

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND LEADERSHIP

**Digital platforms as a means to enhancing customer satisfaction at a South
African commercial bank**

MARIA SINOMHLOBO NGCAWENI

220044391

A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of **Master of
Business Administration**

Graduate School of Business and Leadership
College of Law and Management Studies


Supervisor: Prof. Theuns Pelser

2021

DECLARATION

I Maria Sinomhlobo Ngcaweni declare that

- The research reported in this dissertation/thesis, except where otherwise indicated, is my original research.
- This dissertation/thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
- This dissertation/thesis does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
- This dissertation/thesis does not contain other persons' writing, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other researchers. Where other written sources have been quoted, then:
 - a) their words have been re-written, but the general information attributed to them has been referenced.
 - b) where their exact words have been used, their writing has been placed inside quotation marks, and referenced.
 - c) (v) Where I have reproduced a publication of which I am author, co-author or editor, I have indicated in detail which part of the publication was actually written by myself alone and have fully referenced such publications.
 - d) (vi) This dissertation/thesis does not contain text, graphics or tables copied and pasted from the Internet, unless specifically acknowledged, and the source being detailed in the dissertation/thesis and in the References sections.

Signed: 

Date: 09 December 2021

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my father **Mr. Joachim Lantabule Mamabolo**. You have asked, you have prayed, and this is my gift to you. Ke a leboga 'kolobe' for ensuring that you instill in me the importance of education.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my husband **Luba Ngcaweni**, thank you for your patience, encouragement, and prayers. Thank you for believing I can do and achieve anything. The confidence you have in me is heartwarming. Thank you for covering me and protecting our home. The best gift God has ever given me, was turning your eyes in my direction when I was not looking. Your love, patience and support is appreciated; I honor you.

To my mentor, sister and best friend, **Advocate Daisy Sereku Lebepe (CA)(SA) MBA**. Thank you for being the wind beneath my wings. Thank you for paving the way and thank you for showing me it is possible.

To my **children, siblings, family, and friends**, thank you for allowing me to take time out so I can pursue this project. May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord cause his face to shine upon you and meet all of you at the point of every secret deep-rooted need. I'm grateful that you have walked this journey with me.

Thank you to my supervisor, **Prof Theuns Pelsier**, for the expertise and guidance provided on this project. I'm also grateful for the MBA team mates and academic team that I was so privileged to walk this journey with.

To my employer **Standard Bank**, thank you for believing in me and financing this MBA.

The Lord's sovereign grace, mercy and unconditional love has kept and protected me in this season, and for that I am eternally grateful. I have seen Exodus 14:14 manifest time and time again. God has once again showed up as the GREAT shepherd that I know He is and that David talks about in Psalm 23.

ABSTRACT

Entities place high reliance on the banking sectors for the safekeeping of their money. This is why customer centricity is at the core of the evolving banking industry that is confronted with fundamental transformation. Advanced technology and modern digital devices have allowed wholistic customer service delivery without reliance on face-to-face interaction with banking staff. The advancement of the internet and electronic communication has resulted in the creation of platforms that allow for the online sale of goods and services. Furthermore, globalization has resulted in normalizing cross border trade and banking transactions making digital banking a key consideration in executing business for commercial banking clients. Legacy infrastructure, culture, data availability and pricing, financial literacy of the consumer base and limited competition in the industry have however slowed down digital adoption by banks in South Africa (SA). Due to arguably extensive experience, operational procedures, and highly regulated industry South African banks have been kept thus far safely in business. The advent of the novel Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) has however introduced a new dynamic in how banks operate because banks have had to strengthen their digital platforms given the widespread lockdown restrictions.

Market research has been used by the five major SA commercial banks, Standard Bank, First National Bank (FNB), Nedbank, Capitec and ABSA to assess client satisfaction and loyalty. The results of the research are then integrated into driving the strategic direction of the banks. Literature has demonstrated that the relationship between a bank and its customer fundamentally contributes to organisational growth. Customer service is becoming more important in the financial sector as banks integrate systems, resources, and infrastructure, while delivering superior products, service levels and convenience. Clients are increasingly describing satisfactory customer experience as real-time resolution of queries through preferred channels. Traditional financial institutions, instruments and markets are quickly becoming outdated and inadequate to service the gradually globally connected environment experiencing a fast-tracked number of high-frequency transactions. Artificial intelligence has the ability to ensure optimum usage of resources. Subsequently, the objective of this research is to investigate digital platforms at commercial banks as a means to satisfying customer service expectations.

Keywords: Commercial banking, Customer service, Digital platforms, Relationship management, South Africa.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	i
DEDICATION	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
LIST OF FIGURES	vii
LIST OF TABLES	viii
LIST OF APPENDICES	viii
CHAPTER 1	1
1 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Background of the study.....	4
1.3 Problem Statement.....	6
1.4 Significance and Justification of the Study.....	7
1.5 Research Objectives.....	8
1.6 Research Questions.....	8
1.7 Research methodology	9
1.8 Ethical Considerations.....	9
1.9 Limitations to the Study	9
1.10 Summary and conclusion	10
CHAPTER 2	11
2 LITERATURE REVIEW	11
2.1 Introduction	11
2.2 Digital platforms	13
2.2.1 Digital platforms in banking	16
2.2.2 Benefits of digital banking.....	23
2.2.3 Digital platform barriers in banking.....	24
2.2.4 Global adoption of banking digital platforms.....	25
2.3 Customer service delivery	26
2.3.1 Customer Satisfaction in Commercial banking	27
2.3.2 Emerging customer trends.....	28
2.4 Enhanced digital platforms.....	30
2.5 Expansion of market share in Commercial banking	30

2.6	Conclusion.....	31
CHAPTER 3.....		33
3	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	33
3.1	Introduction.....	33
3.2	Aim of the study.....	33
3.3	Research design.....	35
3.4	Research Approach.....	35
3.5	Research Strategy.....	37
3.6	Data collection method.....	38
3.7	SERVEQUAL Model.....	39
3.8	Data Analysis.....	41
3.9	Validity and Reliability.....	41
3.10	Participants and location of the study.....	42
3.11	Sampling Strategies and methods.....	43
3.12	Ethical considerations.....	44
3.13	Conclusion.....	46
CHAPTER 4.....		47
4	PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS.....	47
4.1	Introduction.....	47
4.2	Survey Participation.....	48
4.3	Demographic profile of the participants.....	50
4.4	Findings of the study according to the 5 dimensions of service quality.....	58
4.4.1	Reliability.....	59
4.4.2	Responsiveness.....	60
4.4.3	Assurance.....	61
4.4.4	Empathy.....	63
4.4.5	Tangibles.....	65
4.5	Summary of findings.....	67
4.6	Conclusion.....	69
CHAPTER 5.....		70
5	RECCOMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION.....	70
5.1	Introduction.....	70
5.2	Findings from the research study per objective.....	70
5.2.1	Objective one findings.....	72
5.2.2	Objective two findings.....	73
5.3	Recommendations.....	75

5.4	Limitation of the Study	76
5.5	Forthcoming Studies	77
5.6	Conclusion.....	78
REFERENCES.....		79
APPENDICES.....		86

LIST OF FIGURES

- Figure 2.1: Primary insurance regions in Africa
- Figure 2.2: Top 5 Online banking transactional values countries
- Figure 2.3: Customer satisfaction expectations.
- Figure 4.1: Gender of respondents
- Figure 4.2: Age category of respondents
- Figure 4.3: Number of years respondents employed at the bank
- Figure 4.4: Current position held by respondents
- Figure 4.5: Number of years in current position.
- Figure 4.6: History of respondents' employment
- Figure 4.7: Highest Education level
- Figure 4.8: Responses to reliability measurement
- Figure 4.9: Responses to responsiveness measurement
- Figure 4.10: Responses to assurance measurement
- Figure 4.11: Responses to empathy measurement
- Figure 4.12: Responses to the measurement on tangibles
- Figure 5.1: Survey outcomes according to the 5 dimensions of SERVEQUAL

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1: Evolution of financial products and services via digitalization

Table 3.1: SURVEQUAL: The 5 Dimensions of Service Quality

Table 4.1: Participation Statistics

Table 4.2: Nature of respondents' employment at the bank

Table 4.3: Mean distribution of responses

LIST OF APPENDICES

1. Ethical Clearance Approval
2. Informed Consent
3. Declaration
4. Data collection instrument
5. Turnitin Report
6. Gate keeper's letter

CHAPTER 1

1 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction.

Traditional banking is becoming automated by digital banking. Banking customers are now able to utilise online banking platforms for accessing bank services and products. Digitizing bank operations and replacing the bank's physical presence with online presence, reducing the need for consumers to visit a branch, is referred to as digital banking (Tavaga, 2021). Easy access to the internet through smart mobile devices and advanced digital technology has introduced artificial intelligence to a larger audience, resulting in a shift in the purchasing behaviors of customers (Lee and Lee, 2019). In 1971 Finland introduced the first Automated Teller Machine (ATM) indicating the beginning of new transacting channels. This introduction propelled Finland to lead digital banking earlier than other industrialized and developed nations (Hammoud, Bizri, and El Baba, 2018). Customers have become more interested in electronic banking as a result of rapid technological advancements and increased competition between banks (Hammoud et al.,2018).

Mobile phones and the internet are key digital banking service channels and have become essential for the survival of a bank because of the convenient access to banking facilities (Mbama and Ezepue, 2018). BusinessTech, (2021) suggests that the South African population is adopting digital technology at an accelerated rate. Furthermore, they argue that in a country like SA, it is vital to have a mobile-first strategy to digital banking technologies because of the fact that many South African bank customers do online banking using their smartphones. Notwithstanding, simply being available on digital platforms is not enough; banks must also provide excellent functionality and security that challenges competitors (BusinessTech, 2021a).

From various perspectives, several authors and economists have provided structural and functional definitions for banks. According to Prabhavathi, and Dinesh (2018), the bank is a financial entity that deals with credit and debit transactions. It creates a bridge between lenders

and borrowers by lending, accepting, and depositing money. Banks are money generators as well as money handlers (Prabhavathi, and Dinesh, 2018). A bank is also defined as a licensed financial institution that uses different mechanisms and products to accept deposits and provide loans to people and entities (Market Business News, 2020). The South African Reserve bank (SARB) reports that there are 36 banks in South Africa (Rapapali and Simbanegavi, 2020). Of these, 33 are commercial banks and 3 mutual financial institutions. 15 of the commercial banks are registered locally, while 18 are branches of foreign financial institutions (Rapapali and Simbanegavi, 2020). The five biggest commercial banks in SA according to Business Tech, (2020) include ABSA, Standard Bank, First National Bank, Nedbank and Capitec.

Quality customer service is a material component of client experience and value creation in the banking industry (Bick et al., 2010). Satisfaction is defined as an emotion experienced after consuming and conducting an appraisal valuation of a service or product (Oliver, 1981). Client satisfaction on the other hand is defined as the customer's reaction to the supposed variance between result post utilisation and their expectations (Tse and Wilton, 1988). A post-purchase appraisal of a service or product's quality in comparison to what was expected prior to purchasing is another method to describe satisfaction (Hammoud et al., 2018). Other researchers, on the other hand, have found that the impact of the product or service during the purchasing and consumption stages may also be significant. Additional studies argue that impression exerted during a purchase and consumption of a service or product can have a significant impression on the customer's satisfaction judgements. According to the provided definitions and in the context of this study, customer satisfaction is the customer's attitude expressed in response to the use of any type of digital banking service and platform. As a result, digital banking attributes may raise, lower, or maintain client satisfaction.

Okoye, Omarkhanlen, Okoh, Ezeji and Achugamonu, (2019) argue that for commercial banks to flourish in this global and techno-savvy environment, they will need to deliberately explore ways of providing customer service in a quick, efficient, effective, and cost-effective manner. Customer centricity is central to the transforming banking industry, which is undergoing significant changes (Lee and Lee, 2020). Traditional banking services require that customers be physically present in a branch to execute their banking transactions (Melamedov, 2020). The implications of this include congestion, high and risky cash management and excessive

hours spent waiting for service (Okoye et al., 2019). According to Accenture (2017), banks must establish their value offer to encompass both traditional values and digital innovation in order to gain client loyalty. In developing countries, non-bank, technology-enabled innovators such as financial technology (FinTech's) and mobile network carriers have been the driving force. They've taken advantage of rising mobile and internet penetration rates to offer more convenient and affordable financial goods and services that compete with traditional providers. In rich nations, on the other hand, the banking sector has been at the forefront of the digitalization transition (Lyons, and Kass-Hanna, 2021). Competitive challenges, combined with the development of new technologies, have emphasized technology's strategic significance as a possible source of differentiation and cost reduction (Moutinho and Smith, 2000).

Digital financial product and service development has created potential to extend financial inclusion and reach greater sectors of the population that have previously been unserved or underserved by traditional financial service providers around the world. The COVID-19 crisis has bolstered the promise of wider inclusiveness through the introduction of financial products. At the same time, the crisis enhanced widespread awareness of the dangers that could arise. Lyons, and Kass-Hanna, (2021) indicate that concerns have been expressed that the transition to the development of financial goods may expand gaps and exacerbate financial exclusion for vulnerable groups who may be left behind, particularly those with poor socioeconomic status and limited financial resources.

According to a research study conducted by Moutinho and Smith (2000), the client prefers ease of banking and convenience, thus banks should seek out other strategic routes to increase service delivery. These strategic paths may according to the study be either human-based or technology based. The study suggests that the customers' perceptions regarding human service delivery and subsequent levels of satisfaction will have a greater impact on bank switching than when the identical service is delivered via automation. The study outcomes additionally show a correlation between service delivery and customer satisfaction, and financial institutions should continue to identify efficient strategies to consistently monitor and manage customer satisfaction and retention (Moutinho and Smith, 2000). The continuing contentment with the services clients received throughout the epidemic has already produced major rewards for banks with extensive, user-friendly online banking systems (BusinessTech, 2021a).

1.2 Background of the study.

Globalization permits normalisation of cross border trade and banking transactions making digital banking a key consideration in executing business for commercial banking clients (Okoye et al., 2019). To mitigate complexities, many banks have sought to fast-track migration to online banking and embraced artificial intelligence to provide transactional services (Okoye et al., 2019). The advent of COVID-19 has further introduced a new dynamic in how banks operate, as institutions have been forced to enhance their digital platforms due to widespread lockdown restrictions (Melamedov, 2020). The SA population has improved the utilization of digital channels due to COVID-19. Furthermore, financial institutions are under more pressure than ever to adapt and innovate so as to keep up with changing expectations of modern consumers as well as the increased disruption caused by quickly emerging technologies (BusinessTech, 2021a).

The delivery of the technologically advanced platforms is reliant on the suitability of banking infrastructure (Okoye et al., 2019). Rapapali and Simbanegavi, (2020) argue that a degree of competition in the banking industry drives innovation, efficiency, variety of products and solutions, better prices, and improved services. This in turn results in the development of the financial sector and ultimately a growing economy (Rapapali and Simbanegavi, 2020). COVID-19 has prompted a quick move from cash to digital, resulting in a surge in demand for digital payment and transfer solutions around the world. The most significant game-changer has been the use of mobile money to conduct basic daily transactions (Lyons, and Kass-Hanna, 2021). The invention of digital platforms and technological shifts continue to drastically influence and transform economic systems and banking (Tasca, Aste, Pelizzon, and Perony, 2016). This is arguably accurate to the extent that the services are embraced (Jagani and Patra, 2017).

In the first half of 2020, FNB reported a 30% rise of electronic commerce spend on merchant platforms year on year. Furthermore, Standard Bank saw expansion of eCommerce and online buying. Although internet banking was rapidly expanding prior to COVID 19, nationwide shutdown caused a higher percentage of South Africans to make the switch (BusinessTech, 2021a). The developing financial literacy and growing human population globally has resulted in increased participants requiring banking services (Jagani and Patra, 2017). Notwithstanding

new banks entering the industry, the capability of traditional branch platforms to deliver financial services is proving inadequate.

From transaction processing to risk management, technological innovations have revolutionized financial institutions' internal operations. The financial services business is undergoing tremendous change as a result of the digital revolution. The rise of financial technology (Fintech) has sparked the creation of a slew of new digital financial goods and services. While their rise can be traced to the recent fintech boom, it's worth noting that the financial industry has a long history of relying on technology. At least in industrialized economies, the sector has always been a major user of technology-driven solutions (Lyons, and Kass-Hanna, 2021).

1.3 Problem Statement.

Easy access to well-established banking infrastructure is important for business to flourish in any economy (Mbama and Ezepue, 2018). Banks are the primary channel for the movement of money; therefore, the efficient provision of banking services is a key factor in the development life cycle of the economy (Bick, Abratt and Moller, 2010). Commercial banks have a mandate to ensure that they provide services and products that fulfill the needs and expectations of their stakeholders in order to retain customer loyalty, compete and to survive in the long term (Rapapali and Simbanegavi, 2020).

Advanced technology and modern digital devices have allowed holistic customer service delivery without reliance on face-to-face interaction with banking staff (Lee and Lee, 2019). SA commercial banks have struggled to adequately innovate due to legacy infrastructure, culture, and limited competition in the industry however extensive experience, operational procedures and highly regulated industry have kept them thus far safely in business (Rapapali and Simbanegavi, 2020). Traditional financial institutions are quickly becoming inadequate in servicing the globally integrated economically active environment (Tasca et al., 2016).

Artificial intelligence and robotics can now collect, examine, and interpret information thereby enhancing and advancing decision-making and improving service delivery (Okoye et al., 2019). Business Tech, (2020) reported that some banks are reducing their bricks and mortar networks across SA, however other players such as Capitec continue to increase their branch networks across the country reaching 864 branches. This number is significantly higher than the FNB and Nedbank branch network at 604 and 692 branches respectively. The ability of commercial banks to align to the customer service expectations will help banks retain customer loyalty and grow market share (Mbama and Ezepue, 2018). Shinde, (2020) argues that accurate data is a critical component in the use of artificial intelligence, therefore minor deviation in data captured can have negative consequences. Furthermore, ‘too much’ reliance on artificial intelligence may expose the financial system to risk and vulnerabilities.

Developed economies have been successful in researching banking service quality however Africa is behind on studies relating to the relationship between technology and service delivery (Bick et al., 2010). The research objective of this study is to investigate digital platforms at

commercial banks as a means to satisfying customer service expectations in South Africa. The findings will provide insight on the relationship between digital banking, customer service, and bank growth in emerging markets, particularly in South Africa.

1.4 Significance and Justification of the Study.

Banks in SA have acknowledged that the market is evolving and that the environment is changing. Customer satisfaction is a characteristic which differentiates and distinguishes one institution from its competitors establishing a lasting competitive advantage in the face of global and local competition. Embracing technology-based applications is essential for banks to remain relevant in the 21st century, as competition rises and new players enter the market (Tasca et al., 2016). Artificial intelligence can enhance efficiency levels, contain cost, and improve administrative processing, which will result in better-quality customer engagements (Shinde, 2020). Of the top 5 financial institutions, the one with the least number of branches in SA has 604 branches some within a 5km radius (Business Tech, 2020) which is arguably indication that digital platforms have not been well integrated into society. This research study will outline why this is and seek to understand customer satisfaction expectations of the banking sector. This has necessitated a study of the ability of digital platforms to enhance customer service and subsequently to grow and retain a commercial banking customer base. The findings will bring insight into the relationship between digital banking, customer service and growth of a bank in developing economies in particular South Africa.

1.5 Research Objectives.

- 1.5.1 To determine the effect of digital platforms used by a Commercial bank in SA on operational efficiency of the bank in providing customer service.
- a) To investigate how to grow a South African commercial banking customer base through the use of digital platforms.
- 1.5.2 To identify barriers that bar digital platforms from enhancing customer service in South African commercial banks.
- a) To identify which digital platforms a commercial bank in SA uses to transact and engage with customers.
 - b) To identify the challenges a commercial bank in SA will experience in the effective implementation of digital platforms.

1.6 Research Questions.

- 1.6.1 How have digital platforms in commercial banking affected customer service delivery in South Africa?
- a) How effective has the use of digital platforms been in enhancing service delivery and subsequently enabling commercial banks in SA to grow their customer base?
- 1.6.2 How can digital platforms be improved to meet customer service expectations of commercial banking clients in SA?
- a) What digital platforms do commercial banks in SA utilise to provide transacting services to clients?
 - b) What are the digital platforms challenges and bottlenecks experienced in commercial banks in SA and how can these be resolved?

1.7 Research methodology

The research is exploratory in order to clarify the position and descriptive in nature in order to obtain an accurate profile of the situation (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2016). This study follows a quantitative method approach. This component deals with the customer satisfaction component where data collected from the sample guides to answer the objective of the study being to investigate digital platforms in commercial banks as a means to satisfying customer service expectations in South Africa. The data collection uses survey instrument distributed among front-line staff employed by a commercial bank in SA. Interviews and surveys utilising questionnaires are used to answer the research questions. The research opted for a modified SERVEQUAL approach and also strongly relies on secondary data such as the internet, released financial performance of the commercial banks, journal articles and regulatory publication.

1.8 Ethical Considerations

A gate keeper's letter from a commercial bank in SA has been provided in order to conduct the study and ethical clearance from University of KwaZulu Natal to conduct a survey on the study. Consent from the participants emphasizes that participation is voluntary and highlights that the details and responses of participants are kept anonymous and safe, used only for the study. The records will be available only to the researcher and supervisors and kept for a period of five years after which the data will be deleted or shredded.

1.9 Limitations to the Study

This article discusses the impact of digital banking as a means to enhancing customer satisfaction at a South African commercial bank, an area that has received insufficient attention in the literature. The study however is limited as the research does not consider personal retail banking; this avenue could add value because commercial clients enter the banking industry first in their personal capacity as such increasing the sample size. This study only focused on existing commercial clients and future studies can also focus on potential entrepreneurs. Lastly the time available to conduct this research was limited impacting the extent of the literature study. The discussion contributes to the on-going studies on the impact of digital banking and

provides insights on how banks can leverage digital platforms to ensure improved customer satisfaction, customer retention and increased market share. Future studies can include retail banking and consider how digital banking may exclude poor and uneducated communities.

1.10 Summary and conclusion

The study approach adheres to a logical structure of the research process and is presented in five chapters. The first chapter included an introduction to the study, background of the study, established a problem Statement and outlined the significance and justification of the study. Furthermore, the chapter outlined the research objectives and questions as well as summarized the methodology approach. Lastly the chapter reviewed the ethical considerations and limitations to the study. Digital finance in this study refers to financial services supplied through the internet, cellphones, computers, and cards connected to secure online payment devices. Furthermore, FinTech companies and creative providers of financial services offer wide range of novel products, financial enterprises, finance software, and innovative forms of customer contact, all of which are included in digital banking. While no universal definition of digital finance exists, it is widely agreed that it encompasses all technology, products, infrastructure, and services that enable persons to access payments, credit and saving facilities through online channels without having to visit a physical branch and deal directly with human financial service provider. In industrialized countries, the internet has established itself as a widely recognized distribution channel for the banking industry, and all traditional banks as well as new businesses are discovering its benefits over other channels.

In the following chapter the researcher intends to focus on the literature around digital platforms as a means to enhancing customer satisfaction at a South African commercial bank in order to meet the research goal and establish whether digital platforms are being adequately leveraged in order to produce meaningful stakeholder value. Following that, the researcher will conduct surveys through a questionnaire given to a sample of bank staff. The responses will be studied and based on the findings the research intends to suggest recommendations.

CHAPTER 2

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Innovation in technology is transforming the world into something never experienced globally before. Financial services firms have emphasized differentiation as a competitive strategy and the sector has placed a strong emphasis on lowering cost-to-income ratios. Additionally, competitive challenges, combined with the development of new technologies, have highlighted the strategic importance of technology as a source of differentiation and cost savings (Moutinho and Smith, 2000). The understanding of platforms and infrastructures in the digital age has been shaped by cutting-edge research from the fields of information systems, strategic management, and economics over the last few years. Subsequently society today has benefited from technological advances in a variety of ways and as such digital advancement have developed into a key element that improves the quality of services and transforming economies (Hammoud et al., 2018). The fourth industrial revolution will arguably materially modify the status quo in operations, work, and relations (Tasca et al., 2016).

The financial services sector is at a crossroads because despite the fact that many financial institutions have made significant investments in offering a positive digital experience, the online banking scenery remains out of grabs in terms of the South African landscape (BusinessTech, 2021a). Digital banking is banking conducted completely online, without utilising paper. The availability of banking services over the internet is also referred to as digital banking (Benton, 2020). Camarate and Maritz, (2020) argue that the banking industry in SA is gradually moving to a marketplace without boundaries, marked by impending entrance of new online enterprises challenging the current situation as well as triggering extraordinary innovation. Subsequently, banks have continuously invested in large-scale conversion initiatives intended to improve user experience, digitalization, creative operating methods as well as overall reduction of expense.

Financial service providers, like other service industries, have emphasized the importance of consumer satisfaction and service quality in achieving organizational goals, as well as a grasp of the impact of technology-based systems on these goals. The importance of consumer views

and behavior cannot be overstated (Moutinho and Smith, 2000). Client satisfaction is fundamental aspects of marketing research today. It integrates the procedures which result in a sale with after sale wonders such as the alteration of attitudes, reoccurring business, and devotion in general. When clients make a comparison of their perceptions of product or service expectations to performance, they feel satisfied (Hammoud et al., 2018). Accenture (2017) reported that customers value tools that enable instant self-service, are open to non-traditional providers and are ready for advice provided by computer-only on banking products. Non-account holders can now transfer funds using their mobile phone number, which is evidence that technology is arguably a carrier of financial services (Okoye et al., 2019).

Banks have long used technologies to optimize the efficiency and customer service, but they are nowadays facing innovation with far-reaching consequences for the industry. Notwithstanding the known benefits, results of technological advancements for financial system efficiency, financial stability, consumer protection and integrity necessitate a comprehensive response from regulators and supervisors (González and José, 2017). The use of electronics for banking has recently improved between 25 percent to 30 percent (Shinde, 2020). Notwithstanding, customers who exclusively use digital services remain with the lowest satisfaction levels in the banking industry, indicating banks have a lot of opportunity for development.

While banks focused on meeting regulatory requirements, digital firms and start-ups were able to enter the market by providing financial services at cheaper costs and with more efficiency. Customers have swiftly established more trust and familiarity with tech-based financial products, allowing these new non-bank businesses to prosper and grow quickly. Traditional financial institutions have reacted to increased competition by acquiring or collaborating with fintech start-ups, as well as investing extensively in internal fintech developments. There have also been the rise of financial institutions that are solely digital (Lyons, and Kass-Hanna, 2021). The digital transformation of financial services has only lately been embraced by non-bank market participants such as FinTech's and Mobile network operators.

The brick and mortar model used by commercial banks is threatened by the emerging digital platforms taking over financial services as clients have rapidly embraced the use of online banking and trading (Tasca et al., 2016). Banks need to be responsive to client requirement and

refrain from a blanket approach to clients (Govender, 2004). The distinguishing factor from other banks will be based on speed of execution (Chalmeta, 2006). Commercial banks that embrace and improve their operational digital platforms will better overcome the complexities introduced by globalization, modernization, and the fast-evolving technology (Okoye et al., 2019). Banks may be able to survive the stresses of poor growth, declining profitability, and rigorous regulation by using digital disruption to reestablish consumers' trust and reputation in society. Because consumers are already exposed to digital transformation in almost every aspect of their life, banks that can provide a better user experience will be closer to what customers want and need to fulfill their ambitions and take advantage of this new era's opportunities (González and José, 2017).

2.2 Digital platforms

In South Africa, the formation of digital banks is still beginning. Growth in digital banking is only achievable with investments from stakeholders who support and understand the digital bank's development route. TymeBank is first in SA to function completely on a cloud-based infrastructure network and be given a banking license (Kene-Okafor, 2021). The financial services industry has undergone a number of changes because of technological advancements. The Global Financial Crisis of 2008 was a historical turning point for the financial sector. Consumer confidence in traditional banking institutions plummeted after the crisis (Lyons, and Kass-Hanna, 2021). Additionally, the fears of the SA community about the security of their online banking activity have been heightened by the Experian data hack. Due to extensive lockdown limits imposed by COVID-19, banks have been obliged to improve their digital platforms, introducing a new dynamic in how they function (Melamedov, 2020). COVID-19 has expanded the use of online channels by millions of South Africans. Furthermore, financial institutions are under greater pressure than ever before to adapt and innovate in order to meet shifting consumer demands and the growing disruption brought by rapidly evolving technology (BusinessTech, 2021a).

The number of people utilizing mobile banking applications has increased dramatically since 2011. Not only has consumer satisfaction with the mobile channel improved, but so has mobile banking usage. Mobile banking has surpassed all other channels, according to Power (2020), and has become the most enjoyable engagement channel. In tandem with the growth in mobile

banking usage, the attempt to become a "digital bank" is beginning to pay off in a number of key areas for some of the largest financial institutions. The top banks had greatly increased overall customer satisfaction, mostly owing to digital offerings (Marous, 2016). TymeBank claims to add One Hundred and Ten Thousand new clients monthly on average. This establishes it as a global leader in digital banking in emerging regions, with a goal of reaching 4 million customers next year. TymeBank now outperforms its African competitors in terms of growth and can be considered one of the world's fastest-growing digital banks (Kene-Okafor, 2021).

Cloud banking is becoming progressively crucial in confirming that services be delivered quicker and more flexibly, which is augmented when delivery happens through a Software as a Service model, which is especially important for SA banks as the environment migrates toward more streamlined and customer-focused banking (BusinessTech, 2021a). Digital infrastructures include the Internet, data centers, and electronics like tablets and smartphones. While consumer devices are "lightweight" infrastructures compared to the Internet, which is "heavyweight," it is important to remember that cellphones are powerful computing and networking devices that, once they reach critical mass, can act as infrastructures. Digital technology' ubiquitous availability has hastened the development of digital infrastructures to enable digital innovation. Furthermore, easy-to-access digital infrastructure is crucial for the formation and growth of new digital businesses (Constantinides et al., 2018).

Financial institutions have traditionally been at the forefront of the digitalization of financial services and products. The debut of the Automated Teller Machine in the late 1960s signaled the start of digital financial services innovation. The Internet's arrival in the 1990s accelerated this process, particularly in the developed world, when regulated financial institutions began to offer online banking services (Lyons, and Kass-Hanna, 2021). Digital infrastructure refers to the computation and network resources which permit numerous stakeholders to arrange service and content needs (Constantinides, Henfridsson, and Parker, 2018). Recent years have experienced a spike in curiosity on online platforms and digitization. Amazon, Facebook, and Google are three of the world's most valuable companies, all of which are platform businesses with short histories. Simultaneously, many long-established firms are considering how platform thinking may help them improve their performance (Constantinides et al., 2018).

According to the literature, four significant elements of customer satisfaction with digital banking service quality are efficiency, reliability, security and privacy, and responsiveness and communication (Hammoud et al., 2018). Digital platforms is viewed as a collection of digital resources, such as services and content, that allow external producers and users to collaborate to create value. They distinguish such platforms from product platforms. Physical assets in the form of infrastructural resources are not always held by the digital platform. Rather, it is consistent with a platform ecosystem paradigm that stresses basic interactions among platform participants, such as customers, producers, and third-party actors (Constantinides et al., 2018). An area which digital entrants can gain insurmountable edge over traditional bankers is their ability to adapt. Quickly launching a minimum viable product (MVP), then testing and adapting. Because they are not restricted by legacy systems and are generally built around off-the-shelf, easy-to-customize platforms, digital banks are expected to deliver new product features, price plans, and channels in a minimum number of designs, development, and testing sprints (Camarate and Maritz, 2020).

An optimal digital banking experience is critical to a bank's future success or, in certain cases, it can be argued the bank's existence. Whether institutions take the digital journey alone or partner with a technology provider, they must be able to rapidly build and deliver continual development. Success will hinge on the capacity to absorb and utilize new technologies and capabilities (Benton, 2020). Not all digital banks have however lived up to the high standards that were raised when they first opened their doors. Those who can build a clear segmentation model and differentiate themselves, have found success in some of the world's most competitive banking sectors. They've adopted an agile development methodology and developed a business strategy focused on monetizing user input via carefully constructed communities. It can be argued that this recipe will be used by digital entrants in South Africa to make the same impact in the local banking sector (Camarate and Maritz, 2020). A modern digital banking infrastructure must be adaptive and versatile, as well as scalable without compromising performance; as a result, a modular microservices-led architecture has become the norm (Benton, 2020).

2.2.1 Digital platforms in banking

In most cases, the phrases "online banking" and "digital banking" are used synonymously. However, there is a thin line separating the two meanings. Online Banking deals with the necessities of daily life, such as checking balances, examining transactions, and moving monies. This is the bank's primary function, and it has been moved online thanks to online banking. Online banking is furthermore a tool for accomplishing a goal. Although it's a means to an end, digital banking is a goal in itself. The goal of digital banking is to digitize all of a bank's operations, whether they are fundamental or not. Digital banking's major goal is to serve customers from account opening through account closure. The goal of digital banking is to eliminate the need for customers to visit a bank office so they may manage all of their banking needs on their own (Tavaga, 2021).

The fintech era has evolved, marked by a wide range of new service providers as well as a variety of innovative digital financial solutions. New market actors today include technology corporations, fintech's, startup companies, mobile network carriers, and many more, in addition to traditional banks, financial institutions, advisors, and planning firms. Furthermore, the recent COVID-19 epidemic has heightened the need for digital banking and has hastened the spread of digital financial products and services (Lyons, and Kass-Hanna, 2021). The Reserve Bank in SA encourages innovative digital participants by promoting a favorable regulatory environment.

PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC) identifies three significant themes that are influencing the local banking industry. To begin with, there has been a rise of digital solutions with lower-cost models introduced by financial services providers in the vicinity. Secondly, non-financial services businesses are launching sector and industry-specific banks, which are tightly interwoven with broader supply chains; and lastly, the four South African universal banks are continuing to evolve to meet changing consumer, regulatory, and technological needs (Camarate and Maritz, 2020). This is evidenced by among others ABSA's announcement of its plans to hire approximately 250 highly skilled professionals in the coming months as part of its in-house skills development program, and to help with the financial services sector's digital transformation (Business Tech, 2021b). According to FNB, in order to speed up its bold fintech

aspirations in banking, insurance, investment, and telecoms, it will hire 300 additional digital experts in order to enhance its current cohort (Business Tech, 2021c). ABSA reported having seen a significant increase in the market's demand for technology and security skills, as financial services and other industries increasingly focus on digital innovation. They attribute this shift to among others the Covid-19 pandemic, which it said have disrupted traditional banking practices in the last year (Business Tech, 2021b).

Camarate and Maritz, (2020) argue that in SA, the changing nature of the sector has arguably slowed down in some cases. The authors argue that while TymeBank has softly started with limited services, the spread of branchless, digital banking is still awaiting the public introduction of high-profile companies like Bank Zero and Discovery Bank. Nevertheless, timing of these institutions' and their offers' debuts suggests that increased competition in the industry looming. The four big banks in SA, on the other hand, are not powerless in the face of the challenge introduced by the newcomers. Contrasting the competition, they already serve a sizable share of the country's retail and commercial consumers. The major banks will require adoption of clear operating models and innovation strategies to sustain their competitive edge and confront the challenge provided by fast-paced entrants. They'll also need to establish a culture that encourages flexibility and calculated risk-taking (Camarate and Maritz, 2020).

In recent years, individuals and businesses around the world have increasingly used the internet and/or mobile devices to make payments and transfers, deposit and save money, finance, and borrow and to manage risks. Table 2.1 below depicts the evolution of financial products and services via digitalization, including some of the new digital financial products and services that have gained traction in recent years. When it comes to harnessing the power of digital financial products and services, developing economies such as China, India, and Kenya have leapfrogged ahead of most others (Lyons, and Kass-Hanna, 2021).

Table 2.1: Evolution of financial products and services via digitalization

Financial Services	Traditional Products and services	New digital products and services
Payments and transfers	Cash/ATM Cheque Wire/MTO Debit/Credit cards	Mobile payments, mobile money, mobile PoS Peer-to-peer payments Business-to-business transactions Digital wallets, e-wallets, mobile wallets
Savings and Investments	Bank deposits Mutual funds Bonds Equities	Mobile banking Micro saving and micro investing apps Mobile market funds Blockchain stocks and bonds Online brokers Mobile trading Crowdfunding or equity crowdfunding social trading
Borrowing and Financing	Bank loan Microcredit and microloans Bonds Mortgages Trade credit	Crowdsourcing and alternative financing Crowdfunding Online business lending Blockchain bonds Electronic or e-leasing Electronic or e-invoicing Electronic or e-factoring Credit scoring and modeling
Risk Management	Insurance Brokerage underwriting structured products trading regulation Compliance KYC	Digital or e-insurance Peer-to-peer insurance Social insurance Online business insurance Smart contracts Regtech, suptech Crypto-asset exchange e-KYX Digital ID

Source: Lyons, and Kass-Hanna, (2021): pp 2-3

It's no longer just about having a digital banking presence; it's also about how the platform curates and personalizes the experience for a certain consumer segment. All banks must strive for a seamless digital customer journey (whether for query resolution, product applications, or personalized money management), which is supported by a digital banking platform that incorporates machine learning (ML), natural language processing, and open application programming interface (APIs), none of which should be visible to the customer (Benton, 2020).

2.2.1.1 Payments and Transfers

The coronavirus epidemic prompted a quick move from cash to digital, resulting in a surge in demand for digital payment and transfer solutions around the world. The most significant game-changer has been the use of mobile money to conduct basic daily transactions. Mobile money is a type of digital technology that allows you to deposit or withdraw money, pay bills, and transfer money between financial accounts or persons using your phone. Mobile money differs from other digital financial products and services in that it has strong ties to a diverse group of collaborators, including mobile network operators, fintech's, banks, non-bank financial institutions, retailers, and governments (Lyons, and Kass-Hanna, 2021). As a result, it's no surprise that it's quickly become a crucial instrument for effectively engaging in today's digital economy and a vital element of the financial services scene.

Point-of-sale (PoS) machines are compact, portable devices that read a card and approve and complete a transaction. At supermarkets and gas stations, this is the favored method of payment. As the popularity of digital banking has expanded, PoS terminals have evolved into more than just physical PoS devices. Virtual and mobile point-of-sale terminals have evolved, utilizing mobile phones' near-field communication technologies and web-based applications to initiate payment. Mobile wallets have reduced the requirement of memorizing pin numbers, input Card Verification Value information, or have currency on hand. Furthermore, they preserve credit card and bank account information so that customers can deposit money into their wallets instantly and shop at other shops who use similar apps. Mobiwik, Freecharge, Paytm are examples of popular mobile wallets. Mobile wallets, however, usually have limits on the value that may be transacted. Depositing monies from the mobile wallet back into the bank account may be subject to a modest cost (Tavaga, 2021).

Globally there are 1.2 billion recorded mobile money accounts increasing monthly with an average of 300 million accounts (GSMA, 2021). In 2020, these accounts accounted for a 13% increase, more than doubling the expected growth rate. Every day, more than \$2 billion USD is exchanged, with this figure predicted to reach \$3 billion USD by the end of 2022 (Lyons, and Kass-Hanna, 2021). International remittances transferred through mobile phone have surged by 65 percent in the last year, with more than \$1 billion USD being sent and received

every month for the first time. Africa has the largest mobile money market in the world, with M-Pesa being the most successful supplier (M for mobile and pesa for money in Swahili). Kenya's biggest mobile network operators, Vodafone Group and Safaricom, launched M-Pesa in 2007. It's a branchless banking service that lets users use their mobile device to deposit, withdraw, transfer money, pay for products and services, and access credit and savings via a network of banking agents (Lyons, and Kass-Hanna, 2021).

2.2.1.2 Savings and Investments

The internet, among the many disruptive technical advancements, has been one of the most revolutionary discoveries, causing a profound paradigm shift. The advent of online banking has had a significant impact not just on the banking business, but also on associated industries such as investing and portfolio management (Ramakrishnan, 2020). Financial advisers have traditionally been seen as the experts in charge of investment decisions, and in the past, individuals have relied on their knowledge to make sound investment selections. Stocks, bonds, and mutual funds have a complicated vocabulary to decipher. However, as the internet has evolved, this sector has become more democratized, and smartphones have made it easier than ever to learn about financial products while on the go. Internet banking has made it possible for investors to keep track of their investment portfolios in real time, allowing them to invest or trade at the touch of a button. By entering into their bank account and clicking on the required field, they can now get a real-time report of their investments (Ramakrishnan, 2020).

2.2.1.3 Borrowing and Financing

Most customer relationships revolve around credit, and digitizing it provides major benefits to both banks and customers. For the bank, effective transformations result in increased revenue and cost savings. End-to-end credit experiences, including customer experience and supporting credit processes, are being transformed digitally. The average time the traditional bank takes to decide for corporate lending is between three to five weeks. This period is further extended by compliance with conditions of approval and legal documentation. Subsequently, the customer will often receive the funds in approximately three months on average (Chappell, Harreis, Havas, Nuzzo, Papanides and Rowshankish; 2018). Understanding customer expectations is the first step in enhancing service quality (Bick et al., 2010). According to

Hammoud et al., (2018), quick response and effective communication, appear to have a significant impact on customer satisfaction. Subsequently, leading banks have embraced the digital lending revolution, reducing the amount of time it takes to make a lending decision to five minutes and ensuring that processing of payment of the required funds is less than 24 hours (Chappell et al.; 2018).

Both lenders and borrowers have benefited from digital lending. Especially during the Covid19 pandemic, when limited physical interaction was the norm and doing business as usual was tough. From loan origination to disbursement, the digital lending platform manages the whole loan lifecycle. Customers have the ability to choose a loan product at their leisure, and lenders have the opportunity to reach new borrowers and expand their client base due to these lending platforms and other fintech advances. Furthermore, human judgment is replaced by algorithms, which provides a reasonably risk-free platform for lenders to assess creditworthiness while also providing a straightforward and accessible platform for borrowers to raise funds for immediate needs. The digital loan application process eliminates geographical barriers and the need for physical movement, allows lenders to automate the decision-making process to streamline the process, and replaces human judgment with decision rules, which ensures consistency in the process because the software adheres to pre-set rules and consistently applies loan rules and credit policies (Celusion, 2021).

2.2.1.4 Risk management

Africa is one of the most active insurance markets in the world. After Latin America, the continent has become the second-fastest-growing market for insurance due to steady economic growth in most countries and a largely underdeveloped insurance sector. 70% of total African premiums as depicted in Figure 2.1 below are paid in South Africa (Bagus, Girancourt, Mahmood and Manji, 2020). Insurance companies have been walking the route toward digital transformation for some time, but Covid-19 has hastened the transition. As businesses throughout the world realized how badly the crisis would affect their operations, customer engagement became more important than ever as more clients needed to discuss payment holidays or file claims for business interruption. This necessitated reaching out to clients as quickly as possible through the most appropriate channels. Consequently, insurers had to acknowledge the significance of utilizing technology that improves the client experience, particularly when it comes to consumer communication (Sibbald, 2021). The shift to digital

channels is well underway in Africa, and with it comes increasing expectations for service quality. While many insurers are beginning to digitize customer journeys, there are still many places where this may be done more quickly. Insurtechs have jumped in to address the growing need for digital solutions (Bagus et al., 2020).



Figure 2.1: Primary insurance regions in Africa

Source: (Bagus, Girancourt, Mahmood and Manji, 2020).

Consumer demand and buying behavior have shifted dramatically as a result of the epidemic, necessitating new digital assets such as seamless onboarding and robust identity verification at the point of contact. Bagus et al., (2020) argue that organizations in all industries, including insurance, must embrace innovation to remain competitive in today's digital economy. Sibbald, (2021) reasons that artificial intelligence can help customers have a better experience by analyzing data based on activities performed with the insurance or changes in life phases that modify their demands. Meanwhile, machine learning can assist in determining whether material is appropriate for a consumer based on available data such as previous behavior, demographics, and geography, making it easier to deliver truly hyper-personalized communication. Furthermore, Sibbald (2021) believes that insurance companies are unlikely to see improved circumstances in the coming months, given the economy is expected to take years to recover. As a result, insurers must build on the positive customer communication practices they formed in the aftermath of COVID-19 to provide an even better customer experience.

2.2.2 Benefits of digital banking

Traditional banking had a number of flaws, one of which was the overemphasis on paper. Using digital banking has eliminated the need for paper checks and statements. A user can access their account at any moment to keep tabs on their records. With digital banking, a user can do financial operations at any time of day or night because of the constant availability of banking capabilities (Tavaga, 2021). A decade ago, the most apparent feature of technical growth in banking to the consumer was ATMs, which at the time had revolutionized the delivery of financial services since their inception (Moutinho and Smith, 2000).

All in all, technology has allowed decision makers to significantly reorganize distribution, leading to fewer branch locations and fewer human tellers (Moutinho and Smith, 2000). Thanks to digital transactions, the days of travelling to a bank or fund house and standing in lines to manually fill out forms to create SIP or mutual fund accounts are long gone. Due to regularities such as E-KYC and the adoption of the Unified Payments Interface, the time it takes to complete a transaction has decreased from three days to one to two days. Fund houses are increasingly relying on technology for a variety of procedures, allowing them to shorten processing times and improve customer service. Even banks, such as Digibank by DBS, are utilizing mobile banking to increase investments in their products (Ramakrishnan, 2020).

Automated financial advice is in recent years being digitized in addition to distribution and customer relationship channels. More companies are using computer algorithms and/or decision trees to give consumers advice without, or with limited human intervention. Financial advice can be made more inexpensive by automating processes, allowing historically marginalized or underserved individuals access to a wider range of financial products as a result of these efficiency benefits. Apart from that, the independent intermediation of automated advice services may increase competition among financial product providers, creating incentives for even greater efficiency gains in the banking sector (González and José, 2017). Fund transfers using digital banking lessen the risk of counterfeit money. At the stroke of a button, a user may report, and block lost credit cards via digital banking. This advantage significantly improves the privacy and security of clients. Digital banking also helps to curb the spread of counterfeit currency by encouraging a paperless culture and allowing the

authorities to trace financial movements. In the long term, digital banking is predicted to reduce a currency's minting needs (Tavaga, 2021).

Individuals and businesses around the world have increasingly used the internet and/or mobile devices to make payments and transfers, deposit and save money, finance, and borrow and to manage risks. In terms of harnessing the power of digital financial products and services, China, India, and Kenya have "leapfrogged" ahead of most other countries (Lyons, and Kass-Hanna, 2021). Banks can provide fast inter account payments to commercial clients on 24 hours throughout the year basis using real-time payment systems. Payment service companies will incur large upfront costs to deploy real-time payment systems. However, they may result in future efficiency improvements due to lower investment costs for legacy system maintenance and upgrading, as well as reduced variable administration fees when other payment methods such as cheque payments are replaced by real time (González and José, 2017).

2.2.3 Digital platform barriers in banking.

There are significant initial implementation costs for digital platforms such as real-time payment systems and this cost is transferred to the client (Gonzalez-Paramo, 2017). Despite the potential for financial savings, the long-term consequences are unknown. The impact of ATMs and other technologies on profitability will be determined by consumer attitudes and behavior. Decision makers are concerned about their propensity to use technology-based services or look for alternative providers (Moutinho and Smith, 2000).

When opposed to typical retail payment systems, real-time payment technologies pose unique risk problems in terms of financial stability. The payments system, as well as the participating payment service providers, face increased operational continuity and reliability due to the system's continuous availability (including outside of typical business hours). Furthermore, due to the pace of electronic payments, delays and disruptions in service will be directly visible to end-users, thereby triggering reputational risk sooner. Some operational incidents may go unreported by clients in typical retail payments with deferred clearing. Additionally, increased fraud risk may worsen operational hazards. Indeed, fraudsters may find real-time payment

systems more appealing because of the instant availability of funds for the recipient (González and José, 2017).

Power, (2020) argues that as bank customers migrate from branches to digital, overall satisfaction has historically declined. Developments in technology have efficiency benefits; however, Gonzalez-Paramo (2017) argues that the integrity of the financial system, consumer protection and financial stability need a holistic response by regulatory bodies. He further notes that the rigid legacy infrastructure, cyber risk, and the possibility of a pool of clients not embracing technology is a real challenge. Lyons, and Kass-Hanna, (2021) claim that banks have been constrained by regulatory restrictions, which make lending difficult and expensive.

2.2.4 Global adoption of banking digital platforms.

An optimal digital banking experience is critical to a bank's future success. It's no longer enough to have a digital banking presence; it's also important to consider how the platform curates and personalizes the experience for a current or target consumer group. All banks must strive for a smooth digital client journey as their ultimate goal (Benton, 2020). In an ever-changing digital world, the financial services industry is currently experiencing another wave of innovation that is transforming the business. There has been a noticeable increase in the number of digital products and services being offered to clients, especially those related to mobile and smartphone devices, which is the most obvious change (Lyons, and Kass-Hanna, 2021).

India aims to one day create a cashless economy and speedy improvement of providing internet connectivity to the citizens is expected to result in 150 million online banking customers by the end of 2020 (Tavaga, 2021). As depicted in Figure 2.2 below, the five countries conducting the largest number of online banking transactional include China, USA, UK, Japan, and South Korea. All of which are developed countries according to the world population review. Deloitte (2017) estimated that by 2021, 3 billion people throughout the world are expected to have access to retail banking services via mobile phones, iPad, computers, and wearable technology. Furthermore, they recognize the primary tactical areas for development in banking as including

technology progresses and advances, the expectations and needs of consumers for service are rising. Customers today want the ability to function and conduct transactions without going to the bank. Furthermore, this must be possible without the constrain of operation hours, resulting in quick and efficient transactions. Consequently, freedom, elasticity, independence and flexibility need to be met in order to satisfy these objectives (Hammoud et al., 2018).

Despite having a significant and positive outcome on client gratification, security and privacy seem to measure less influential than effectiveness and easy to utilize, reliable, responsiveness and communication. Variable response and communication, on the other hand, were shown to have a considerable impact on customer satisfaction. As a result, Hammoud et al., (2018) discovered that quick response and efficient communication, both of which are crucial for customers having issues with digital banking services, appear to have a significant impact on customer satisfaction.

2.3.1 Customer Satisfaction in Commercial banking

To describe consumer satisfaction, a number of different definitions have been presented. However, most definitions seem to agree that comparing post-product or service performance to pre-formed expectations is a good idea (Hammoud et al., 2018). The broad principle is that customer happiness is a crucial variable for evaluation and control in bank marketing management has received considerable support (Moutinho and Smith, 2000). Customer satisfaction is a variable that distinguishes one institution from its competitors, allowing it to gain a long-term competitive advantage in the face of global and local rivalry. As competition grows and new companies enter the market, banks must embrace technology-based solutions to be competitive in the twenty-first century (Tasca et al., 2016). As pioneers of electronic services, banks in most developed countries are committed to the continuous improvement of service in order to retain and attract clients. Customer needs and lifestyles are continually evolving, so the goal was to try and meet those needs and lifestyles as they change (Hammoud et al., 2018).

The financial model of commercial banks is reliant on the ability to grasp and satisfy customer service expectations in order to retain business (Mbama and Ezepue, 2018). Studies have demonstrated that factors that contribute to good customer service in the banking industry

include product quality, price, service quality and efficiency (Mujinga, 2020). According to Hammoud et al., (2018), efficiency and ease of use of the service are important characteristics of service excellence. Customers can make their transactions more cost-effective by using a bank's electronic services, not only in terms of money but also in terms of time. Digital-only customers, on the other hand, remain with the lowest levels of satisfaction in banking according to Power (2020), showing that financial institutions still have a lot of room for development.

2.3.2 Emerging customer trends.

Customer service has grown increasingly important to reflect, particularly in the banking industry globally. Banks face the challenge of integrating disparate systems into a coherent, efficient infrastructure while providing the highest level of customer service and convenience without exposing their customers to the bank's internal system integration problems as they continue to provide an increasing number of financial services and products (Amoako, 2012). Commercial banks, according to Okoye et al., (2019), will need to consciously investigate ways to provide customer service in a speedy, efficient, effective, and cost-effective manner in order to thrive in this global and techno-savvy world. The developing banking business, which is undergoing substantial changes, places a premium on customer centricity (Lee and Lee, 2020). Non-account holders can now transfer funds using their mobile phone number, which is evidence that technology is arguably a carrier of financial services (Okoye et al., 2019). Accenture (2017) reported that customers value tools that enable instant self-service, are open to non-traditional providers, and are ready for advice on banking products provided by computer-only.

According to Accenture (2017), in order to gain client loyalty, banks must build a value proposition that includes both digital innovation and traditional values. The findings of the study by Hammoud et al., (2018) found that not only is service quality an important factor in customer satisfaction with digital banking services, but that reliability is the most important factor in determining customer satisfaction. Existing research suggests that service quality is a predictor of customer satisfaction, with a considerable and positive impact. The findings also revealed as depicted in Figure 2.3 below that, when it comes to the quality of electronic banking

services, convenience and efficiency, privacy, security and communication as well as responsiveness have a major effect on client gratification (Hammoud et al., 2018).

Theoretical model.

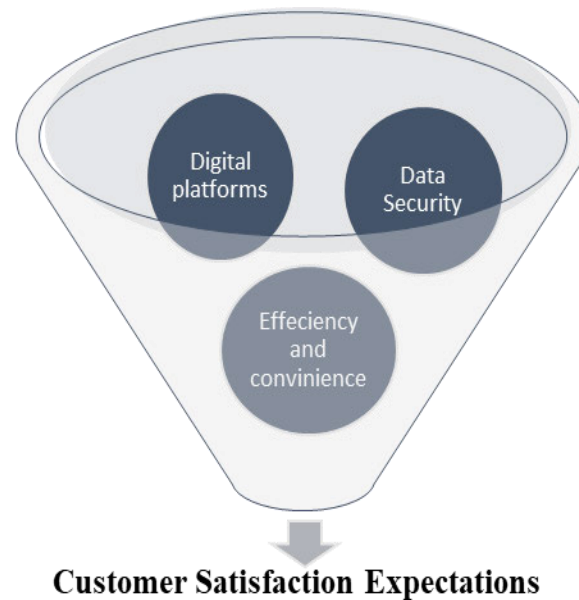


Figure 2.3: Customer satisfaction expectations.

Source: Author

Research demonstrates that the number of people utilizing mobile banking apps has increased dramatically since 2011. This is in support of the notion that clients appreciate comfort and ease of banking, so banks should look for more strategic ways to improve customer delivery. Mobile banking has surpassed all other channels, according to Power (2020), and has become the most delightful engagement channel. In tandem with the growth in mobile banking usage, the attempt to become a "digital bank" is beginning to pay off in a number of key areas for some of the largest financial institutions. Overall consumer satisfaction had grown significantly at the biggest banks, mainly primarily to digital products (Marous, 2016). Customers' impressions of human service delivery, as well as their subsequent levels of satisfaction, are said to have a bigger impact on bank switching than when the same service is supplied via automation. In addition, there is a link between service performance and customer satisfaction, thus financial institutions should continue to develop effective systems for tracking and managing client happiness and retention (Moutinho and Smith, 2000).

2.4 Enhanced digital platforms

The Temenos Value Benchmark is a strategic survey-based program that assesses business performance and value creation enabled by IT investments. It is organized around qualitative best practices across eight domains of the banking value chain, among other things. Top performing banks that use Temenos software have achieved industry-leading cost-income ratios of 25.2 percent and returns on equity of 25 percent, which is more than double the industry average, according to the Temenos Value Benchmark. These banks are also in a better position to capture a larger market share in the future, as many unsatisfied customers from other banks will shift to better services (BusinessTech, 2021a). Online purchase has become simple as payment channels have grown well-integrated with online shopping portals. Online payments have been greatly influenced by internet banking. With digital banking, a user can set up automatic payments for typical utility bills such as energy, gas, phone, and credit cards. Consumers are no longer needed to keep track of due dates. The customer has the option of receiving reminders about upcoming payments and past due balances. The spread of digital financial services to remote locations looks to be a step in the right direction. Rural residents have access to low-cost cellphones and internet access in remote areas (Tavaga, 2021).

2.5 Expansion of market share in Commercial banking

New opportunities emerge as a result of deregulation and technological advancements, but the skill required to capitalize on them effectively may be unclear to many banks. Since the pandemic began, demand for digital banking services has experienced increased interest from all economic levels globally. Digital banks like Zolve and Nubank have been raising capital to accommodate this demand in recent months. A South African startup has come on board this time. TymeBank, a digital bank based in South Africa, said that it has acquired an investment of R1.6 billion to assist it grow and expand its business across the country. It's worth mentioning that this falls among the continent's biggest digital bank fundraising efforts. TymeBank provides both a savings account and a transactional bank account with no or low monthly fees. Physical kiosks, which can be found in Pick n Pay and Boxer stores across the country, are used to enroll the majority of its customers (Kene-Okafor, 2021).

Since its launch in February 2019, TymeBank has grown dramatically and now has approximately 2.8 million customers. The company claims that by the end of next month, it will have reached 3 million customers. More investors are recognizing the importance of digital banking and the company's value propositions, which include improving access to underbanked and underserved customers in South Africa, as well as satisfying customer demand for low and transparent bank fees, which are widely regarded as both costly and difficult to comprehend across the country, they believe (Kene-Okafor, 2021).

2.6 Conclusion

New inventions in technology is transforming economies. Customer acquisition, cross-selling, and satisfaction are all increasing as a result of digital banking investments, while branch traffic and associated costs are falling (Tasca et al., 2016). The emergence of new age fintech firms is likely to accelerate the growth of digital platforms, making it easier for users to transact digitally while also decreasing processing time and costs for fund houses and investment organizations. People may be tempted to move their wealth from physical assets to investments. However, sufficient information and awareness should be provided to internet investors in order for them to make informed judgments. Additionally, clients must be educated, particularly in underdeveloped countries, since a lack of information regarding digital transactions causes them to be hesitant to use these means (Ramakrishnan, 2020).

Consumer data privacy and security, regulatory arbitrage, fair competition, and financial stability are all issues that have been brought up. These issues must be addressed by regulatory frameworks that regulate non-bank fintech businesses' entry and operations in a way that promotes healthy competition in the marketplace while also protecting consumers. So far, the tactics taken have been diverse in terms of geographical regions and financial activities. Researchers and financial practitioners must develop a deeper understanding of how digital financial products and services are evolving, as well as the associated benefits and risks, in the current environment. A few survey articles have attempted to assess the current state of digitalization within the financial services industry, as well as the expected trends. Failure to fully participate in the new digital financial system might increase existing financial insecurity and hinder one's potential to create financial resilience and long-term financial stability (Lyons, and Kass-Hanna, 2021).

The broad premise that customer happiness is a crucial variable for evaluation and control in bank marketing management has received considerable support. Similarly, the standing of quality service in the delivery services has been emphasized (Moutinho and Smith, 2000). The decreasing importance of physical branch network and emergence of FinTech's demonstrates the relevance of the objective of the study; being to investigate digital platforms in commercial banks as a means to satisfying customer service expectations in SA will add to existing knowledge.

CHAPTER 3

3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

When doing research, the art of selecting the appropriate approach is not always easy to master. A researcher must balance the benefits and drawbacks of various solutions while considering the numerous variables. Furthermore, the study's setting may bring problems and hurdles that must be addressed in order for the approach to be credible. Research equips managers with the required information to make well-informed decisions. Sekaran and Bougie, (2016) define research as the process of solving a problem after a thorough study and analysis of the situational factors. They argue that research further includes the processes of inquiry, investigation, examination, and experimentation, all of which must be carried out methodically and objectively.

This chapter will discuss the research process, design and methodology used in the study so as to establish the role of digital platforms as a means to enhancing customer satisfaction at a South African commercial bank. The chapter begins by situating the research in the context of the research philosophy's body of knowledge, which led to the selection of an acceptable research methodology. This presentation will incorporate the research technique, which is covered extensively, as well as the aims and objectives of the study, participants and location, data collecting techniques, research design and methodologies, and data analysis.

3.2 Aim of the study

The business procedures of financial organizations have changed over time. Global and local rivalry have highlighted the strategic importance of quality, contentment, and loyalty in order to acquire client preferences and hence build a sustainable competitive advantage. Customers' needs must be adhered to, and service providers must continue to focus on meeting these demands. Service businesses, especially banks, rely on a devoted customer base to stay afloat. Four major retail banks in SA have historically dominated the financial services sector presenting a barrier to entry for new banks. These big banks already have the majority of the country's established businesses and higher salary earners as clients. Furthermore, they have

designed and established a successful banking offering as well as value proposition that compete well in the environment (Ntimane, 2020).

To compete, Capitec Bank, a relatively new player in the market, established a simple banking business model that drastically changed the financial services landscape in South Africa. Capitec Bank's business model and strategy are based on utilizing newly available digital technology to provide low-cost banking products and services to its customers. Simpler digital registration and transaction application processes, as well as stripped-down branches, were all part of the digital business plan. The digitalization of banking put established banks' old business models to the test, putting their paper-based processes and sophisticated operations to the test (Ntimane, 2020).

By conducting research into the impact of digital platforms as a means to enhancing customer satisfaction at a South African commercial bank one is able to evaluate the importance of physical and human relationship management in the delivery of financial services. Furthermore, the study provides guidance into the association between digital platforms, human service delivery and customer satisfaction. The results will provide insight on customer satisfaction, where data collected from the sample guides to answer the objective of the study. This chapter highlights how the researcher will collect and analyses data in order to solve the presented problem statement and obtain the objectives of the study. The following study objectives were addressed using this research methodology:

Objective 1

To determine the effect of digital platforms used by a Commercial bank in SA on operational efficiency of the bank in providing customer service.

- a) To investigate how to grow a South African commercial banking customer base through the use of digital platforms.

Objective 2

To identify barriers that bar digital platforms from enhancing customer service in South African commercial banks.

- a) To identify which digital platforms a commercial bank in SA uses to transact and engage with customers.
- b) To identify the challenges a commercial bank in SA will experience in the effective implementation of digital platforms.

3.3 Research design

The researcher's strategy for responding to a research question is known as research design (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). The design shows source of data collection and explains how the said data will be collected and analysed. Furthermore, the research design will outline any bottlenecks such as access to data, insufficient time available to complete the study, funding requirements or even access to location of the study, that the researcher may experience in the process (Saunders et al., 2016). The purpose of this research is to gather data from a group of people in a methodical and organised manner in order to achieve a group conclusion. Furthermore, the researcher did a descriptive study employing a quantitative technique for the aims of this study, as this was the most fitting strategy. It is a descriptive research since it examines the features of a group of individuals, in this case, their view of digital platforms as a method of improving customer satisfaction. The period necessary for the completion of this thesis is roughly half a year. This is also the time frame allocated by the university to complete the research project.

3.4 Research Approach

There are several tools that may be used to obtain information while investigating a given subject. There are distinctions between qualitative and quantitative research that must be understood before choosing a method for a study. Qualitative research techniques differs from quantitative research methods in that they take a different approach to academic investigation. Although the techniques have similarities, when critically evaluating scientific research, the research technique used has an impact on the questions that are asked and the answers that are provided. Furthermore, the research technique used has a direct impact on the methodologies used, the scrutiny performed, the conclusions drawn, and the overall goal of the study (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016).

Creswell and Creswell, (2018) reason that qualitative study is a method used to investigate and comprehend the meaning ascribed to a problem and the analysis thereof refers to data that has not been quantified through the use of conceptualization based on meanings represented by words (Saunders et al., 2016). Furthermore, qualitative research employs inductive approaches based on theory construction, in which the process begins with explanations and includes recurrent sampling in order to find generalizations on the subject under investigation. Qualitative research includes educating readers about the purpose of qualitative research, mentioning specific designs, carefully reflecting on the researcher's role in the study, drawing from an ever-expanding list of types of data sources, using specific protocols for recording data, analyzing the data through multiple steps of analysis, and mentioning approaches for documenting the methodological integrity and accuracy of the data collected (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

Quantitative studies on the other hand are an inquiry into a recognized predicament based on testing theories, quantified with figures, and scrutinized with statistical tools. Other authors define quantitative research as research which identifies properties of an apparent occurrence but does not involve altering the environment under investigation (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). Calculations and chart creation are carried out in quantitative analysis using analysis software ranging from spreadsheets like Excel as in this study, to more complicated data management and statistical analysis software applications (Saunders et al.,2016).

The study will follow a quantitative method approach. The quantitative component will deal with the customer satisfaction component where data collected from the sample will guide to answer the objective of the study being to investigate digital platforms in commercial banks as a means to satisfying customer service expectations in South Africa.

The research will be exploratory in order to clarify the position and descriptive in nature in order to obtain an accurate profile of the situation (Saunders et al., 2016). The study will be a cross sectional research study. Saunders et al., (2016) defines a cross sectional study as one that will provide a “snapshot” taken at a point and time predominantly because of the time constraints that exist in producing an academic research project.

Mainly primary data will be used in the study however incorporate an element of and secondary data such as industry statistics and publicly available reports. Primary data is defined as information that is collected by the researcher for consequent examination to answer a research problem (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). Saunders et al., (2016) describe secondary data as information that was collected for another purpose. The research will strongly rely on publications and readily public information reported in the media.

Triangulation validation will be used to verify research data. Saunders et al., (2016) defines validation as a technique used to establish credibility, validity and authenticity of data, interpretation, or analysis. The best strategy was triangulation validation, which confirms the consistency of data collected using many instruments and increases the chance of controlling, or at the very least analyzing, some of the risks or numerous factors that impact the study's result. Based on the nature of the research problem, deductive approach to theory will be adopted. Saunders et al., (2016) argue that deductive reasoning happens if a conclusion is reached logically from observations and the result being true when all observations in the set are correct and data gathering is used to assess propositions related to a theory that exists. The deductive approach was selected as it has the ability to assist the researcher in staying focused on the goal of the study.

3.5 Research Strategy

A strategy is a set of instructions for accomplishing a certain objective, in this instance completing the research. A research plan will assist the researcher in achieving the research objectives and answering the study's research questions. The research method chosen will be determined by the research objective and the kind of research questions, as well as the researchers' perspective on what constitutes excellent research and practical considerations like data availability and time restrictions (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016).

The research strategy employed in this study is the survey research strategy. According to Mouton (2005), a research strategy is an overarching plan that researchers use to go about answering research questions, and in this study, surveys were the most appropriate method to use. This choice was made for a variety of reasons. To begin, surveys were regarded the most appropriate way above other research strategies, in line with Saunders et al., (2016), who

identified surveying as the most common and prevalent strategy in management research. Second, surveys are a cost-effective technique to collect data from a community using questionnaires. Sekaran and Bougie, (2016) define a survey as a method of gathering data from or about individuals in order to characterize, compare, or explain their knowledge, attitudes, or behavior. In business research, the survey approach is popular because it allows the researcher to obtain both quantitative and qualitative data on a variety of study issues. This strategy is appropriate for this research as the study follows a quantitative approach. Furthermore, surveys are often used in exploratory and descriptive research to gather information about individuals, events, or situations which is appropriate in this study.

3.6 Data collection method

The procedures used to collect data are an important part of every research project. Interviews, observation, and surveys are only a few examples of data collection methods, each with its own set of benefits and drawbacks. The mechanism of data collection for this study was a questionnaire. A questionnaire can be defined as pre-made set of open-ended or closed-ended written questions to which the respondent must provide answers. Saunders et al., (2016) argue that questionnaires operate better when the questions are standardized, and the researcher can be certain that all respondents will understand them in the same manner. As a result, questionnaires are commonly utilized in descriptive or explanatory research.

Descriptive research, such as that conducted utilizing attitude and opinion surveys and organizational practice questionnaires, can allow the researcher to discover and characterize the variability in various occurrences. Explanatory or analytical research, on the other hand, will allow the researcher to explore and explain correlations between variables, particularly cause and effect interactions (Saunders et al., 2016).

The data collection in this study uses a survey instrument distributed among front-line staff employed at one of the major commercial banks in SA. A survey utilising questionnaire is adopted to answer the research questions. A modified SERVEQUAL approach has been adopted to fulfill the objective of the study. The questionnaire was distributed through electronic mail on October 4, 2021. The respondents were given two weeks to complete the questionnaire and submit their responses. The replies were due on Friday, October 15, 2021.

Surveys strategies using questionnaires is the chosen method of data collection because it is inexpensive and permits collection of standardised information from a substantial population and allows for uncomplicated evaluation. To allow the respondent to answer the questions and avoid any misconceptions that could destroy the data irrevocably, the questions in this study were simple, brief, and to the point. Questions should be fair and constructed in such a way that they are easy to grasp and adhere to the respondents' ideas as much as feasible (Kothari, 2004).

The research also strongly relies on secondary data such as the internet, released financial performance of the commercial banks, journal articles and regulatory publication. The study will adopt an analytic research survey design as the aim of the study is to test theories about a phenomenon by examining and testing the associations between variables. The survey questionnaire will be sent through email as this is a free and user-friendly method of conducting online surveys.

3.7 SERVEQUAL Model

SERVQUAL is a multi-dimensional research tool that captures customer expectations and perceptions of a service along five dimensions as shown in Table 3.1 below, that are thought to characterize service quality. SERVQUAL is based on the expectancy-disconfirmation paradigm, which defines service quality as the degree to which consumers' pre-purchase quality expectations are confirmed or disproved by their actual impressions of the service experience (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry, 1988). When dealing with consumers, it is important to grasp how their minds function. Furthermore, one must comprehend what motivates their decisions and actions. Everything boils down to perspective. The SERVQUAL methodology is a quality management tool that was created and implemented first by Zeithaml, V., Parasuraman, A., and Berry, L. The model is a mechanism for capturing and measuring customer service quality. Furthermore, SERVEQUAL is used to discover the perceived gap between what an organisation perceives it is delivering to customers and what the consumer believes they are receiving (Mulder, 2018). The SERVQUAL questionnaire constituted a breakthrough in the measuring methodologies used for service quality research when it was first released. Many authors prefer to combine both qualitative and quantitative studies when applying SERVEUAL (Mulder, 2018).

Table 3.1: The 5 Dimensions of Service Quality

Dimension	Definition
Reliability	The ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately
Assurance	The knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to convey trust and confidence
Tangibles	The appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel, and communication materials
Empathy	The provision of caring, individualized attention to customer
Responsiveness	The willingness to help customers and to provide prompt service

Source: Parasuraman, et al., 1988: page 23

Despite the fact that SERVQUAL has a lengthy history of interest and a plethora of context-specific applications, it has received some criticism from scholars. Caruanaa, Ewing, and Ramaseshan, (2000) however argue that although extensive research has been undertaken using SERVQUAL, there are still a number of challenges with service quality measurement that have yet to be resolved. They recommend that further study on expectations, as well as the clarification of gap concerns and the underlying factor structure, are all needed. Notwithstanding the above, they maintain that the SERVQUAL questionnaire is arguably the most widely used standardized questionnaire for assessing service quality (Caruanaa et al., 2000).

3.8 Data Analysis

Data analysis involves examining information incorporating steps that include the organization and preparation of data; the use of computer programs and presenting and interpreting results using graphs, tables, and figures (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). A method of respondent and non-responded analysis will be incorporated into data analysis in order to determine response bias. Bias means the responses provided by non-respondents would have materially altered the overall findings (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

The data was reviewed for completeness once the surveys were completed, and any outliers, discrepancies, or blank replies were dealt with in a consistent and specified manner. The data was subsequently entered into a Microsoft software program Excel spreadsheet document to package the report, ensuring that an electronic record of the summary information was available. The information was then coded, updated, and entered into a spreadsheet. The act of assigning numbers to participant responses is known as coding, and it is a key part of data analysis since it provides for a better understanding of the results. Due to the possibility of human error at this stage, the researcher double-checked at least 10% of the coded questionnaires for accuracy (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). The researcher's personal computer, which was password protected, was used to keep all questionnaire-related files and papers.

3.9 Validity and Reliability

This question is based on how a researcher prepares a section in a study on the processes that will be used to validate the findings of the planned study (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). To guarantee that their results are reliable and credible, researchers must convey the procedures they will use in their studies. The use of techniques by the researcher to assure the accuracy of the findings is referred to as qualitative validity. A metric is dependable to this extent if it consistently produces the same findings. Reliability is a required component to the validity of a study, but it is not a sufficient criterion for validity. It is possible to employ reliable equipment with confidence, knowing that temporary and situational influences will not interfere. Furthermore, trustworthy instruments are durable and perform effectively at various times and under various situations (Cooper and Schindler, 2014).

3.10 Participants and location of the study

The study examined Standard Bank client facing bank representatives, in senior, middle and junior management roles. These representatives have been employees at Standard bank for a period ranging from a month to 40 years. Some have also been employed at other banks in south Africa. The participants also have different levels of education, ranging from a grade 12 certificate to a master's degree in different fields of studies. These measures were not used to accept or eliminate any participants. The population consists of employees from several Standard Bank branches located in South Africa. Sekaran and Bougie (2016) define a population as the complete collection of individuals, things, or situation of interest that the academic wishes to examine. The target population is a subset of the population and more manageable (Saunders et at, 2016).

According to Rapapali and Simbanegavi (2020), South Africa has 36 banks of which 33 are commercial banks. The five biggest commercial banks in SA according to Business Tech, (2020) include Standard Bank, FNB, Nedbank, ABSA, and Capitec. These five institutions have representation in all nine provinces of SA. Standard Bank staff where selected as the access was made available to the study site through a gate keeper's letter. Due to time constrains in the completion of the study, and difficulty in receiving access to other study sites, it would have proved challenging to obtain access to other study sites and engage personnel from other banks. However, secondary data in the form of public information was utilised in order to strengthen the validity of the findings.

The study site will be Standard Bank, which is a South African commercial bank. Standard Bank is a financial services company listed on the Johannesburg stock exchange which was founded in South Africa with a global presence focused on emerging economies. It has a presence in 30 countries worldwide, including 20 in Africa. Standard Bank was founded in 1962 as a South African affiliate of the British foreign bank Standard Bank. Standard Bank Group is an African and international financial organization that provides banking and financial services to individuals, businesses, institutions, and corporations. By assets and earnings, the Standard Bank Group is Africa's largest bank in South Africa and is reported to employ 49 000 employees (Standard Bank, 2021).

3.11 Sampling Strategies and methods

A sample is defined as a subgroup of the population (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). The sample was drawn from the population of bank staff employed on a permanent basis in client engaging capacity roles at a commercial bank in SA. These roles include relationship managers, portfolio managers, account executives, private bankers, sales consultants, global markets managers in the treasury team and even executives who engage with clients on a regular basis and are employed to foster a relationship between the bank and its staff. The study examined perceptions of client facing managers because they will have the ability to provide in-depth insight relating to the study because of their direct link in a professional capacity with both customers and the bank, which is the focus of the investigation.

It is not known how many of the 49 000 group employees at Standard bank are permanent and client facing. As a result, this population is not measured. Non-probability sampling (or non-random sampling) is used in the study. Sampling is defined as the process of choosing the correct people, events, or objects to represent the whole population (Sekaran and Bougie,2016). Non-probability sampling is described as a situation where every person in the population has the same probability of being chosen (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). The researcher selected to use the non-probability sampling strategy because for exploratory investigations non-probability sampling is fitting. Furthermore, it has been shown that scholars use the strategy in inquiries wherever random probability sampling is impracticable because of cost and time restrictions which is the case in this study. The respondents were selected because they are employed in a client facing capacity and will have the ability to give in-depth insight into the study due to their professional relationship with both clients and the bank, which is the subject of the inquiry.

The questionnaire for this study was completed by 44 out of a hundred people, for a success rate of 44 percent. However, 3% of the respondents did not finish the survey, while 53% did not respond to the invitation to complete the questionnaire. The population and procedures used to determine sample size were explained in the preceding section.

This research has a sample of $n=44$, which may be arguably considered small given the size of the study site. Given the sample size, the researcher urges against using these findings to

execute the suggestions in a general and broad sense. This type of use should be carefully scrutinized to ensure that the application is effective and will not result in unfavourable outcomes. The researcher however believes that the sample is adequate to provide useful insight and guidance on the research question.

Creswell and Creswell, (2018) argue that except for quota samples, the question of sample size is puzzling for all non-probability sampling procedures, but most importantly, unlike probability sampling, there are no rules relating to sample size when it pertains to non-probability sampling. It is more crucial to have a logical relationship between the sample selection technique and the objective and emphasis of the research, rather than making broad generalizations about a group. As a result, the sample size the researcher will choose is determined by the research questions and objectives, specifically what the researcher aims to establish, what will be useful, what will be credible, and what the researcher can achieve with the available limited resources.

3.12 Ethical considerations

The relevance of ethical considerations is addressed by the majority of authors that discuss research designs. The researcher ought to respect the rights, requirements, morals, and preferences of the informant as investigative studies have an element of being intrusive. The informant's space and thoughts is invaded, and sensitive material is routinely exposed (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). Some ethical problems were explored. A gatekeeper's letter from Standard Bank of South Africa was requested and supplied. Furthermore, ethical clearance was obtained from the University of KwaZulu Natal to conduct a survey on the topic: Digital platforms as a means to enhancing customer satisfaction at a South African commercial bank. Before granting the ethical clearance, the university needs to establish among others the purpose of the study, receive details of the study as well as the methodology that will be applied in the study. Furthermore, the university ensures that the study will not be to anyone's detriment, the relevant consent has been received and how the integrity of the participants will be maintained.

Respondents have the option of participating or not participating in the survey, and the survey enumerator has informed them of the poll's objective as well as the confidentiality of their responses. Emerging ethical problems were explored and addressed during the study's execution. The goal and importance of the study, as well as confidentiality, were indicated in the introductory section of the questionnaire for this purpose. Respondents were advised that they had complete freedom to fill out the questionnaires or withdraw from the research at any time, with no negative repercussions, and that their participation or non-participation is voluntary and would not damage them.

Structured questionnaires as depicted in appendix 3 were circulated to obtain primary data. The questionnaire is made up of matched pairs of anticipation and perception items that are organized into five dimensions that are thought to correspond to the customer's mental map of service quality parameters. The questionnaire includes measures to capture tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy in both the expectations and perceptions sections.

There were two sections to the questionnaire. The respondents' statistical profile was addressed in the first portion, which included eight generic demographic questions. The second segment focused on the research objectives, which included determining the respondents' opinions on digital platforms as a method of improving consumer satisfaction. The twenty-seven questions in this component of the study instrument were logically organized into five sub dimensions, which corresponded to the five SERVEQUAL dimensions of service quality. To shield their responses from preconception, only generic information was included in the paragraph of the questionnaire. Respondents' confidentiality was maintained, and their identities were not revealed. The records will be accessible only to the researcher and supervisors and will be stored for five years before being destroyed or shredded. Finally, by citing every reference utilized, all study findings have not been hidden and are free of plagiarism. Furthermore, the survey was conducted in an open-minded way, with attitudes presented as they are. Nothing was updated or modified. As a result, the material that will be obtained will be given as is, and all of the literatures gathered for the purpose of this study will be appreciated in the reference section.

3.13 Conclusion

The researcher addressed the research method employed in this study in this chapter. There was also discussion of the research design, research methods, and ethical issues. The methodology used to conduct the survey was described in detail in this chapter. For the study, the researcher chose a quantitative data gathering technique. The questionnaire as the major data collecting tool was also discussed in this study. This survey instrument was distributed via e-mail. The findings of the questionnaire will be reported in the next chapter and an attempt is made to derive significant inferences from the information acquired.

CHAPTER 4

4 PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The presentation and analysis of data is an important aspect of research. It transforms unstructured data into actionable information that may be linked to research goals and suggestions. If this stage is done correctly, the results can significantly contribute to numerous fields of research and schools of thought (Bazeley, 2009). This chapter contains and discusses the research discoveries based on participant data analysis. The data obtained throughout the study process has created information, which must be analyzed.

It was stated in the previous chapter that for purposes of this study, a quantitative approach was used. Green, Willis, Hughes, Small, Welch, Gibbs and Daly (2017) argue that the examination of data must be rigorous and methodical in order to provide high-quality research. Studies that provide an explicit explanation of the data analysis process provide insights into how conclusions are obtained, whereas studies that describe themes that are grounded in data and theory generate the strongest evidence. The data acquired through the surveys was analyzed, and the material was summarized and reduced to a reasonable size

This research collects data using a survey instrument issued to front-line personnel at one of South Africa's leading commercial banks. To address the research questions, a questionnaire-based survey was distributed to Standard Bank front line staff. The study employs non-probability sampling (also known as non-random sampling). It has been demonstrated that researchers adopt this method in investigations when random probability sampling is impossible due to time or cost restrictions, as is the case in this study (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). The study looked at the perspectives of client-facing managers since they would be able to give in-depth insight into the study due to their professional relationship with both clients and the bank, which is the subject of the inquiry.

As indicated in chapter one, the study aims to enquire on digital platforms as a means to enhancing customer satisfaction at a commercial bank in SA. There are two main objectives to the study. Each with sub themes. These objectives of the research are:

- 4.1.1 To determine the effect of digital platforms used by a Commercial bank in SA on operational efficiency of the bank in providing customer service.
- a) To investigate how to grow a South African commercial banking customer base through the use of digital platforms.
- 4.1.2 To identify barriers that bar digital platforms from enhancing customer service in South African commercial banks.
- a) To identify which digital platforms a commercial bank in SA uses to transact and engage with customers.
 - b) To identify the challenges a commercial bank in SA will experience in the effective implementation of digital platforms.

To achieve the study's purpose, a modified SERVEQUAL technique was used. The research also heavily depends on secondary data sources such as the internet, commercial bank financial performance, academic articles, and regulatory publications. After the surveys were completed, the data was checked for completeness, and any outliers, discrepancies, or blank responses were handled in a consistent and standardized manner. The data was analyzed in the order in which the questionnaire items were asked. This chapter is broken into two sections: the first includes results on participants' demographic information, while the second focuses on findings relating to the objective of the study.

4.2 Survey Participation

The response rate for this study is shown in Table 4.1 below. The questionnaire was given to 100 Standard Bank employees. 77 of those who got the invitation to participate in the study opened and read the emailed invitation. 44 people in this sample replied favourably to the request. 3 respondents advised they would find the opportunity to attend to the survey, however the responses did not reach the researcher timeously and were excluded from the sample. 54% of those who were invited to answer the questionnaire did not respond to the request to participate in the survey. The researcher estimated that the survey would on average take less than 20 minutes to complete.

Table 4.1: Participation Statistics

	Count	Percentage
Number of individuals invited to Participate in the Survey	100	100%
Number of Participants that viewed the questionnaire	77	77%
Completion rate	44	44%
Attempted the survey, but did not complete it	3	3%
Did not complete the survey	53	53%
Average survey completion time	Less than 20 minutes	

4.3 Demographic profile of the participants

The respondents' backgrounds were evaluated using eight categories in the questionnaire. Gender, age, number of years at Standard Bank, current position held, nature of employment, number of years in present role, highest level of education, and number of large banks the respondent had previously worked for were among the categories. Demographic variables are, by definition, independent variables since they cannot be changed. These categories gave insight on among others the banking experience of the respondents, which would highlight their understanding of the banking sector, its clients, systems, and operations. The demographic profile would further assist in the understanding of how well placed the respondents were in providing a customer's view of the digital platforms as a means to improving customer satisfaction levels with the proposition of the banks to the marketplace. In illustrating the eight categories, the information will be presented in graphical format.

As depicted in Figure 4.1 below, the demographics of the respondents reflect that 59% were female and 41% were male. When comparing this percentage to the Standard Bank of South Africa workforce profile released by the bank in the Transformation report (2020), it is noteworthy to observe that women make up 62% (18,394) of the SA workforce of 29,581 permanent workers. This might explain why ladies in the study answered to the survey in greater numbers than males.

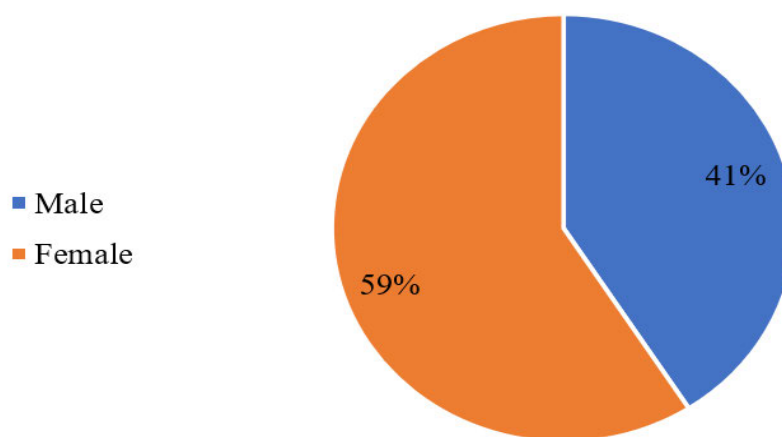
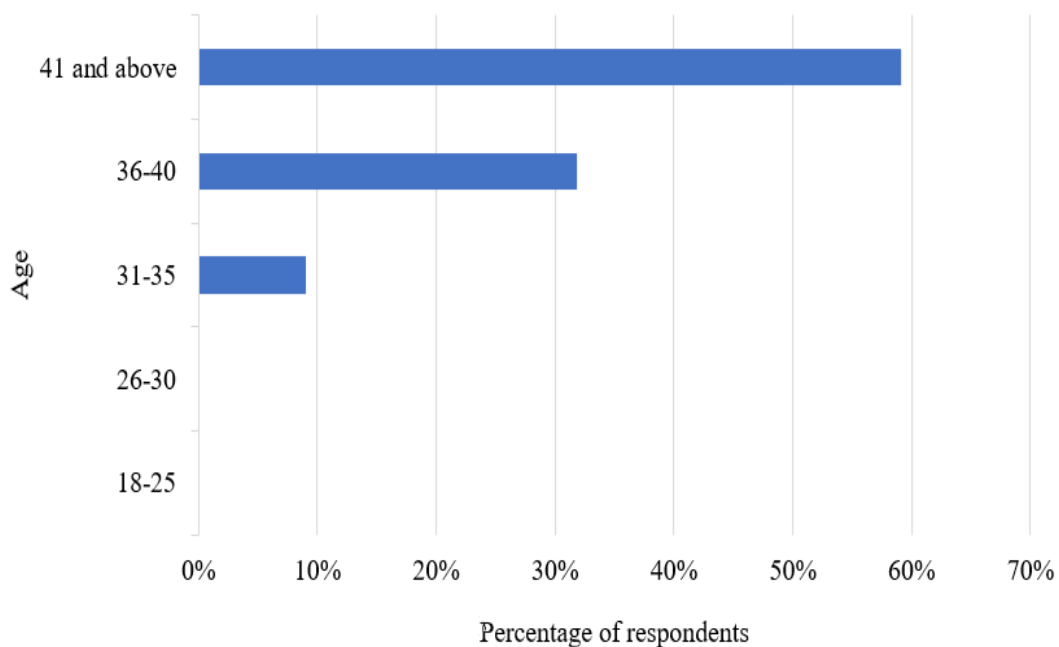


Figure 4.1: Gender of respondents

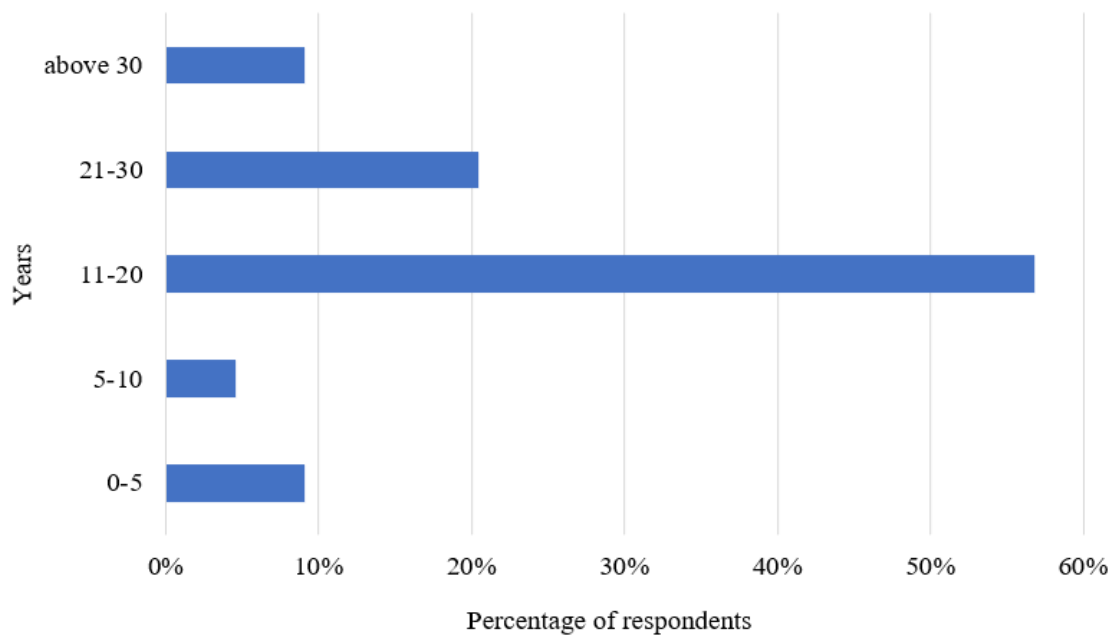
Figure 4.2 below displays the age category of the individuals that responded to the study. The responses to the survey received was from a group of people aged 31 years old and older. The range of years obtained was not intentional, the researcher simply did not receive any responses from the younger individuals requested to partake in the study. According to the findings 59% of the participants are older than aged 41. Participants between the ages of 36 and 40 made up 32% while the remaining 9% of responders are between the ages of 31 and 35. There were no people under the age of 31 who responded. The bulk of the respondents are middle-aged, which is not surprising given that the majority of the respondents are not in entry-level positions but managerial roles. Young graduates are typically employed at branches by banks, and after acquiring experience, they are offered opportunities in customer relationship management roles.



	18-25	26-30	31-35	36-40	41 and above	Total
Number of respondents	0	0	4	14	26	44
Percentage	0%	0%	9%	32%	59%	100%

Figure 4.2: Distribution of age

Figure 4.3 shows the number of years the respondents have been employed at the bank. According to the data 86 % (38 participants) of the 44 respondents have worked at Standard Bank for more than ten years. This further explains the age category data received in the age demographic above. Only 14% of the sample (6 employees) have worked at the bank for less than ten years. Given that the majority of the respondents work in relationship management, these findings make sense, since a bank representative must have a thorough understanding of the bank's systems, procedures, and operations in order to be trusted with the most crucial stakeholder in any organization, the customer.



	0-5	5-10	11-20	21-30	above 30	Total
■ Number of respondents	4	2	25	9	4	44
■ Percentage	9%	5%	57%	20%	9%	100%

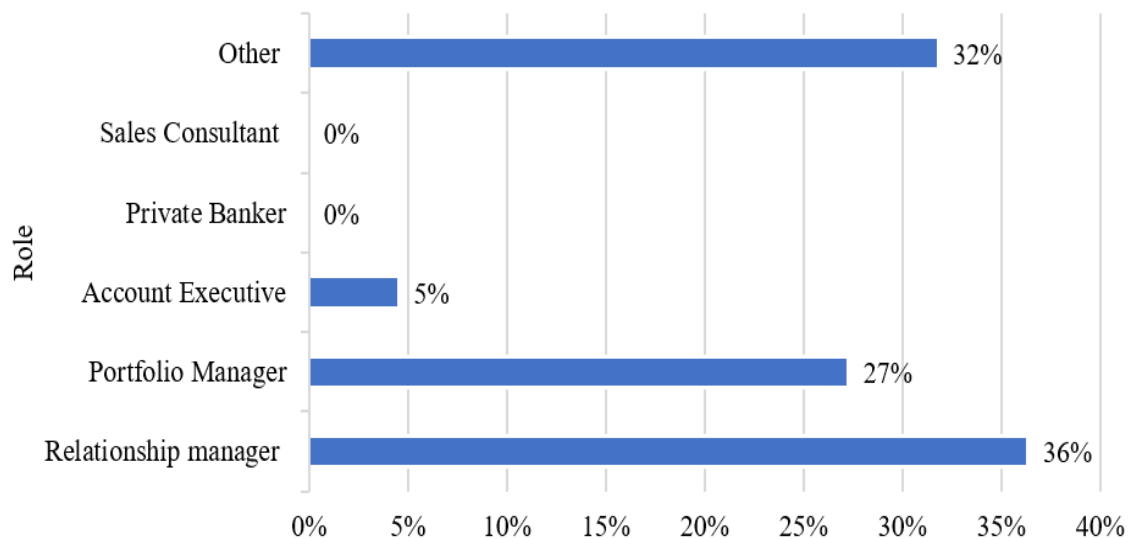
Figure 4.3: Number of years employed at Standard Bank

All the respondents in the study indicated that they are permanent employees at the bank as depicted in table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2: Nature of respondents' employment at the bank

Nature of Employment.	Percentage	Number of respondents
Full time	100%	44
Part time	0	0
Total	100%	44

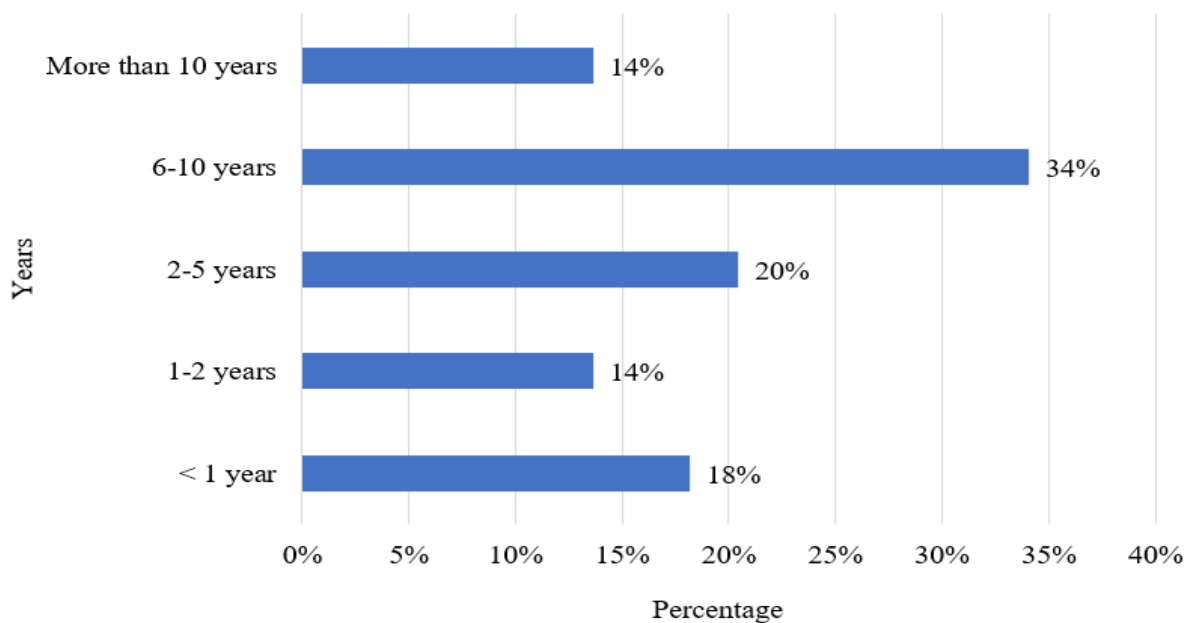
As shown in Figure 4.4 below, 36 % (16 participants) of all respondents work as a customer relationship manager, and 5% (2 participants) work as an account executive. The customer relationship manager role and the account executive role have exactly the same deliverables. The difference in the roles is that they service different divisions in the bank and consequently different customer segments. The roles are labeled differently in order to identify them with ease. The portfolio managers, who make up 27% of the respondents, are the relationship managers' support personnel. Consequently, the data indicates that 68% of the respondents are customer relationship managers whose major responsibility is to serve as a conduit between the bank and its customers. 14% of the respondents are either executives, or product and sales managers who support the relationship management role.



	Relationship manager	Portfolio Manager	Account Executive	Private Banker	Sales Consultant	Other	Total
■ Number of respondents	16	12	2	0	0	14	44
■ Percentage	36%	27%	5%	0%	0%	32%	100%

Figure 4.4: Current position held

Figure 4.5 displays the breakdown of the tenure spent in the position in which the respondents are currently employed. Just like the years of experience, this demographic provides an understanding of the time spent with the customers and whether the respondent is qualified to provide us with insight of the client understanding, perception and satisfaction as far as it pertains to the ability of digital platforms in enhancing customer satisfaction in the bank. 48% of the respondents indicated that they have been in the current role for more than 5 years while 20% have a tenure of between 2 to 5 years in the same role. Only less than 18% of the respondents have been in their current roles for less than a year. BusinessTech (2016) reported that for three years in a row (2009 to 2011), the average employment duration which represents the length of time an employee has been with their present company has stayed unchanged at 47 months. This duration however fell to 44 months in 2015. This research shows that the average banker stays longer in their role and company.



	< 1 year	1-2 years	2-5 years	6-10 years	More than 10 years
Number of respondents	8	6	9	15	6
Percentage	18%	14%	20%	34%	14%

Figure 4.5: Number of years in current position

All the participants in the study currently work for Standard bank. Of this sample, 50% (22 participants) have only worked for standard bank. In addition to working for Standard Bank, Figure 4.6 shows that 35% indicated that they have also previously been employed by ABSA, 19% by Nedbank, 9% have worked at Investec, 2% at FNB and 14% of the sample have been employed by other banks. It was surprising that none of the 44 respondents have ever worked for Capitec Bank. This is because over the past 20 years, the presence of Capitec Bank has materially grown in South Africa.

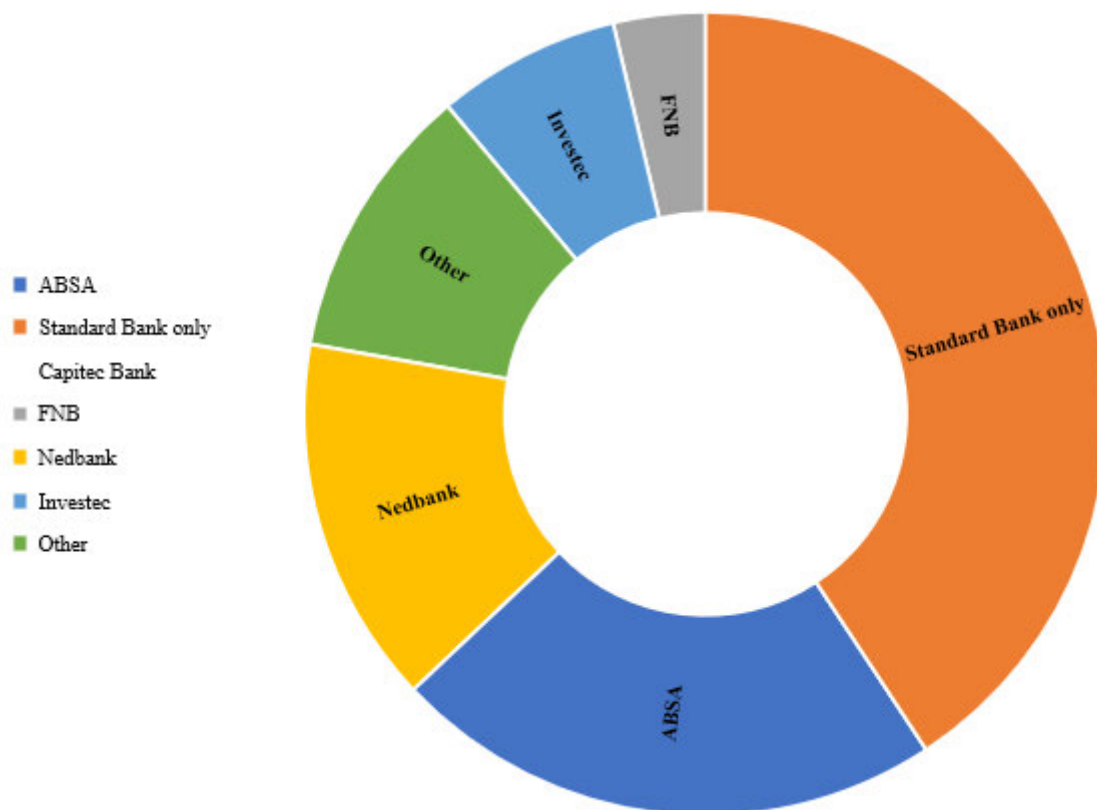


Figure 4.6: History of respondents' employment

According to Figure 4.7 below, more than three quarters (84 %) of the respondents held a bachelor's degree or higher. About 7% of the remaining respondents had a diploma qualification or some form of banking certificate, while only 9% had successfully acquired a matriculation certificate as the highest academic achievement. None of the participants had a qualification lower than Matric and It was also discovered that none of the participants had earned a PhD or Doctorate qualification.

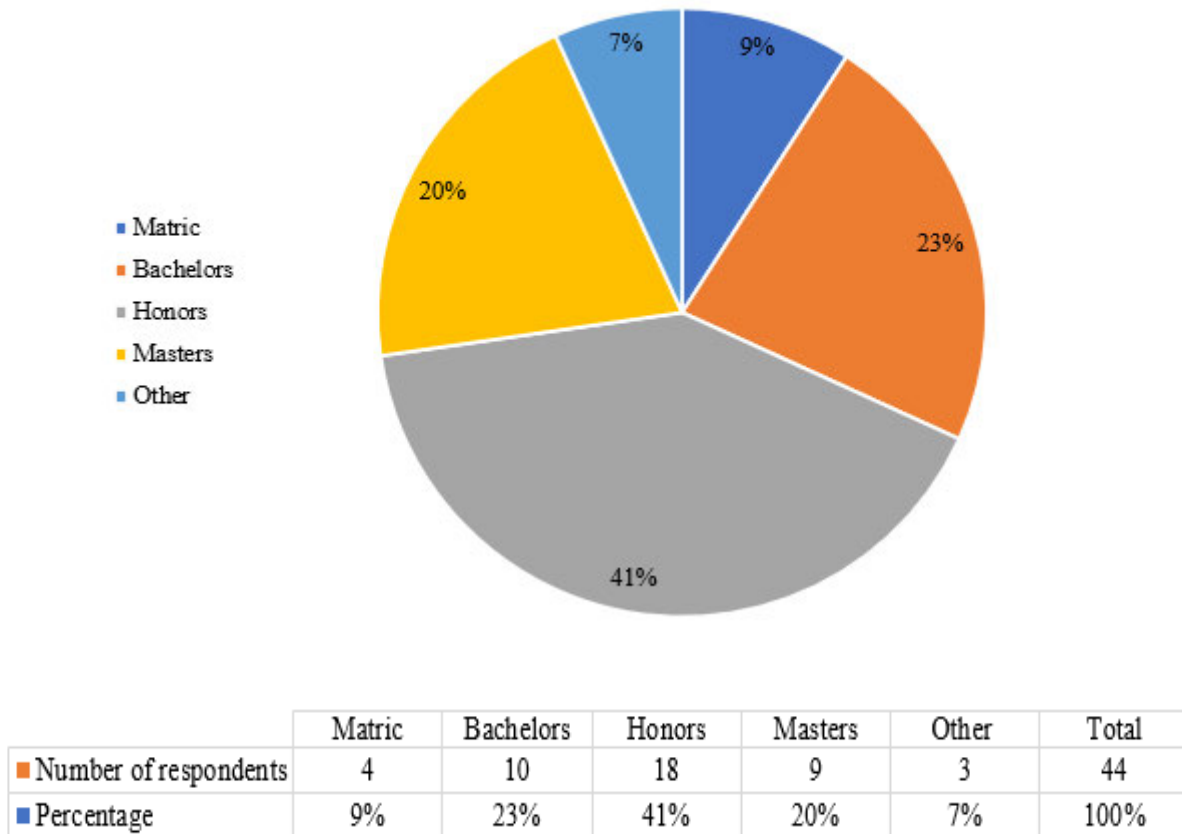


Figure 4.7: Highest Education level

The demographic question were asked to evaluate suitability for purpose in aiding in addressing the objective of the study. According to the data presented, more than 82 % of those interviewed through the questionnaire are employed in customer relationship management and supporting roles and have the primary task of acting as a liaison between the bank and its clients. Furthermore, 86 % have worked at the study site for more than ten years. The statistics above arguably demonstrate that the majority of respondents are well equipped to address the topic of whether banking digital platforms can improve customer satisfaction levels in the banking sector. Three-quarters (84%) of those polled had a bachelor's degree or above academic qualification and approximately 7% of the remaining respondents held a diploma or some type of banking certificate. This demographic information could arguably imply that they are well informed, understand the questions presented to them, and understand the purpose of the questions that were supplied to them in the questionnaire.

The study's overall findings may be utilized to identify developmental needs of staff capabilities necessary for managers in influencing consumers' adoption of digital platforms in order to improve customer satisfaction levels.

The empirical study findings will be presented in graphical form in the following sections, and they will be interpreted. Furthermore, the below section will deal with the questions that were presented to the respondents in addressing the research questions outlined previously in the first chapter in order to realize the objectives of the study.

4.4 Findings of the study according to the 5 dimensions of service quality

In 1988, American marketing experts Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Berry devised and executed the Service Quality Model, also known as the SERVQUAL Model. The model is a way of capturing and measuring the level of service that consumers receive. SERVEQUAL is also used to determine the perceived gap between what an organization feels it is delivering to customers and what the customer believes they are receiving (Mulder, 2018). Considering that service quality is a grading, rather than a quantifiable evaluation, it can be difficult to evaluate where companies genuinely stand. Consequently, Klokkenga, (2020) argues that knowing how to measure the five dimensions of service quality will help to uncover concrete methods of improving customer experience and delight consumers. These five dimensions include reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles (Parasuraman, et al., 1988).

In the study, the SERVQUAL model's five criteria were used to gauge how respondents felt about digital platforms in terms of improving customer satisfaction at a commercial bank. The subdimensions of reliability and responsiveness each contained six questions, while the subdimensions of assurance, empathy, and tangibles each had five. The agree and strongly agree responses were used to establish the variables that positively influenced customer satisfaction using the SERVQUAL assessments, which were based on the five-point Likert scale measures used. To establish the exact characteristics that contributed favourably to customer service and satisfaction, the twenty-seven categories were scored from highest to lowest using a total score of agree and strongly agree. Neutral was used to determine a mid-point view of neither agree nor disagree while disagree and strongly disagree were used to determine aspects that did not contribute favourably to customer service and satisfaction.

4.4.1 Reliability

Reliability is the first component of service quality to examine. This refers to the company's ability to deliver on its promises in a timely and accurate manner, as well as its ability to provide appropriate solutions and service. Furthermore, includes an entity's capability to provide the service timeously, always, and with no errors (Parasuraman, et al., 1988). Figure 4.8 below summarises the responses received in the study in relation to the reliability dimension.

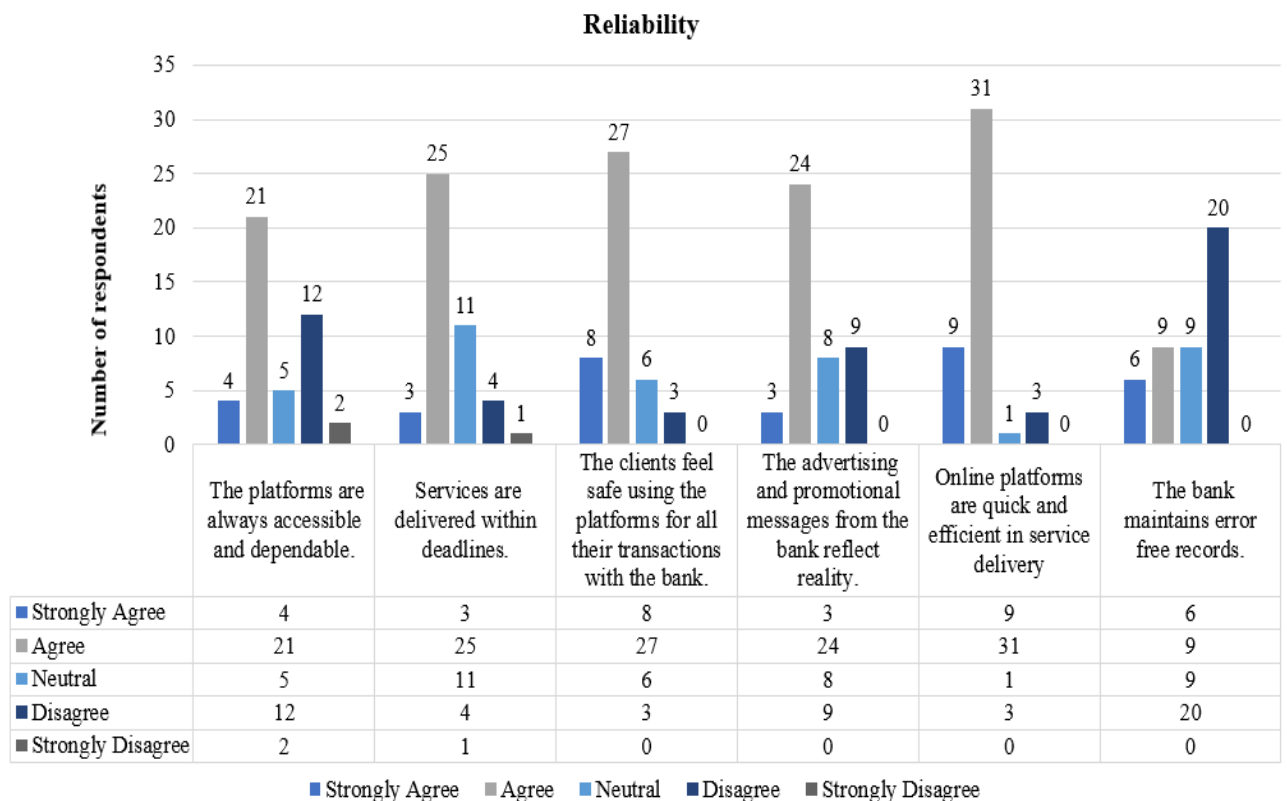


Figure 4.8: Responses to reliability measurement

Figure 4.8 shows that 57% of the respondents agree or strongly agree that the available digital platforms in the banking sector are always accessible and are dependable while 32% of the respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. Furthermore 64% of the respondents believe that services are delivered within agreed turnaround time. A greater proportion of the respondents (80%) trust the digital platforms in the bank as they indicated that the clients feel safe using the platforms for all their transactions with the bank. 40 out of the 44 respondents who took the survey indicated that digital platforms are a quick and efficient

service delivery mechanism. None of the respondents outlined that they strongly disagree with this notion. 45% of the respondents indicated concern around the bank’s ability to keep error free records, while 20% remained numb of the matter. Only 34% showed confidence in the bank’s record keeping abilities.

4.4.2 Responsiveness

The responsiveness of service quality is the second dimension. This dimension measures the willingness to aid customers and deliver prompt service as well as assesses the organization's capacity to respond quickly to client requests (Parasuraman, et al., 1988). When businesses fail to respond to consumers, especially without evident cause and explanation, customers develop an unfavourable impression of the company. Six questions were asked in this area as per Figure 4.9 below. All of the questions earned good ratings, demonstrating a substantial positive relationship between responsiveness and customer satisfaction.

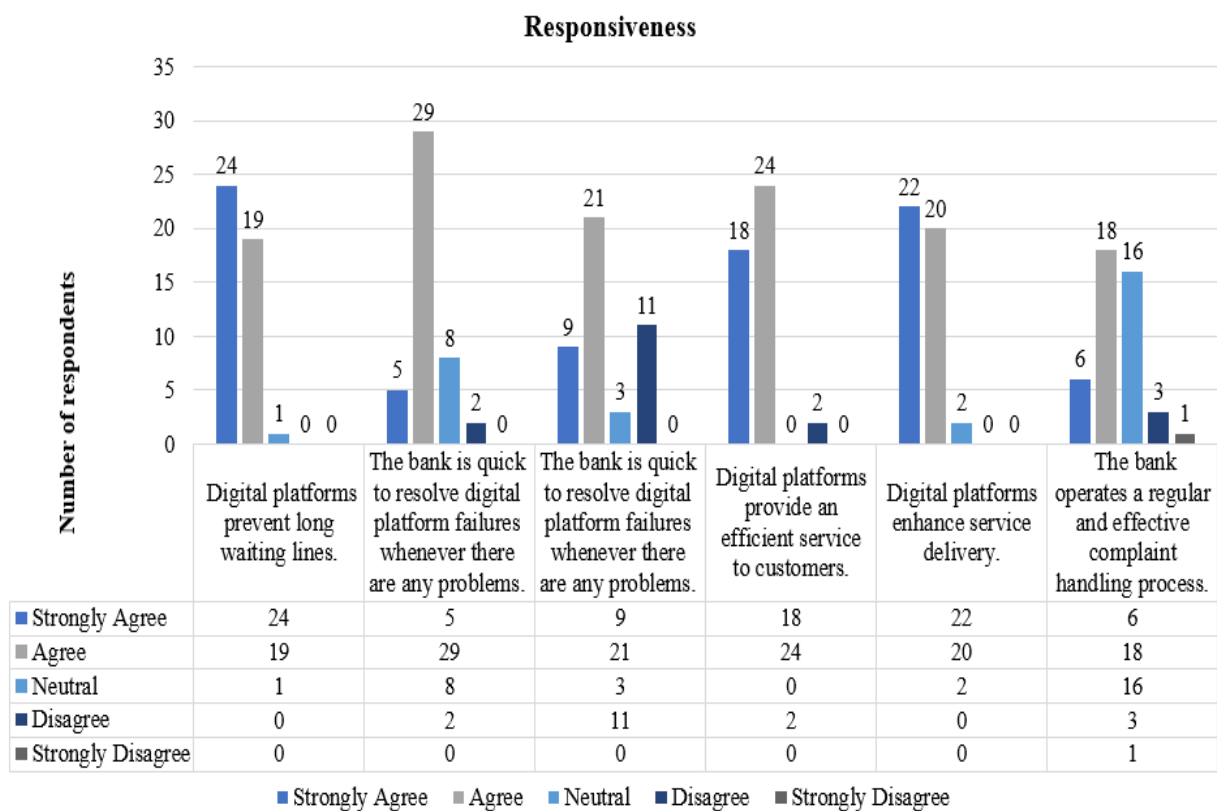


Figure 4.9: Responses to responsiveness measurement

According to the data gathered from the participants, 98 % agree or strongly agree that digital platforms eliminate long delays for banking customers. No one contested this assertion, demonstrating a high level of trust in the platforms' potential to save clients' time. While just 11% strongly agreed that the bank responds quickly to digital platform breakdowns, 66% agreed with this assertion. Only 18% of respondents stayed neutral on the subject, and only 2 of the 44 replies received thought this assertion was false. No one expressed a significant disagreement with this stance. Respondents were asked if they thought digital platforms provided a good service to their clients. Twenty % strongly agreed, while the other 48% agreed. Remarkably, a quarter of those polled stated that they do not feel digital platforms give an effective service to clients. This 25% of responses may arguably signal that there is place in the bank for human interaction, as digital platforms do not have the potential to fully service the banking sector on their own. 95 % felt that digital platforms improve service delivery, and % agreed that the bank has a regular and effective complaint management mechanism. According to the replies above, there is a significant degree of confidence in the role of digital platforms in increasing customer service and, ultimately, customer satisfaction.

4.4.3 Assurance

This dimension is determined by the company's capacity to earn the trust and confidence of its customers. It has to do with employees' knowledge and courtesy, the capability to express confidence and trust (Parasuraman, et al., 1988). This is determined by the company's ability to interact courteously and politely. This dimension is made up of four components: competence, customer respect, effective communication, and attitude. In Othman's (2003) study, Assurance is regarded the second most significant measurement.

Of the twenty-seven questions posed; the question in this section on whether the bank has the ability to gauge customer satisfaction with online platforms and uses its ability to measure customer satisfaction with online platforms effectively had the highest number of respondents agree. 61% of respondents claimed that the online platforms provide complete detail about the utility of the bank's services supplied to the consumer, while 18% were indifferent on the subject and another 18% disagreed. The data obtained in the assurance dimension was particularly notable for having the highest average neutral replies. Furthermore, the topic

concerning helpdesk staff having excellent expertise to answer questions about bank offers and operations had the greatest indifferent answers.

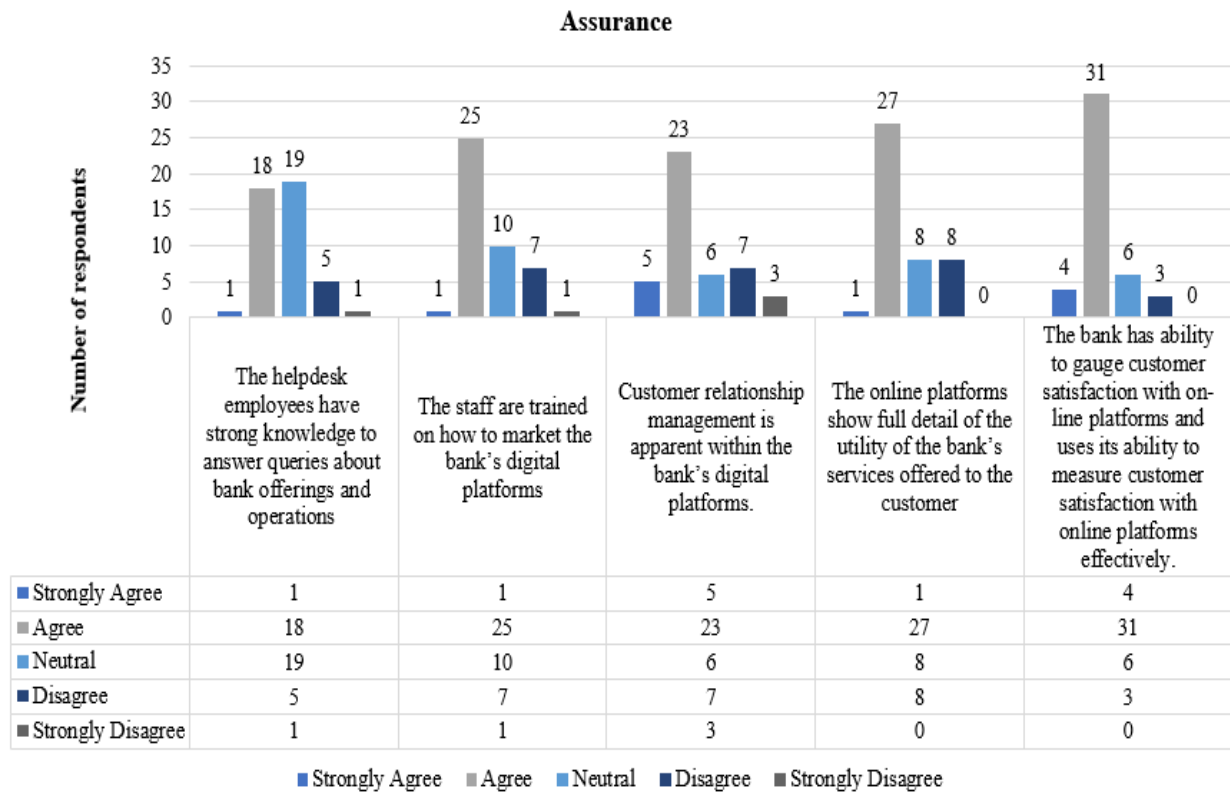


Figure 4.10: Responses to assurance measurement

43% of the respondents were indifferent on whether the helpdesk employees have strong knowledge to answer queries about bank offerings and operations and only 41% agreed that the staff entrusted to answer service queries were competent. More than half of the respondents however are of the view that the staff has the ability and required training to sell and market the digital platforms that are available in the bank. 64% of the those polled agree with the notion that customer relationship management is apparent within the bank's digital platforms. This was an important question in the survey as the objective of the study includes to ascertain the effect of digital platforms used by a Commercial bank in SA on operational efficiency of the bank in providing customer service. And subsequently this would have the effect of ascertaining how to grow a South African commercial banking customer base through the use of digital platforms.

In addition, 66% of the respondents believe that show full detail of the utility of the bank's services offered to the customer and no one was strongly opposed o this statement. When asked whether the bank has the ability to gauge customer satisfaction with on-line platforms and uses this ability to measure customer satisfaction with online platforms effectively, 31 out of the 44 responses received were in agreement and again none of the respondents strongly disagreed with this statement. This statement was key in meeting assisting to meet the second objective of the study which is to identify barriers that bar digital platforms from enhancing customer service in South African commercial banks. The positive link will help resolve for the question on how digital platforms can be improved to meet customer service expectations of commercial banking clients in SA.

4.4.4 Empathy

Empathy is the fourth dimension of service quality. The company's capacity to exhibit real concern and care for clients establishes this. Empathy is the provision of caring, individualized attention (Parasuraman, et al., 1988). For Empathy to be effective, companies must demonstrate it on a regular basis. Among the questions asked, as seen in Figure 4.11 below, all the questions in the Empathy subdimension measured well, indicating a significant positive link between Empathy and customer satisfaction.

Figure 4.11 indicates that 52% of the respondents agreed that the bank maintains strong customer relationships through the use of online platforms and 14% strongly agreed with this statement while another 14% remained neutral on the subject. This indicates that at least 66% of the respondents were satisfied with how the bank managed relationships through the use of the digital platforms. The data presented also indicates that 55% of the respondents believed that the bank ensures clients are well informed about new and attractive schemes. There were no respondents who strongly disagreed with this statement. In terms of using the information provided by the digital platforms to study the customer base in order to obtain better understanding of their needs and requirements, 64% indicated that the bank does this well.

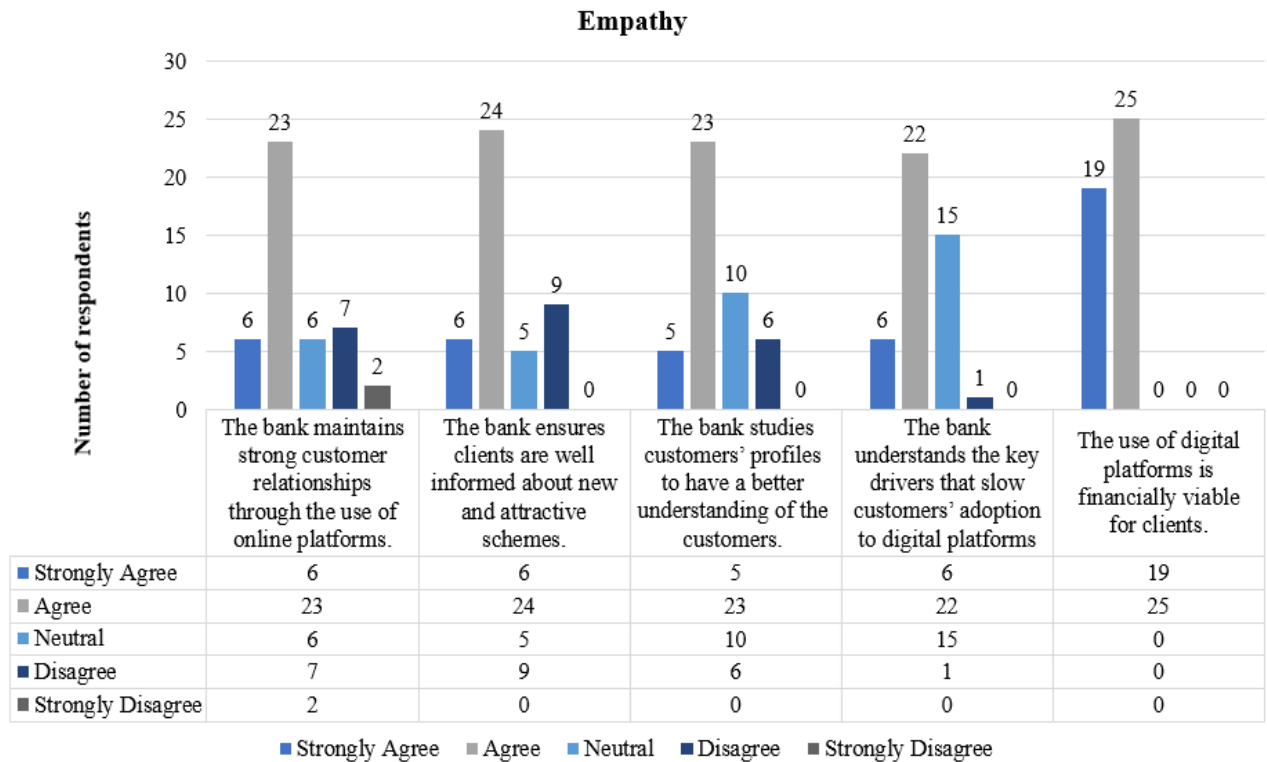


Figure 4.11: Responses to empathy measurement

The banking sector has embraced the client service concept of knowing the customer, which comprises offering personalised service to the client in order to build sustained relationships. The research shows that the technique is visible on digital channels and contributes to client happiness. 64% of the respondents indicated that the bank understands the key drivers that slow customers' adoption to digital platforms. No participants strongly disagreed with this statement; and only one respondent did not agree while 15 respondents (34%) remained neutral on the matter. All the participants believed that the use of digital platforms is financially viable for clients, indicating that digital platforms provide cost saving measures which in turn are a demonstration of keeping the clients' best interest at heart.

4.4.5 Tangibles

Tangibles is the fifth and final Service Quality Model dimension. This may include things like the company's appearance. The appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel, and communication materials (Parasuraman, et al., 1988). The question to be asked is whether the customer's eye is drawn to the company's aesthetic. The tangible component included five questions about the physical characteristics of the digital platforms offered by banks as per Figure 4.12 below.

In comparison to the other dimensions, all of the questions scored fairly well. The replies to these questions are depicted graphically below. According to Bitner (1992), the total impression of the service environment causes emotional arousal, influences beliefs and physiological sensations, and eventually influences consumer behaviour. Likewise, research shows clients make wholistic service impressions founded on components of the physical environment as well as the relations with service providers and other clients, producing feelings impacting client loyalty behaviour (Pullman and Gross, 2004).

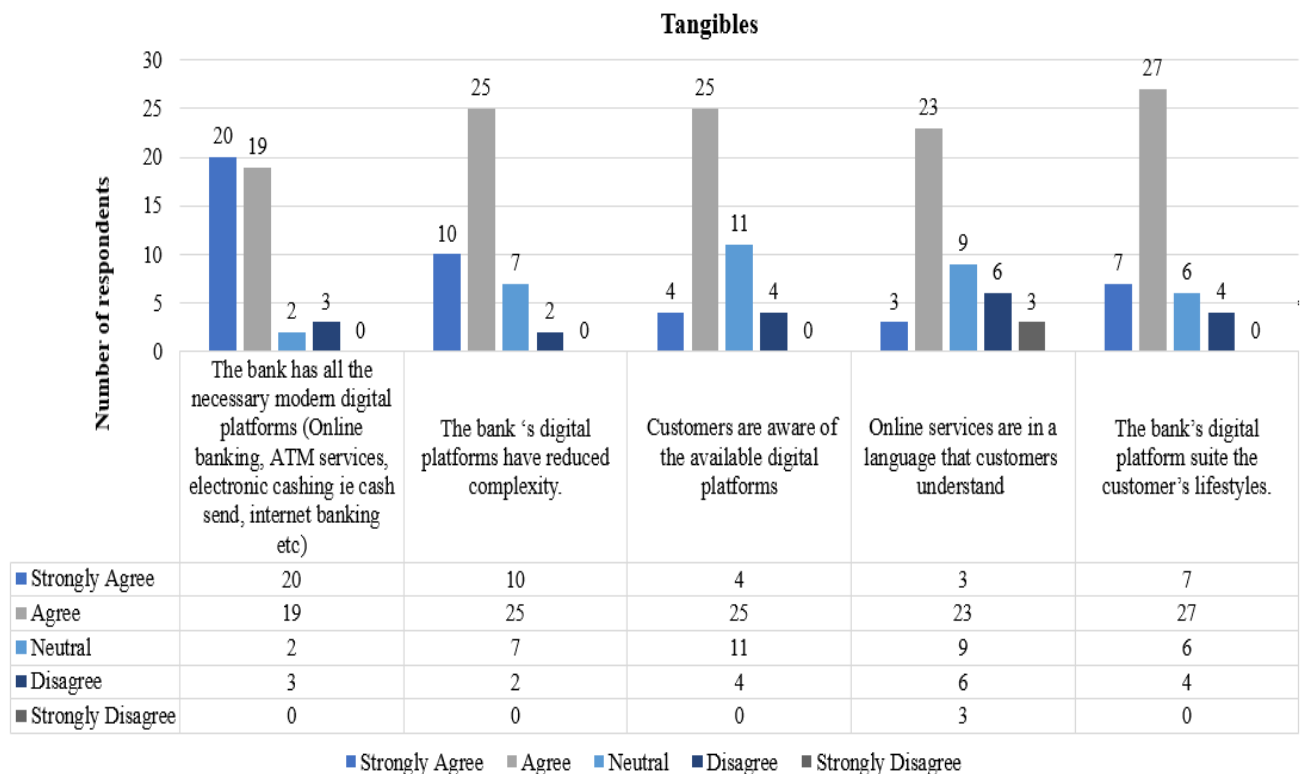


Figure 4.12: Responses to the measurement on tangibles

According to the statistics in Figure 4.12, 89 % of respondents stated that the bank employs cutting-edge technology and has all of the required current digital platforms (Online banking, ATM services, electronic cashing i.e. cash send, internet banking etc). 7% disagreed, while 5% were uncertain. While the majority of respondents indicated happiness, the bank must be aware of the neutral and unsatisfied respondents. Because technology is becoming increasingly crucial in the fast-changing financial environment, examining present technology, and determining the issues that are causing unhappiness will not be a waste of time. This will allow the bank to better grasp what their clients desire

80% of the respondents (23% strongly agree and 57% agree) agreed that the bank 's digital platforms have reduced complexity. Making it easy for the customers to understand and optimally use. Furthermore, 66% of the surveyed sample agree that customers are aware of the available digital platforms. A quarter of the respondents however remained neutral on this question which should be investigated in order to ensure that the available digital platforms are optimally being distributed in the bank. The question on whether online services are in a language that customers understand received the lowest score of the 5 questions asked in the tangibles dimension section. 52% agreed and 7% strongly agreed that the online platforms are easy to understand. 20% of the respondents believed that the language on digital platforms is not easy for clients to understand. Lastly 77% of the respondents agree that the bank's digital platform suite the customer's lifestyles.

4.5 Summary of findings

According to table 4.3 below, the responsiveness component ranked highest of the SERVQUAL characteristics examined. 82% of those surveyed indicating that there is a positive association between the usage of digital platforms and customer satisfaction. Research has shown that the majority of clients abandon an organization because they are dissatisfied with the service or product they are receiving (Rust and Zahorik, 1993). Participants stated that digital platforms eliminate long lines and waiting time; the bank is quick to handle digital platform failures whenever there are any difficulties; and the bank is able to remedy digital platform breakdowns whenever there are any complications. Furthermore, digital platforms provide an efficient service to customers, improve service delivery, and the bank has a consistent and effective complaint handling process in place.

Table 4.3: Mean distribution of responses

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Reliability	Totals	33	137	40	51	3
	Mean	13%	52%	15%	19%	1%
Responsiveness	Totals	84	131	30	18	1
	Mean	32%	50%	11%	7%	0%
Assurance	Totals	12	124	49	30	5
	Mean	5%	56%	22%	14%	2%
Empathy	Totals	42	117	36	23	2
	Mean	19%	53%	16%	10%	1%
Tangibles	Totals	44	119	35	19	3
	Mean	20%	54%	16%	9%	1%

Malik and Naeem (2011) discovered in a study done in Turkey that under Parasuraman's SERVQUAL model, the responsiveness and tangible service dimensions are most relevant in terms of levels of commitment and client satisfaction (Yavas, Bilgin, and Shemwell, 1997). According to the findings of this study, the empathy dimension has a considerable influence on customer satisfaction. Malik and Naeem (2011) revealed that the alleged service environment standard and the reliability dimension of services presented affected consumer

behavioural intentions like promoting and intention to move away. Reliability service dimension received the highest average negative response. With 20% of the respondents either disagreeing or strongly opposing on average the questions presented in this section. This is a red flag for the banks as it sends the message that the bank does not have full confidence of the respondents on their ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately as well as the capacity to provide correct solutions and service.

According to Hoyer and MacInnis (2001), satisfaction is linked to sentiments of approval, contentment, comfort, enthusiasm, and excitement after receiving a service. Customer requirements and wants must be met in order to achieve satisfaction and retention (LaBarbera and Mazursky, 1983). The data presented demonstrates that while digital platforms are aiding in certain areas, there is still gaps in their utilisation that banks need to take seriously and rectify. Gronroos (2000) argues that to maintain or acquire market share, businesses must outperform competitors by providing the highest services or products that satisfies customers.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter provides an overview of the survey's participation numbers. A summary of demographic statistics was offered, providing some context on the survey participants. Furthermore, the findings of the study according to the 5 dimensions of service quality was presented. The preceding discussion has outlined the characteristics that positively and negatively affect customer service through the use of digital platforms, therefore addressing the objectives of the study.

The two primary objectives as outlined in chapter 2 are first, to assess the impact of digital platforms utilized by a commercial bank in South Africa on the bank's operational efficiency in delivering customer service. This objective touches on the investigation of elements that will assist in the growth of a South African commercial bank's customer base through the use of digital platforms. Secondly, to identify challenges and barriers that prohibit digital platforms from enhancing customer service in South African commercial banks.

The second objective includes two sub-goals, one of which is to determine which digital platforms a commercial bank in South Africa utilizes to transact and communicate with consumers. This sub-objective was addressed using secondary data in the literature study provided in chapter 2. The second sub-goal was to identify the problems that a commercial bank in South Africa will have in effectively implementing digital platforms. The survey results, as outlined through the Servequal methodology, define which areas, according to the respondents, require attention.

The recommendations for the results are detailed in the next chapter, along with the conclusion.

CHAPTER 5

5 RECCOMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

A literature study was undertaken in chapter 2 which served as the foundation for the empirical investigation. Thereafter a survey questionnaire was distributed to a sample of participants. The outcomes of the study were analyzed and reported in the previous chapter. These discoveries were linked to the problem statement, which sought to obtain better knowledge of digital platforms as a method of improving customer satisfaction at a South African commercial bank. Linked to the problem statement are two objectives which the survey findings and secondary data studied have aided in getting to the recommendations and conclusions that will be discussed in this section.

Chapter five is the study's final chapter, and it summarizes all of the information presented in the previous chapters. It represents and justifies the extent to which the research study's objectives and questions were met. This chapter will make recommendations based on the study's findings, limitations, and possible future research. Finally, this chapter will bring the research to a close.

5.2 Findings from the research study per objective

Today's society has benefited in a number of ways from technology breakthroughs, and as a result, digital advancement has become a critical component in increasing the overall quality of services and reshaping economies (Hammoud et al., 2018). The discovery of COVID-19 has also changed the way banks function, as institutions have been compelled to improve their digital platforms owing to broad shutdown limitations (Melamedov, 2020). With particular reference to SA, research has revealed that millions of SA citizens have increased the utilization of online channels due to COVID-19. Furthermore, financial institutions are under more pressure than ever to adapt and innovate in order to meet the changing demands of modern consumers and the increased disruption caused by quickly emerging technologies (BusinessTech, 2021a).

This study used a survey questionnaire to determine the participants' impressions of the problem statement using the five aspects of the Service Quality Model. The findings are summarized in Figure 5.1 and will be used to depict and justify the extent to which the research study's objectives and questions were accomplished.

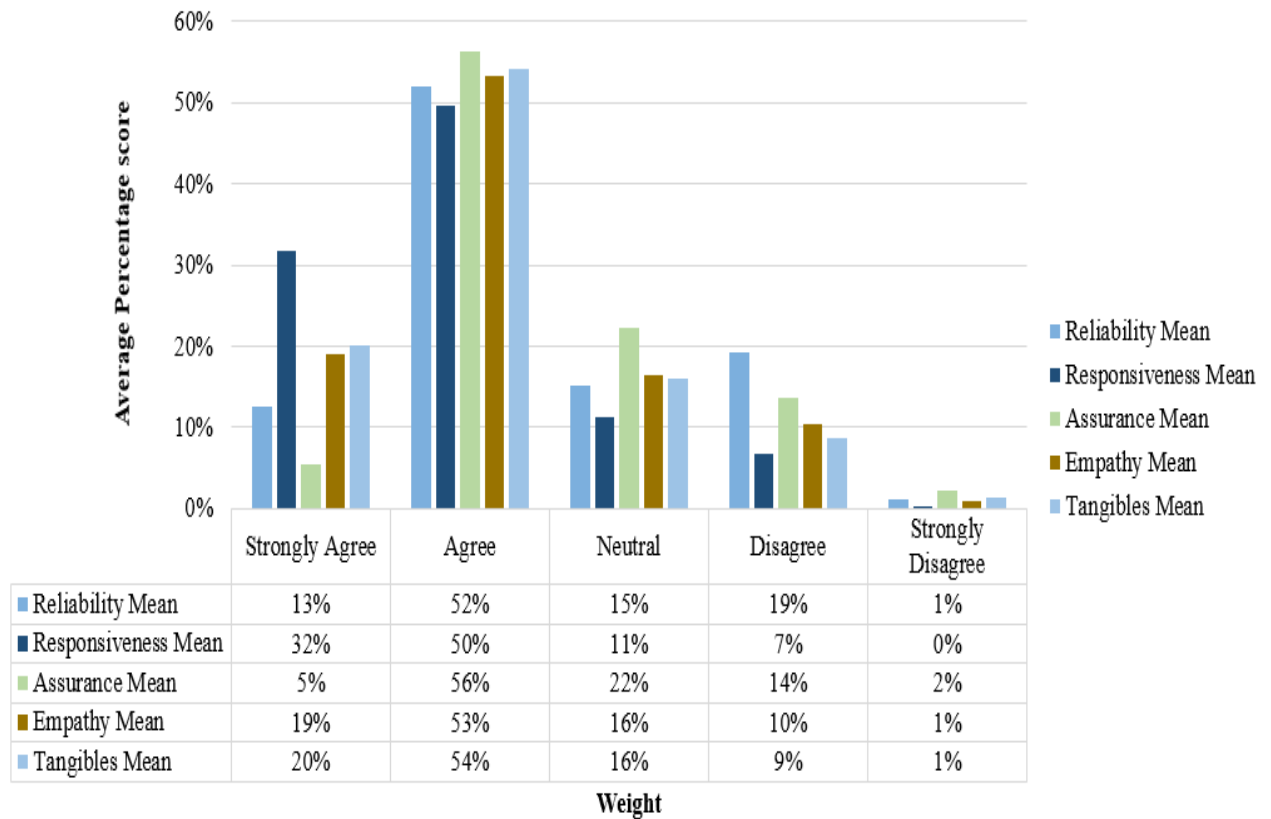


Figure 5.1: Survey outcomes according to the 5 dimensions of SERVEQUAL

Okoye, et al., (2019) argue that for commercial banks to flourish in this global and techno-savvy environment, they will need to deliberately explore ways of providing customer service in a quick, efficient, effective, and cost-effective manner. The research results reveal that traditional banking has a number of flaws, one of which is the overemphasis on paper (Tavaga, 2021). Consequently, digital platforms are aiding in the mitigation of the existing flaws, subsequently banking is becoming increasingly automated.

5.2.1 Objective one findings

The research showed that the distribution of financial services via electronic networks, has gained popularity among customers as a result of rapid advancements in technology and increased competition among banks (Hammoud et al.,2018). The first objective of the study was to determine the effect of digital platforms used by a Commercial bank in SA on operational efficiency of the bank in providing customer service. In addition, expand the objective through a sub objective that was to investigate how to grow a South African commercial banking customer base through the use of digital platforms.

The Responsiveness dimension as defined by Parasuraman, et al., (1988) examines the organization's ability to respond rapidly to client demands as well as its willingness to assist consumers and provide timely service. This dimension aided in answering the first objective of the study. Participants were asked if digital platforms reduce lengthy queues and if the bank responds quickly to digital platform faults when they occur. Furthermore, the study intended to determine if digital platforms provide an efficient service to clients, whether they improve service delivery, and whether customers make adequate use of digital platforms. Finally, if the bank have a consistent and effective complaint handling process. All of the items in the dimension had favourable responses, indicating a significant positive link between the responsiveness measurement and customer satisfaction.

In the Empathy dimension, respondents were asked if the use of digital platforms is financially viable for clients. All the participants believed that the use of digital platforms is financially viable for clients, indicating that digital platforms provide cost saving measures for customers. This is the only question where all participants either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement. This finding supports the argument made by Okoye et al., (2019) that for commercial banks to thrive in this global and technologically aware world, they would need to consciously seek ways of offering customer service in a cost-effective manner, among other items.

The research has shown that digital platforms have had a positive impact in the following areas:

- a) Time saving,
- b) Cost saving
- c) And are an efficient method of banking with availability 24 hours/7 days a week.

These findings of the research support the argument by Shinde, (2020) that artificial intelligence can increase productivity, reduce costs, and improve administrative operations, resulting in higher-quality client interactions.

5.2.2 Objective two findings

To identify barriers that block digital platforms from enhancing customer service in South African commercial banks.

- a) To identify which digital platforms a commercial bank in SA uses to transact and engage with customers.
- b) To identify the challenges a commercial bank in SA will experience in the effective implementation of digital platforms

Research has shown that easy internet access via smart mobile devices and powerful digital technologies has introduced artificial intelligence to a bigger audience (Lee and Lee, 2019). Notwithstanding, the financial services sector is at a crossroads because despite the fact that many financial institutions have made significant investments in offering a positive digital experience, the digital banking landscape remains out for grabs in terms of the South African landscape (BusinessTech, 2021a). Furthermore, due to legacy infrastructure, culture, and limited competition in the industry, SA commercial banks have failed to sufficiently innovate; yet, significant expertise, operating processes, and a highly regulated industry have kept them in business thus far (Rapapali and Simbanegavi, 2020). Traditional financial institutions are rapidly becoming insufficient to serve the globally integrated economically dynamic environment (Tasca et al., 2016).

Through the questionnaire, the respondents were asked six questions under the reliability dimension with the intention to aid in understanding the barriers that block digital platforms from enhancing customer service. Parasuraman, et al., (1988) defined this dimension as the

company's ability to perform a promised service dependably and accurately as well as the capacity to provide correct solutions and service. It also includes the company's ability to deliver the service on schedule, consistently, and without errors every time. The findings of the survey demonstrate that tell us that 32% of the respondents do not believe the existing digital platforms are dependable and always accessible. Furthermore, 36% of the respondents were neutral or did not agree that the services are delivered timeously. Digital platforms are meant to save time, be more efficient. The fact that a significant portion of the respondents do not believe that the available systems are dependable is a barrier that banks in the SA commercial sector should investigate. It was also alarming to note that 46% of the respondents were concerned about the record keeping capabilities of digital platforms. On an encouraging note, the empathy dimension revealed that 64% of the respondents believe that the bank understands the key drivers that slow customers' adoption to digital platforms. Consequently, this reveals that the banks understand why digital platforms are not adding optimum value to customer service. There is however a need to review why the other 36% of the respondents do not support this statement.

Secondary data also revealed that there are significant initial implementation costs for digital platforms such as real-time payment systems and this cost is transferred to the client (Gonzalez-Paramo, 2017). This could be a barrier in as far as modernizing and updating existing digital platforms in order to optimally service the clients.

5.3 Recommendations

- a) The banking sector in South Africa is progressively moving toward a marketplace without borders,' marked by the fast-approaching entry of new digital enterprises challenging the status quo and triggering unprecedented levels of innovation. As a result, banks have continued to engage in large-scale transformation initiatives aimed at enhancing customer experience, digital transformation, new ways of working, and overall cost reduction (Camarate and Maritz, 2020). As competition increases and new companies enter the market, banks must embrace technology-based applications in order to remain competitive in the twenty-first century.

- b) Research has shown that at the correct investment level artificial intelligence has the potential to increase productivity, reduce costs, and improve administrative operations, all of which will result in higher-quality consumer interactions (Shinde, 2020). South African banks need to have a long-term view with regard to the investment made in digital platforms.

- c) The study has demonstrated that the level of confidence in digital platforms is not at the optimal level. Based on this outcome, it is recommended that South African banks invest more in advertising, training staff and educating their customer base on the benefits of digital platforms.

5.4 Limitation of the Study

- a) The sample size is arguably one of the drawbacks of the study. The study is restricted because it does not cover personal retail banking; this approach might offer value because commercial clients enter the banking business in their personal capacity initially before they become commercial client, which may have the potential to expand the sample size.
- b) The participants in the study are banking employees as opposed to the customer. The voice of the customer was received through the interviews conducted with the staff. In future studies, it may be beneficial to obtain direct responses from the customer.
- c) The entire population of front-line staff at Standard Bank was not surveyed, only a sample of 100 were requested to partake in the study.
- d) The study looked into the respondents' perceptions at a specific point in time. No further investigation was done as to any change in the perception. Furthermore, this study only focused on existing commercial clients and future studies can also focus on potential entrepreneurs.
- e) As some of the salespeople who responded to the questions had only been in their jobs for a year or less, some of their responses may be based on their own interpretations of the problem statement.

5.5 Forthcoming Studies

The time available to perform this research was constrained, which influenced the scope of the literature review. The debate in this article contributes to ongoing research on the impact of digital banking and gives ideas on how banks should employ digital platforms to boost customer satisfaction, retention, and increase market share.

- a) The research has shown that migration to digital platforms is as a result of the merging of two of the modern era's rapidly developing technologies being mobile phones and the Internet (Mbama and Ezepue, 2018). South Africa's educational attainment is low, with just 7% of adults having a higher degree. Future research can review how this is impacting digital adoption.
- b) Future research should possibly include the customer in the sample of the respondents in order to hear the from the client using digital platforms. It would be interesting to compare the results of this study with the findings of a study conducted through the voice of the customer.
- c) It would also be interesting to hear why customers who prefer the traditional banking methods continue to shy away from digital platforms as well as review the perception of retail banking clients.
- d) A larger sample size study with salespeople from other banks could also provide further insight into the problem statement.

5.6 Conclusion

The business strategies of financial institutions have evolved, and they now rely on a loyal client base to stay viable. Customers have become more interested in electronic banking as a result of fast technological improvements and greater competition among banks (Hammoud et al., 2018). Quality customer service is an important component of the banking industry's client experience and value creation (Bick et al., 2010). Research has shown that clients seek services that are rapid, efficient, effective, and cost-effective (Okaye et al., 2019). The digitization of banking put to the test the traditional business models of established banks, with their paper-based processes and sophisticated operations (Ntimane, 2020).

The purpose of this research was to conduct research on the impact of digital platforms on customer satisfaction at a South African commercial bank. This enabled the researcher to assess the relationship and impact digital platforms made on enhancing customer service as well as satisfaction levels in the financial services industry. The SERQUAL methodology was used to assess service quality. The information gathered through the survey questionnaire was relevant to the objectives and gave distinct responses to the research questions.

According to the research findings, the South African public is increasingly adopting digital platforms (BusinessTech, 2021). However, it is not enough for banks to simply be available on digital devices; they must also provide excellent functionality and security that challenges that of competitors (BusinessTech, 2021a). This research will provide Standard Bank commercial bank and other banks with weighty insight on the existing reality of the available digital platforms. Furthermore, an understanding into the barriers that currently exist and need to be mitigated in order to take the South African digital banking landscape to the next level. This will enable and equip banking management with tools to take deliberate pronouncements to improve digital platforms adoption.

REFERENCES

Accenture, 2017. Beyond Digital: How can banks meet customer demands? [online], Available at: <https://www.accenture.com/acnmedia/Accenture/next-gen-3/DandM-Global-Research-Study/Accenture-Banking-Global-Distribution-Marketing-Consumer-Study.pdf?fla=en>.

[Accessed 11 November 2020].

Amoako, G., 2012. Improving Customer Service in the Banking Industry-Case of Ghana Commercial Bank (GCB)-Ghana. *International Business Research*. Volume 5(4): pp 134 – 148.

Bagus, Girancourt, Mahmood and Manji, 2020. Africa's insurance market is set for takeoff. [online]. Available at: <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/middle-east-and-africa/africas-insurance-market-is-set-for-takeoff>. Accessed 13 October 2021.

Bazeley, P. 2009. Analysing Qualitative Data: More Than 'Identifying Themes'. *Research Support P/L and Australian Catholic University*. Volume 2(2): pp 6-22

Benton, P. 2020. Selecting a Digital Banking Platform,2020–21. [online]. Available at: <https://www.temenos.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/omdia-universe-selecting-a-digital-banking-platform-2020-21.pdf?>. Accessed 17 September 2021.

Bick, G., Abratt, R., and Moller, D. 2010. Customer service expectations in retail banking in Africa. *South African Journal of Business management*. Volume 41(2): pp 13-28.

Bitner, M. 1990. Evaluating service encounters: the effects of physical surroundings and employee responses. *Journal of Marketing* 54

Business Tech, 2016. How long the average South African stays in one job for [Online], available at: <https://businesstech.co.za/news/business/139675/how-long-the-average-south-african-stays-in-one-job-for/>. [Accessed 20 November 2021].

Business Tech, 2020. South Africa's 5 biggest banks compared: earnings vs customers vs market cap vs reach. [Online], available at: <https://businesstech.co.za/news/banking/431754/south-africas-5-biggest-banks-compared-earnings-vs-customers-vs-market-cap-vs-reach/>. [Accessed 7 November 2020].

Business Tech, 2021a. Why digital banking is the future in South Africa. [Online], available at: <https://businesstech.co.za/news/industry-news/466855/why-digital-banking-is-the-future-in-south-africa/>. [Accessed 05 August 2021].

Business Tech, 2021b. Absa is hiring 250 professionals – these are the skills they want. [online]. Available at: <https://businesstech.co.za/news/banking/510706/absa-is-hiring-250-professionals-these-are-the-skills-they-want/>. Accessed 12 September 2021.

Camarate, J., and Maritz, C. 2020. A marketplace without boundaries 2.0 and Digital disruption in the South African banking sector. [online]. Available at <https://www.pwc.co.za/en/assets/pdf/strategyand-digital-disruption-in-sa-banking-sector.pdf>. Accessed 12 September 2021.

Caruana, A., Ewing, M., and Ramaseshan, B., 2000. Assessment of the Three-Column Format SERVQUAL: An Experimental Approach. *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 49 (1), pp 57–65. Available at: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0148-2963\(98\)00119-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0148-2963(98)00119-2).

CELUSION, 2021. Digital lending platform: Lending moves with the times. [online]. Available at: <https://www.celusion.com/2021/08/03/digital-lending-platform-lending-moves-with-the-times/>. [Accessed 12 October 2021].

Chalmeta, R. 2006. Methodology for customer relationship management. *The Journal of Systems and Software*. Volume 79(0): pp 1015 -1024.

Chappell, G., Harreis, H., Havas, A., Nuzzo, A., Pepanides, T., and Rowshankish, K., 2018. The lending revolution: How digital credit is changing banks from the inside. [online]. Available at: <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/risk-and-resilience/our-insights/the-lending-revolution-how-digital-credit-is-changing-banks-from-the-inside>. [Accessed 1 October 2021].

Constantinides, P., Henfridsson, O., and Parker, G. G., 2018. Introduction—Platforms and Infrastructures in the Digital Age. *Information Systems Research*. Volume 29(2): pp 381–400. Available at: doi:10.1287/isre.2018.0794

Cooper, D., and Schindler, P. 2014. *Business research methods*. 12th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill/Irwin, pp.140-144. 241-245

Creswell, J.W., and Creswell, J.D. 2018. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. 5th ed. United Kingdom: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Deloitte, 2017. Digital banking benchmark: Improving the digital performance. [online]. Available at: <https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/lu/Documents/financial-services/Banking/lu-digital-banking-benchmark.pdf>. [Accessed 1 October 2021].

González, P. and José, M. 2017. Financial innovation in the digital age: challenges for regulation and supervision. Volume 32(0): pp 9-37. [online]. Available at: <https://repositorio.bde.es/handle/123456789/11293>. [Accessed 7 November 2020].

Govender, C. 2004. Customer relationship management as a model for growth in banks. Unpublished master's dissertation. Durban: University of Kwa-Zulu Natal.

Green, J., Willis, K., Hughes, E., Small, R., Welch, N., Gibbs, L., and Daly, J. 2017. 2007 Generating best evidence from qualitative research: the role of data analysis. Volume 31(6). Pp 545 – 550.

Gronroos, C. 2000. *Service Management and Marketing: A Customer Relationship Management Approach*. Chichester, Wiley and Sons.

GSMA. 2021. State of the industry report on mobile money 2021. London, UK: GSM Association. https://www.gsma.com/mobilefordevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/GSMA_State-of-the-Industry-Report-on-Mobile-Money-2021_Full-report.pdf

Hammoud, J., Bizri, R. M., and El Baba, I. 2018. The Impact of E-Banking Service Quality on Customer Satisfaction: Evidence from the Lebanese Banking Sector. *SAGE Open*, Volume 8(3): pp 1-12. Available at doi:10.1177/2158244018790633.

Hoyer, W. D. and MacInnis, D. J. 2001. *Consumer Behaviour*, 2nd ed., Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company.

Jagani, K. and Patra, S. 2017. Digital Participation through Mobile Internet Banking and Its Impact on Financial Inclusion. Volume 4 (4): pp 51 – 54.

Kene-Okafor, T. 2021. South African digital bank TymeBank lands \$109m from UK and Philippines investors. [online]. Available at: <https://techcrunch.com/2021/02/23/south-african-digital-bank-tyembank-lands-109m-from-uk-and-philippines-investors/>. Accessed 7 October 2021.

Kothari, C. 2004. *Research methodology*. 2nd ed. New Delhi: New Age International (P) Ltd.

LaBarbera, P. A. and Mazursky, D. 1983. A Longitudinal Assessment of Consumer Satisfaction, Dissatisfaction: The Dynamic Aspect of Cognitive Process, *Journal of Marketing Research*. Volume 20 (1). Pp. 393-404.

Lee, S.M and Lee, D. 2019. “Untact”: a new customer service strategy in the digital age. *Service Business*. Springer-Verlag GmbH Germany. Volume 14 (1): pp 1-22. available at doi:10.1007/s11628-019-00408-2.

Lyons, A and Kass-Hanna, J, 2021. The Evolution of Financial Services in the Digital Age. [online]. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3873370>. [Accessed 11 August 2021].

Malik, M.E. and Naeem, B. 2011. Banking clients’ perceived service quality and behavioural responses. *European Journal of Social Sciences*, Volume 23(3): 466–473.

Mbama, C. I., and Ezepeue, P. O., 2018. Digital banking, customer experience and bank financial performance. Volume 36 (2): pp 230 – 255.

Market Business News, 2020. Bank – definition and meaning. [online], Available at, <https://marketbusinessnews.com/financial-glossary/bank/> . [Accessed 26 November 2020].

Marous, J. 2016. How Digital Investments Are Changing the Face of Banking. [online], Available at: <https://thefinancialbrand.com/60125/digital-banking-investment-satisfaction-acquisition-branch-traffic/>. [Accessed 26 September 2021].

Melamedov, L., 2020. Coronavirus (COVID-19) and the Banking Industry: Impact and Solutions. [online], Available at, <https://www.lightico.com/blog/coronavirus-covid-19-and-the-banking-industry-impact-and-solutions/>. [Accessed 26 November 2020].

Moutinho, L. and Smith, A., 2000. Modelling bank customer satisfaction through mediation of attitudes towards human and automated banking, International Journal of Bank Marketing, Volume 18(3): pp. 124-134. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1108/02652320010339699>

Mouton, J. 2005. How to succeed in your master and doctoral studies, Pretoria: Van Schaik.

Mujinga, M. 2020. Online Banking Service Quality: A South African E-S-QUAL Analysis. Volume 12066: pp 228-238.

Mulder, P. 2018. SERVQUAL Model. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.toolshero.com/quality-management/servqual-model>. [Accessed 04 November 2021].

Ntimane, L. 2020. Disruptive innovation in the South African banking sector: a case study of Capitec bank. Master's dissertation. Stellenbosch University.

Okoye, L.U., Omarkhanlen, A.E., Okoh, J.I., Ezeji, F.N., and Achugamonu, U.B. 2019. Imperatives for deepening customer service delivery in the Nigerian Banking Sector through engineering and Technology-based channels. International Journal of Civil Engineering and Technology. Volume 10(1): pp. 2156-2169.

Oliver, R. L. 1981. Measurement and evaluation of satisfaction processes in retail settings. *Journal of Retailing*, Volume 57(3): pp 25-48.

Othman A. Q. 2003. Adopting and measuring customer service quality in Islamic banks: A case study in Kuwait Finance House. PhD Thesis

Parasuraman, A, Ziethaml, V. and Berry, L., 1988. SERVQUAL: A Multiple- Item Scale for Measuring Consumer Perceptions of Service Quality. *Journal of Retailing*, Vo. 64 (1). Pp 12-40.

Power, J.D. 2020. Retail banks face major customer satisfaction challenge as world shifts to digital-only engagement. [online], Available at: https://www.jdpower.com/business/press-releases/2020-us-retail-banking-satisfaction-study?utm_source=BusinessTech&utm_medium=SponsoredArticle&utm_term=February2021. [Accessed 06 August 2021].

Prabhavathi, K. and Dinesh, G. P. 2018. Banking: Definition and Evolution. *International Journal of Scientific & Engineering Research*. Volume 9(8). Pp 745 – 753. Available at: <https://www.ijser.org/researchpaper/Banking-Definition-and-Evolution.pdf>. [Accessed 12 August 2021].

Pullman, M. E., and Gross, M. A. 2004. Ability of Experience Design Elements to Elicit Emotions and Loyalty Behaviors. *Decision Sciences*. Volume 35(3). Pp. 551- 578

Ramakrishnan, A., 2020. How Online Banking Has Changed Investment. [online]. Available at: <https://www.outlookindia.com/outlookmoney/banking/how-online-banking-has-changed-investment-4332>. [Accessed 06 September 2021].

Rapapali, M. and Simbanegavi, S. 2020. Competition in South African Banking. South African Reserve Bank working paper Series WP/20/02.

Rust, R. T., and Zahorik, A. J. 1993. Customer satisfaction, customer retention, and market share. *Journal of Retailing*. Volume 69(2). Pp 193–215.

Tasca, P., Aste, T., Pelizzon, L., and Perony, N. 2016. *Banking Beyond Banks and Money: A Guide to Banking Services in the Twenty-First Century*. Switzerland: Springer International Publishing.

Tavaga, 2021. Digital banking and its foray into the banking sector. [online]. Available at: <https://tavaga.com/blog/digital-banking-and-its-foray-into-the-banking-sector/>. [Accessed 18 September 2021].

Transformation Report, 2020. The Standard Bank of South Africa Transformation Report. [online]. Available at: https://www.standardbank.com/static_file/StandardBankGroup/filedownloads/OurTransformationReport.pdf. [Accessed 11 November 2021].

Tse, D. K., and Wilton, P. C. (1988). Models of consumer satisfaction formation: An extension. *Journal of Marketing Research*, Volume 25 (1): pp 204-212.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P., and Thornhill, A. 2016. *Research Methods for Business students*. 7th ed. England: Pearson Education Limited.

Sekaran, U. and Bougie, R. 2016. *Research Methods for Business: A Skill-Building Approach*. 7th ed. United Kingdom: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

Shinde, S. 2020. Banking Sector-Challenges and Opportunities. [online]. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/339090457>. [Accessed 26 November 2020].

Sibbald, R. 2021. Why insurers need to leverage digital customer communication. [online]. Available at: <https://www.striata.com/resources/reading-room/the-current-digital-shift-in-insurance/>. [Accessed 13 October 2021].

Standard Bank, 2021. Our group at a glance. [online]. Available at: <https://www.standardbank.com/>. [Accessed 13 October 2021].

Yavas, U., Bilgin, Z. and Shemwell, D.J. 1997. 'Service quality in the banking sector in an emerging economy: A consumer survey', *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, Volume 16(6): pp 217–223

APPENDICES

1. Ethical Clearance Approval



01 October 2021

Maria Sinomhlobo Ngcaweni (220044391)
Grad School Of Bus & Leadership
Westville Campus

Dear MS Ngcaweni,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00003380/2021

Project title: Digital platforms as a means to enhancing customer satisfaction at a South African commercial bank.
Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 14 September 2021 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted FULL APPROVAL.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

This approval is valid until 01 October 2022.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 8350/4557/3587 Email: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics>

Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

2. Informed Consent

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND LEADERSHIP

HSSREC Research Office: Tel: 031 260 8350/4557/3587, Email address: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za

Informed Consent Document

Dear Participant,

My name is Maria Sinomhlobo Ngcaweni (*student number: 220044391*). I am a master's candidate studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Graduate School of Business and Leadership. The title of my research is: Digital platforms as a means to enhancing customer satisfaction at a South African commercial bank. The research objective of this study is to investigate digital platforms at commercial banks as a means to satisfying customer service expectations in South Africa. The findings will provide insight on the relationship between digital banking, customer service, and bank growth in emerging markets, particularly in South Africa. I am interested in interviewing you so as to share your experiences and observations on the subject matter.

Please note that:

- The information that you provide will be used for scholarly research only.
- Your participation is entirely voluntary. You may choose to participate, not to participate or stop participating in the research. You will not be penalized for taking such an action.
- Your views in this interview will be presented anonymously. Neither your name nor identity will be disclosed in any form in the study.
- The completion of the questioner will take about 20 minutes.
- The record as well as other items associated with the interview will be held in a password-protected file accessible only to myself and my supervisors. After a period of 5 years, in line with the rules of the university, it will be disposed by shredding and burning.
- If you agree to participate please sign the declaration attached to this statement.

I can be contacted on the below details:

Email: 220044391@stu.ukzn.ac.za

Phone number

My supervisor is Prof. Theuns Pelsier.

Email: Pelsier@ukzn.ac.za

Phone number: 031 260 7269

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

3. Declaration

DECLARATION

I..... *(full names of participant)* hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire. I understand the intention of the research. I hereby agree to participate.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

4. Data collection instrument

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHICS

1. Gender.

Male	
Female	

2. Age.

18-25 years	
26-30 years	
31-35 years	
36-40 years	
41 and above	

3. Number of years employed at the bank.

0-5 years	
5-10 years	
11-20 years	
21-30 years	
More than 30 years	

4. Current position held.

Relationship manager	
Portfolio Manager	
Account Executive	
Private Banker	
Sales Consultant	

Other	
-------	--

5. Nature of Employment.

Full time	
Part time	

6. Number of years in current position.

< 1 year	
1-2 years	
2-5 years	
6-10 years	
More than 10 years	

7. How many of the below banks have you worked for in the past?

ABSA	
Standard Bank	
Capitec Bank	
First National Bank	
Nedbank	
Investec	
Other (Please specify)	

8. Highest Education level

Matric	
Bachelors	
Honors	
Masters	
Other	

SECTION B: Responses regarding employees of standard bank on their knowledge of customer perception regarding available digital platforms, their adoption, experience and expectations using an empirical study of SERVQUAL as a tool for service quality measurement.

Statement		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
		5	4	3	2	1
Reliability	1	The platforms are always accessible and dependable.				
	2	Services are delivered within deadlines.				
	3	The clients feel safe using the platforms for all their transactions with the bank.				
	4	The advertising and promotional messages from the bank reflect reality.				
	5	Online platforms are quick and efficient in service delivery				
	6	The bank maintains error free records.				
Responsiveness	7	Digital platforms prevent long waiting lines.				
	8	The bank is quick to resolve digital platform failures whenever there are any problems.				
	9	Customers make sufficient use of the digital platforms.				
	10	Digital platforms provide an efficient service to customers.				
	11	Digital platforms enhance service delivery.				
	12	The bank operates a regular and effective complaint handling process.				
Assurance	13	The helpdesk employees have strong knowledge to answer queries about bank offerings and operations				
	14	The staff are trained on how to market the bank's digital platforms				
	15	Customer relationship management is apparent within the bank's digital platforms.				
	16	The online platforms show full detail of the utility of the bank's services offered to the customer				
	17	The bank has ability to gauge customer satisfaction with on-line platforms and uses its ability to measure customer satisfaction with online platforms effectively.				

		Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
			5	4	3	2	1
Empathy	18	The bank maintains strong customer relationships through the use of online platforms.					
	19	The bank ensures clients are well informed about new and attractive schemes.					
	20	The bank studies customers' profiles to have a better understanding of the customers.					
	21	The bank understands the key drivers that slow customers' adoption to digital platforms					
	22	The use of digital platforms is financially viable for clients.					
Tangibles	23	The bank has all the necessary modern digital platforms (Online banking, ATM services, electronic cashing ie cash send, internet banking etc)					
	24	The bank 's digital platforms have reduced complexity.					
	25	Customers are aware of the available digital platforms					
	26	Online services are in a language that customers understand					
	27	The bank's digital platform suite the customer's lifestyles.					

5. Turnitin Report

Digital platforms as a means to enhancing customer satisfaction at a South African commercial bank

ORIGINALITY REPORT

6%

SIMILARITY INDEX

3%

INTERNET SOURCES

1%

PUBLICATIONS

5%

STUDENT PAPERS



Digital Receipt

This receipt acknowledges that Turnitin received your paper. Below you will find the receipt information regarding your submission.

The first page of your submissions is displayed below.

Submission author: Maria Sinomhlobo Ngcaweni
Assignment title: SUBMISSION
Submission title: Digital platforms as a means to enhancing customer satisfac...
File name: Thesis_Turnitin.pdf
File size: 879.62K
Page count: 80
Word count: 22,724
Character count: 128,719
Submission date: 21-Dec-2021 03:35PM (UTC+0200)
Submission ID: 1725462924

ABSTRACT

The digital platform has become a key enabler for the banking industry for the enhancement of their services. This is why customer centricity is at the core of the existing banking industry that is combined with technological innovation. Advanced technology and modern digital devices have allowed innovative customer service delivery without reliance on face-to-face interaction with banking staff. The advancement of the internet and electronic communication has resulted in the creation of platforms that allow for the online sale of goods and services. Furthermore, digitalisation has resulted in normalising cross-border trade and banking transactions making digital banking a key consideration in existing business for commercial banking clients. Digital information, customer data available for real-time, financial literacy of the customer base and limited competition in the industry have however slowed down digital adoption by banks in South Africa (SA). Due to rapidly changing customer experience, operational processes, and highly regulated industry South African banks have been kept thus far safety in features. The advent of the novel Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) has however introduced a new dynamic to how banks operate because banks have had to strengthen their digital platforms given the widespread lockdown restrictions.

Market research has been used by the five major SA commercial banks, Standard Bank, First National Bank (FNB), Nedbank, Capitec and ABSA to assess client satisfaction and loyalty. The results of the research are then integrated into driving the strategic direction of the banks. Literature has demonstrated that the relationship between a bank and its customer fundamentally contributes to organisational growth. Customer service is becoming more important in the financial sector as banks integrate systems, services and infrastructures, while delivering superior products, service levels and convenience. Clients are increasingly demanding satisfactory customer experience as real-time resolution of queries through preferred channels. Traditional financial institutions, instruments and markets are quickly becoming outdated and obsolete to service the globally connected and investment-experiencing a fast-paced number of high-frequency transactions. Artificial intelligence has the ability to assess customer usage of resources. Subsequently, the objective of this research is to investigate digital platforms in commercial banks as a means to satisfying customer service expectations.

6. Gate keeper's letter



03 September 2021

To: The Faculty Head,
University of KwaZulu-Natal

Maria Nogaweni – Masters in Business Administration

This letter serves to confirm that Maria Nogaweni is currently employed by Standard Bank of South Africa as a Relationship Manager within Commercial Clients, KZN.

We further confirm that we have no objection to Maria undertaking her required research, as required for the completion of the above mentioned qualification, amongst her peers within our organisation on the understanding that the research will be regarded as strictly confidential and that any publication thereof by the University of KwaZulu-Natal would require prior approval by our organisation.

Yours faithfully



Kuben Chetty

For and on behalf of

THE STANDARD BANK OF SOUTH AFRICA LIMITED

Head, Commercial Clients – KZN

Tel: 011 344 5278 / Cell: [REDACTED]

The Standard Bank of South Africa Limited (Reg. No. 1992/000738/06) Authorised financial services provider and registered credit provider (NCRCP15)

Directors: TS Goebashe (Chairman) L Fuzile* (Chief Executive) PLH Cook A Dabirika*
MA Erasmus* GJ Fraser-Moleketi X Guen* GMB Kinnearly JH Maree NNA Matyemba
KD Moroka NMC Nyembesi ML Odzor-Osano* ANA Peterside co* MJD Ruck
SK Tshabalala* JM Vice Lubin Wang*

Company Secretary: Z Stephen - 20210526

*Executive Director 1 British 2 Chinese 3 Kenyan 4 Nigerian

Standard Bank Moving Forward™