease of use dimension. Users do not want to see graphics that they do not need to. Many graphics on a site could lead to frustration for the customer as they will have to contend with long download periods. Cues such as colours, layout, print size, graphics and design influence consumer perceptions of online shopping (Raney, et al., 2003; Nitse, et al. 2004) and the display of products can lead customers to make impulse purchases (Ko & Rhee, 1994).

5.4.4 Relationship between reliability and behavioural intent

Services promised must be performed accurately and consistently as reliability has a direct influence on customer satisfaction which influences behavioural intent. The services that the website is supplying must be easily obtainable and function correctly otherwise and as mentioned earlier any function problems will lead to frustration and a loss in sale (Fram & Grady, 1995).

5.4.5 Relationship between security/privacy and behavioural intent

The security/privacy dimension has been rated as most critical when influencing non-purchasers perceptions of quality and has shown to have a strong impact on a customer’s intention to purchase (Loiacono, et al., 2002; Van Riel, et al., 2003). Trust in an online transaction is related to the buying and payment process, the reliability of the company’s website, privacy and security issues, order fulfillment; after sales services as well as the brand name and reputation of the company (Shankar, Urban & Sultan, 2002; Yoon 2002).

Trust is central to e-shopping intentions and security and privacy have been found to be closely related to trust. Trust toward online companies is mentioned as a key factor or e-commerce growth, of online success and competitiveness (Gefen, 2000; Jarvenpaa, et al., 2000; Urban,
Sultan & Qualls, 2000) The level of trust seems to be of particular importance to some researchers given the fact that there is an absence of physical contact with the e-tailer when online (Lynch, Kent & Srinivasan, 2001; Urban, 2002; Merrillees & Fry, 2003). Due to these perceptions of risk, related to misuse of personal information, many people are still unwilling to buy products from the internet (Kim, Kim & Lennon, 2006). Wilson (2000) found that many consumers consider that lack of security as the main inhibiting factor preventing them from adopting on-line purchase behaviour. The privacy dimension has been shown to have a strong impact on intentions to purchase (e.g. Loiacono, et al., 2002) satisfaction (Szymanski & Hise, 2000), and overall site quality (Yoo & Donthu, 2001).

Customers trust a website because of the cues that the site exhibits, such as privacy assurance, third-party seals of approval, customer referrals and testimonials (Appendix G) (Urban, et al., 2000). Wolfinbarger and Gilly (2003) found that security and privacy were distinct factors that represent the perceived security and confidentiality of personal data on a website. Kim, Williams & Lee (2003) also found trust to be a distinct site quality dimension with positive correlation with attitude toward the site. Consumers are particularly sensitive to privacy and security because of various fears ranging from spam to online identity theft (Wolfinbarger & Gilly; 2003). Jarvenpaa, et al. (2000) and Lynch, et al. (2001) identified that trust increases customers intentions to purchase a product from a company on the web. According to Koufaris and Hampton-Sosa (2002), perceived company trustworthiness is positively associated with customers intention to purchase and re-purchase from the same e-tailer.

Studies have emphasised the importance of online trust between customers and online stores (McKnight et al., 2002; Grabner-Kräuter & Kaluscha, 2003). As trust encourages online customer purchasing activity and affects customer attitudes toward purchasing from an online store (Gefen, 2000; Gefen, et al., 2003).

Many websites offer various forms of protection (in the form of user names, passwords and credit card guarantees), however, some customers will still doubt the websites security. Online security is still perceived as a major obstacle for e-commerce, however, consumer confidence can be increased and managed using encryption, digital signatures and online card guarantees (Santos, 2003).
5.4.6 Relationship between Interactivity/Personalisation and Behavioural Intent

With interactivity defined as the degree to which a dialogue can be generated between the customer, website and the company interactivity also predicts intentions (Loiacono, et al., 2002). There is a lack of real time interaction in the e-service environment and therefore personalisation is becoming more important to online service quality. Giving customers personal attention, understanding their specific needs and providing service related to convenience positively influences their intentions.

5.5 BEHAVIOURAL INTENT AND SERVICE QUALITY

\(H_0^3: \) Service quality exerts no influence on behavioural intent.

Table 5.5 show that service quality is significantly related to behavioural intent \((r = 88.6, p < 0.000)\). This means that the more service quality is achieved by airlines, the more influence it will have on behavioural intent which increases purchases. Therefore, the null hypothesis \((H_0^3)\) that service quality exerts no influence on behavioural intent is rejected, while the hypothesis \((H3)\) that service quality influences behavioural intent is accepted.

5.6 SERVICE QUALITY’S INFLUENCE ON BEHAVIOURAL INTENTIONS

\(H_0^4: \) Service quality exerts no positive influence on customer’s behavioural intentions.

It is plain to see that if behavioural intent is as a result of service quality, then service quality has an influence on customers’ behavioural intentions. Customers’ evaluations of the service received are critical to service firms and those who provide superior service quality have more satisfied customers who are more likely to display positive purchase intentions. This means that the higher the service quality level offered, the more it will positively influence customers’ behavioural intentions. The null hypothesis \((H0^4)\) that service quality exerts no positive influence on customer’s behavioural intentions is therefore rejected and the alternative
hypothesis (H4) that service quality positively influences customers’ behavioural intentions is therefore accepted.

Table 5.5: Regression analysis (BI-SQ)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>Adjusted R²</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Std. Error of Estimate</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>p-value &lt; 0.000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SAT-SQ</td>
<td>0.886</td>
<td>0.785</td>
<td>0.783</td>
<td>(2,181)=331.57</td>
<td>0.366</td>
<td>6.36</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.7 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the statistical results were examined. This chapter has highlighted that various factors, some more than others, must be present when a company wants to achieve service quality improvements that positively influence a customers behavioural intentions. The empirical results revealed the following, namely that service quality does have a positive influence on customer satisfaction; the six Service Quality sub-dimensions do influence or impact behavioural intent; service quality does influence behavioural intent and also positively influences customers behavioural intentions.
CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The final chapter examines the managerial implications of the empirical results of this study and offers recommendations to airlines for their websites to help increase customer satisfaction. This study contributes to a growing body of literature of service quality and behavioural intent, however, the results are industry specific. The main objective of this study was to identify and investigate the dimensions of service quality in an online context and to ascertain how these dimensions contributed to customer satisfaction and behavioural intent. This study used an amended NetQual questionnaire and data gathered was analysed by statistical means to determine electronic service quality factors in the airline industry. Airlines can easily run a survey to determine what factors their customers deem as important. Results obtained in this study are therefore deemed only applicable to the airline industry in an online context.

6.2 MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Airline service quality is based largely on customers’ perceptions of what services should be and how they should be delivered. Reed & Sasser (2007) suggests that airlines suffer from a “business culture in which the costs of fuel and labour are viewed as more important than happy customers in determining profitability”. Furthermore, it is suggested that airlines will never “rank at the average, and certainly not above the average, in customer satisfaction because of some of the intrinsic factors…that never change” (Reed & Sasser, 2007: page). Comments such as these indicate that airlines are not yet convinced that satisfaction is a key to their success, but the growing list of competitive alternatives might change industry minds. If competition does
not change hearts and minds, then the threat of government regulation might (Tiernan, Rhoades & Waguespack, 2008).

There are several implications that can be derived from the findings of this study. The research findings confirmed that there is a strong positive relationship between an airline’s website quality and their customers’ satisfaction. Service quality improvement initiatives should begin with identifying the customers’ needs and preferences and their related quality dimensions (Jun, Yang & Kim, 2004). If airlines understand what dimensions their customers use or view as more important to judge quality, they can then take the correct actions to determine and enhance performance in those dimensions.

This study identified six key online sub-dimensions, namely; information, ease of use, design, reliability, privacy/security and interactivity/personalisation. Obviously in order to provide a high level of overall service quality, airlines should pay attention to all of the six dimensions which were identified in this study. However, in order to improve their online service quality and in order to increase satisfaction, airlines should focus particularly on two dimensions—reliability and interactivity/personalisation, which are elaborated further in point 6.2.1. In the case of airlines wanting to positively influence behavioural intent, they should focus primarily on information and ease of use which is elaborated on in point 6.2.2. Just as each airline is different, so are their customers—the results obtained for the purpose of this study might not be the same for a study conducted in Cape Town or an international location for various reasons.

6.2.1 Influence of service quality on customer satisfaction

The findings emphasise that service quality does, in fact influence satisfaction. As service quality is a key determinant of an airline’s website success, a first step airlines should take is to assess to what extent they are fulfilling the six electronic service quality sub-dimensions as the more criteria meet in each of these dimensions, the better will be the level of service quality. Furthermore, the empirical results highlighted two of the six sub-dimensions as being more pertinent to individuals who make bookings online. These include reliability and interactivity/personalisation. Therefore, it makes sense that managers should focus on meeting
all the criteria (Table 3.1) for these two particular sub-dimensions as they are the biggest influencers on customer satisfaction. It is recommended that airlines conduct their own surveys to determine which sub-dimensions their customers view as imperative and take the necessary steps to meet all the criteria for those sub-dimensions.

6.2.1.1 Reliability

Lack of reliability and trust online leads to a lack of trust in the airline itself. Airlines need to make a point of focusing on and understand the elements that communicate trust to the users of their website in order to help them feel more secure when conducting their online transactions. For example, ensuring that all criteria are met in the reliability sub-dimension as this was one of the sub-dimensions that was viewed as more important.

To fulfill the reliability sub-dimension, airlines must address the following, namely; ensuring that their website is updated frequently, promptly replying to all enquiries as well as ensuring prompt delivery, and keeping personal information secure. Prompt responses and delivery also overlaps with availability of the airline.

Airlines have to frequently update their website information with regards to flight availability (flights available for specified dates or flights sold out) to provide the user with the most accurate and up-to-date information. If information is not accurate and up-to-date, for example, the airline has over booked, users will be making their bookings based on incorrect information. Customers will then have to be informed at a later stage that there were, in fact, no more seats available and that the airline overbooked for that particular flight or date. This leaves customers feeling negative about the airline due to their negative online experience, which leads to a lack of trust. Since trust is based on the user’s experience, the more trustworthy the relationship is with the airline, the easier it is for the airline to create a consistent relationship (Naidoo & Leonard, 2002). When an airline fails to deliver their product/service accurately it is often due to a lack of synchronising online (sales and marketing) with offline (inventory and logistics) business process. Therefore, airlines need to use a system that integrates both their online and offline operations to improve the delivery of their products/services.
Airlines must be prompt when delivering their service. In an online context this entails ensuring that booking confirmations are delivered timeously via e-mail or fax. When customers have a problem they must be given a prompt response from the airline as well as a reasonable and acceptable solution.

Airlines generally do provide information about their privacy and security and this is definitely crucial information to supply. Despite its availability, such information can be difficult to understand due to it being written in very technical language. It is recommended that airlines provide a brief, comprehensive but understandable version enabling customers to easily and quickly understand the airlines policies. Airlines must ensure that transactions that take place online, such as credit card payments, are secure by making use of and promoting their security features to ensure that customers feel comfortable. Additionally, airlines should display the logo that informs the user of which security options the company makes use. This also encourages customers to return and re-use the airlines’ website in the future.

6.2.1.2 Availability

Many internet users make use of Internet Explorer, however there are other browsers which are made use of and the airline must ensure that their website is compatible and operates correctly on a variety of browsers. Unfortunately, this is not always possible. In light of this, airlines could provide users with easy to locate information, explaining their website’s minimum browser requirements as a safety measure to prevent users from blaming the airline for a malfunctioning website.

Airlines must ensure that their websites are always available in order for their users to make use of the website to obtain information (Appendix H). If the website is unavailable for whatever reason, the airline will be losing sales as customers will then make use of another airline’s website. If the airline needs to carry out system maintenance, such as in Appendix H, they need to announce necessary maintenance in advance to users and have such information with a correct time schedule available on their main page for viewing. Alternatively, a notice of maintenance or a maintenance schedule can be e-mailed to individuals who have signed up to receive communication from the airline. Additionally, maintenance should be scheduled at a time when
website traffic is slowest or non-existent, for example, in the early hours of the morning. Additionally, airlines need to monitor dead links, non-working buttons and system availability. This way the airline can also prevent any unnecessary financial loss.

Customers’ problems should be promptly responded to and airlines should list easily obtainable contact information for customers to use. Most airlines have a FAQ page for users to view if they have any queries; however, if their question is not listed there, airlines should consider implementing a live help function to provide instant help to customers who might have questions.

Availability also refers to how well and quickly customers are provided with the products/services they are trying to locate. Airlines must provide a versatile search engine that consumers can use to assist them in locating whatever it is that they are searching for, as well as sitemaps so users can easily navigate the website and ensure that users will not have to contend with missing links, buttons that do not work, sites freezing and crashing as well as long loading times as these factors negatively influence customer satisfaction levels.

Airlines need to provide new and alternative ways to book and pay for flights. Examples include: charging bookings to an individual’s cell phone account or perhaps to another retail account that they operate on such as an Edgars or Woolworths account.

6.2.1.3 Interactivity/personalisation

Interactivity relates to how the airline’s website responds to its customers in an online environment (how customers queries, question and complaints are dealt with). Consumers these days expect airlines to respond to their inquiries promptly which also initiates interactivity.

Personalisation is when users can modify the websites content in real time, such as selecting their own destination to which to travel, adding ancillary services. As websites do not offer the same personal contact as agents would, a dialogue needs to be created or generated between the customer and the airline through the use of their website. For an airline to achieve online service quality users must be able to tailor or customise the service to best fit their individual needs, for example the user must be able to select the preferred day of travel, as well as the time they would
prefer to travel. Additionally, they should have various payment methods available from which to choose that might be considered convenient and suitable.

Other ways to increase satisfaction is to give customers personal attention, to understand their specific needs and provide services related to those needs as this positively influences their intentions. Airlines give customers personal attention, in a sense, by providing a number of flights every day; departing at various times throughout the day. Additionally, customers have the option to add on various ancillary services, such as car rentals and hotel accommodation. This allows the customer to personalise the product/service to meet their individual needs and shows that the airline understands that their customers have specific needs and that they are providing options to satisfy those needs.

6.2.2 Influence of the six electronic service quality dimensions on behavioural intent

Numerous studies on service quality in physical encounters have been identified and certain factors were found to be responsible for a customer’s perception of quality, which could be likely to lead to customer satisfaction and in turn lead to behavioural intentions to purchase (Zhang & Prybutok, 2005). The empirical results revealed that all six dimensions were relevant, however, the most important dimensions applicable to influencing behavioural intent were found to be information and ease of use.

6.2.2.1 Information

Information was found to be important when influencing behavioural intent. Airlines should determine what information their customers will require and the airlines’ website should be designed in such a way that their customers can access relevant information when needed. Airline websites should contain adequate information on not only themselves, but also their products and services offered on their website to reduce the perceived risks associated with online purchases and to enhance customers’ intentions.

While providing adequate information is important, the quality of the information is also essential. Customers must be able to easily find and access the information for which they are
searching, and on top of this, the information must be accurate, relevant and easily interpretable. Many airline website users compare flight times, dates and prices on various airline websites before making their purchase, but they must have correct and sufficient information on which to base their decision. The more information supplied to the user, the lower the perceived risk experienced.

6.2.2.2 Ease of Use

Ease of use was found in this study to be significant when influencing behavioural intent and according to the literature relating to three factors, namely, navigation, website access and transactional functions. Users should be able to navigate and locate information on airline websites easily and they should be able to access the website at a reasonable download speed, otherwise they will become frustrated and more than likely quit and move on to another website. Lastly, airlines should organise their site content in a logical and consistent way to ensure that customers view their website as simple and user-friendly.

6.2.3 Influence of service quality on behavioural intent and behavioural intentions

The empirical results revealed that service quality does have a positive influence on behavioural intent and behavioural intentions. This means that the more service quality that is achieved by airlines through fulfilling each sub-dimensions criterion, the more influence it will have on behavioural intent which increases purchases. It is plain to see that customers’ behavioural intentions are as a result of the service quality they have experienced; therefore, the level of service quality provided does affect how a customer’s behavioural intention are influenced. A customer’s evaluation of the service received is critical to service firms.
6.3 LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

One major limitation was that the sample was relatively small and a larger sample will be needed to further validate the findings of this study. A selected sample figure of 1000 respondents was thought sufficient for this study. However, the researcher had to settle for a sample of 185 respondents even though it was considered to be too small when compared to the amount of passenger traffic that takes place on a day-to-day basis. The initial method for obtaining respondents was through the social network website Facebook. Requests for assistance in completing the questionnaire were sent out to various airlines that have a Facebook page with member listings into the thousands. This method has been and is still being employed by many academics who have had more favourable results. Unfortunately, the researchers’ requests for assistance were listed as a secondary page entitled “Airline + others”, and members would have to specifically click on that tab to read other members’ posts.

The researcher then employed a more traditional and tedious method to obtain a reasonable amount of respondents. Questionnaires were then printed up and administered by hand to individuals at travel agents, banks and passengers at the Port Elizabeth International Airport. Since the questionnaire was administered to any individual willing to take the time to complete it, the results should be interpreted carefully. It is the researcher’s belief that if a larger sample had been obtained, more significant statistical results would have been achieved. A future study could further examine the listed relationships and in more depth by further testing the modified measuring instrument with a larger and more diverse sample. Therefore, the study was conducted mainly at a single domestic airport. A more extensive sample could have been obtained if there were no time and financial constraints. Another limitation was that data was mostly gathered in one specific geographic area, being Port Elizabeth, and the results might be specific only for this area.

While the manual method of physically handing out surveys at the airport was sufficient in this study, it is recommended that in the future alternative data collection methods also be explored. Studies conducted in the future, if possible, should make use of an online web survey website, such as the one employed by the NMMU. This is highly recommended as it is far more efficient and effective than having to input data manually off hard copies of questionnaires.
Additionally, future studies could obtain the assistance and permission of airlines, where researchers would be granted access to the airlines’ data base of individuals who have booked their tickets online - e-mails containing a link to an online survey could then be sent to these individuals. Alternatively the survey could be sent attached to the booking confirmation with the aim of the customer seeing that it comes from the airline which is aware of the request being made to customers to complete an online survey based on their opinions and experience of the website. Alternatively, after the booking process has been completed, a link/button could be displayed on the airlines’ actual website, asking if the customer would like to take part in an online electronic service quality survey, based on their recent experience with the airlines’ website.

An alternate suggestion would be to request permission from other tertiary education facilities to circulate a link of the online survey and request their MBA and part time students to assist if they book their tickets online; it is considered more likely that these individuals travel regularly for work purposes.

A last recommendation for data collection would be to go the traditional route of printing copies of the questionnaire and distributing them to willing passengers at airports. It is noted that this is time and resource consuming. Vast amounts of time will be needed depending on the sample size as questionnaires will firstly have to be distributed then collected, and secondly, data will have to be input manually which also leaves room for errors.

It is recommended that future research should be conducted by broadening and extending the sample size, sample demographic and geographical location, as the percentage of internet users in South Africa is considerably lower when compared to other countries. South Africa has a population of 49,109,107, of which 5,300,000 use the Internet. This makes up 4.8% of the total Internet usage in Africa (Internet world stats, 2010). As the airline industry is constantly improving their infrastructure and facilities, this study’s topic can develop further, which will make for interesting future research.
6.4 CONCLUSIONS

The main objective of this study was to identify and investigate the dimensions of service quality in an online context and to ascertain how these dimensions contributed to customer satisfaction and behavioural intent. The present study has contributed to the attainment of the above objective by firstly, identifying the six electronic service quality dimensions which were found to be: information, design, ease of use, reliability, security/privacy and interactivity/personalisation, and by identifying pertinent factors in each dimension which should be taken into consideration when creating an airlines’ webpage.

The secondary objective of the study was to ascertain if any of the electronic service quality dimensions was more significant in achieving service quality, if any of the electronic service quality dimensions was more significant in influencing behavioural intent; if any of the electronic service quality dimensions was more significant in influencing buying intent, if behavioural intentions were positively or negatively influenced by electronic service quality, and lastly to investigate how electronic service quality in the airline industry could be improved.

The empirical results revealed that reliability and interactivity/personalisation were more significant dimensions in achieving service quality within the airline industry, which positively influences satisfaction. Results further revealed that information and ease of use were considered as the significant dimensions to focus on when influencing buying intent. Behavioural intentions can be either positively or negatively influenced through an airline’s electronic service quality. This will largely depend on to what degree each sub-dimension will be focused on and integrated into the airlines’ website. While this study has its limitations, the attempt to investigate the impact of electronic service quality dimensions on customer satisfaction is of value.
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APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

DISTRIBUTED QUESTIONNAIRE
THE IMPACT OF ELECTRONIC SERVICE QUALITY DIMENSIONS ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

S. Van Der Merwe  
209030450

Research proposal submitted towards partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

Magister in Business Management

in the

Faculty of Business and Economic Sciences

of the

Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University

October 2010

Promoter: Dr. Oren Dayan

Date of submission: November 2010
Dear Respondent

I formally introduce myself as a full time MBA student at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. My name is Samantha Van Der Merwe. You are being asked to participate in a research study by completing a questionnaire which will measure an airline’s website service quality, more particularly the airline you make use of. Once completed, the analysis of collected data will assist in making improvements in electronic service delivery within the airline industry.

This study is conducted in co-operation with the Bordeaux Business School in France and the outcomes are hoped to be published in the European Marketing Academy conference 2011. Furthermore, this study has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee (Human) of the NMMU University.

Please assist in completing the questionnaire and returning it as soon as possible. Should any clarification be needed please do not hesitate to contact me. Communication via e-mail preferred.

E-mail: samanthavandermerwe@gmail.com
Fax: 086 690 4730
Tel: [041] 379-5190
Cell: 083 544 4158

Yours sincerely

Samantha Van Der Merwe
RESEARCHER

Section 1
Please select an airline through which you have recently purchased a ticket from their website and answer the following questions. Indicate on the questions below the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement. For example, 1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree. There are no right or wrong answers – just give your honest evaluation of the site.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. This site provides detailed information about the product or service offered</td>
<td>1  2  3  4  5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. This site shows creativity</td>
<td>1  2  3  4  5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. This site is easy to use</td>
<td>1  2  3  4  5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I trust the overall security of the site</td>
<td>1  2  3  4  5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I can interact with this site to receive personalised information</td>
<td>1  2  3  4  5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. This site provides useful information about the product and service delivery</td>
<td>1  2  3  4  5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I will continue using the web site to purchase additional products and services in the future</td>
<td>1  2  3  4  5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The information on this site is relevant to me</td>
<td>1  2  3  4  5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. This site offers good illustrations of the products or services sold</td>
<td>1  2  3  4  5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. It is easy to search for additional information on this site</td>
<td>1  2  3  4  5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. This site offers functions which gives me a secure feeling</td>
<td>1  2  3  4  5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. This site has interactive functions which I find interesting</td>
<td>1  2  3  4  5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. This site gives me indications of product availability i.e. quantities in stock, seat availability</td>
<td>1  2  3  4  5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I enjoy visiting the website and will visit it again in the future</td>
<td>1  2  3  4  5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. The information on this site is precise</td>
<td>1  2  3  4  5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. This site is visually attractive</td>
<td>1  2  3  4  5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. It is easy to navigate and to find what you are looking for on this site</td>
<td>1  2  3  4  5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. I think that my private life and my financial information are protected on this site</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. This site records my preferences and offers me extra services or information based on these preferences</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. This site offers several types of delivery</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. I intent to continue purchasing products from this web site in the future before looking at other websites</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. The information on this site fulfills my needs</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. This web design is appropriate for this type of site</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. The layout of this site makes it easier to search for information</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. I trust this site not to misuse my personal information</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. I can contact the company easily through this site</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. The ordering process is easy to follow</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. I will visit this web site when I want to compare prices</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. The information given on this site is easy to understand</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. The user interface on the airline website is organised [i.e. appearance, usability]</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. The layout of the site is clear, clean and simple</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Shopping behaviour patterns are protected by the web site</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. I have fun when interacting with the website</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34. This site provides contact details for customer services [e-mail, phone...]</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35. I will visit this website when I want to purchase air tickets</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36. I can make a decision upon the information given to me by the web site</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37. It is simple [easy, quick] to complete a transaction on the website</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38. It is easy to access the results of my search</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39. The site provides detailed information about security [data security]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40. The website offers the ability to speak to a live person if there is a problem</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41. I trust the information on the website is reliable and countable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42. I will recommend using this website to all my friends</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43. The information on the site is always available to me whenever I need it</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44. The site has a unique design that urges me to travel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45. I can complete transactions quickly and efficiently</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46. I am not worried that my personal details will be violated or illegally exposed in any case</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47. The website tells me what to do if my transaction is not processed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48. I feel safe and secure providing my personal details on the web sites system</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49. I will do more business with this web site in the coming months or a year</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50. The information on the site is consistent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51. The site is colourful and interesting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52. The site enables me to get onto it quickly [loads fast]</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53. I feel confident that goods/services will be delivered as promised</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54. The website has customer service representatives available online to assist me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55. The web site is available for business at any time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56. All features of the websites are launched and run straight away so I don’t have to waste time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57. The web site has never crashed while I was online</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58. The web site has adequate security for my convenience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Response Options</td>
<td>Rating Options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you say that overall this site…?</td>
<td>Did not satisfy you at all</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you recommend this site to a friend?</td>
<td>Did not satisfy you at all</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you like to visit the site again in the future?</td>
<td>Did not satisfy you at all</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you like to purchase from this site again?</td>
<td>Did not satisfy you at all</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am satisfied with the product[s] and service[s] offered on this site</td>
<td>Did not satisfy you at all</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I strongly recommend that others use the online website</td>
<td>Did not satisfy you at all</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section 2

Please tick ☑ or mark the items below that describe you

Your Internet and online purchase behaviour

1. How long have you been using the Internet?
   - □ Less than 1 year
   - □ 1 to 2 years
   - □ 2 to 3 years
   - □ 4 to 5 years
   - □ More than 5 years

2. How long have you been making purchases on the Internet?
   - □ Less than 1 year
   - □ 1 to 2 years
   - □ 2 to 3 years
   - □ 4 to 5 years
   - □ 5 to 8 years
   - □ More than 8 years

3. In the past 12 months, how many times have you made purchases on the internet?
   - □ 1 to 2 times
   - □ 3 to 5 times
   - □ 5 to 10 times
   - □ More than 10 times

Some information to get to know you better

4. Are you…? □ Male □ Female

5. Please indicate which age range you fall into:
   - □ Under 18
   - □ 18-24
   - □ 25-34
   - □ 34-44
   - □ 45-54
   - □ 55-64
6. What is your profession?

- [ ] Staff
- [ ] Lower management
- [ ] Middle Management
- [ ] Higher Management
- [ ] Retired
- [ ] Student

7. What is your current level of education?

- [ ] High School
- [ ] Undergraduate
- [ ] Graduate
- [ ] Postgraduate
- [ ] Doctorate
- [ ] Prefer not to say

8. What is your marital status?

- [ ] Single
- [ ] Single with child/children
- [ ] Living with partner
- [ ] Living with partner and child/children

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.
APPENDIX B

WEBSITE LONG LOADING TIMES
APPENDIX C

KEEPING WEBSITE UP TO DATE
APPENDIX D

DESTINATION SELECTION
APPENDIX F

DISPLAY OF SECURITY FEATURES
APPENDIX G

WEBSITE MAINTENANCE
This page is currently undergoing scheduled maintenance.

Our sincerest apologies for the inconvenience.