Perceived convenience as a driver of South African Generation Y consumers' online repurchase intentions

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ABSTRACT

The digital transformation and technological advancements resulting from the fourth industrial revolution (4IR), paired with other external factors including the ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic, have led to the South African online retail market increasing by 66% in 2020 and surpassing a market value of R55 billion in 2022. While online shopping continues to increase steadily, reports of the factors impacting consumer repurchase intentions are vague in the literature, specifically from a consumer convenience perspective and in the South African context. As such, this study provides a departure point and employed the SERVCON (service convenience) model to investigate whether access, search, transaction, execution and post-service convenience had a statistically significant direct influence on South African Generation Y consumers' online repurchase intentions. Following a descriptive research and cross-sectional design, this study collected quantitative data from 400 Generation Y university students, using a self-administered questionnaire. While all five factors were significant, access convenience had a negative impact and execution convenience had no statistically significant influence on repurchase intentions. Nonetheless, the findings will guide academic and industry stakeholders in understanding consumers' perceived convenience and how to optimise every aspect accordingly.

Keywords: Perceived convenience, Online shopping, Repurchase intentions, Generation Y consumers, South Africa

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1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The retail industry is characterised by intense competition (Weber & Badenhorst-Weiss, 2016:434; Aulia & Sushandoyo, 2023:5187) with the ever-changing retail landscape compelling businesses to compete in a highly dynamic and competitive customer-driven market (Diaz, 2022; Hosken *et al*., 2018:3). Nandonde (2019:54) highlights that South African retailers do not only compete on a national level but also with international retailers, which has somewhat impeded the success of local retail businesses. Considering this, Lončar (2017:87) advises retailers to constantly strategise and adopt contemporary business practices with specific customer-centred and user experience approaches, thereby ensuring a competitive advantage.

One of these strategies includes integrating online shopping to eliminate the need for intermediaries to fulfil the purchase process. This strategy, among other benefits, allows the retailer to reach a larger target audience and, in turn, increase turnover. While online shopping has been adopted by major and even smaller businesses for a few decades (Raunaque *et al*., 2016:1236; Ariannezhad *et al*., 2021:2867), many have not taken advantage of this shopping solution.

Retailers, without exception, were forced to adapt at rapid speeds due to the ramifications brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. For extended periods, brick-and-mortar outlets had to close their doors, which necessitated alternative sales methods to remain operational (Short, 2021). While initially challenging, moving to online selling allowed various businesses to not only survive, but thrive, so much so, that the South African online retail industry increased by 66% in 2020, exceeding prior projections (Daniel, 2021). Additionally, growing at a rate of 35%, this industry surpassed a market value of R55 billion in 2022 (Mastercard, 2023). Despite restrictions being lifted mid- and post-COVID-19, where traditional shopping channels normalised, the online retail market continued to grow and statistics indicated a 25% growth in 2023 (TMO Contributor, 2023). The local market is marginal compared to the global e-commerce market, yet the growth opportunities are vast. Ensuring the continued expansion of this sector relies on retailers understanding consumer behaviour.

Consumer behaviour is defined as a consumer act that directly involves the acquisition, consumption and disposal of commercial products, including the decision-making that follows and influences these acts (Rajan *et al*., 2021:397). Shopping behaviour, in general, refers to a consumer's willingness to purchase a product from a store, as well as their observations and desires about the product (Veiga & Diogo, 2022:09). According to Rashaduzzaman (2020:24), convenience is a crucial factor for understanding consumers' shopping behaviour in both traditional and online shopping contexts. Convenience, in a shopping context, is defined as the reduction of the amount of time and effort involved with the entire purchasing process (Saha *et al*., 2022:4; Zeqiri *et al*., 2023:2). Convenience is one of the most important aspects a retailer can utilise to attract and retain consumers (Mkwizu, 2018:23) and has become increasingly vital in a competitive market where consumers have access to various alternatives (Saha *et al*., 2021). According to Anshu *et al*. (2022:4), consumers are more likely to select a retail store that offers a convenient experience. As the retail industry is constantly growing and there are more online stores to choose from, consumers are seeking aspects that differentiate retailers (Reinartz *et al*., 2019:352).

Price and product quality have long been considered the foremost influential factors when purchasing products, yet a growing emphasis is placed on convenience, given that consumers are driven by a fast-paced lifestyle. Therefore, saving time and effort is increasingly being regarded as more important, since consumers are willing to pay a premium price in exchange for increased convenience (Blázquez, 2014:99; Duarte *et al*., 2018:162). Online shopping has expedited consumers' perceived convenience since they are able to spend less time accessing, searching for and buying the desired products, despite having to wait a certain amount of time to receive their order (Beauchamp & Ponder, 2010:49).

Convenience is an important aspect, particularly of youth shopping behaviour as it has a direct effect on their shopping channel preference (Aris *et al*., 2021:420). The term youth is mostly associated with the Generation Y or Millennial cohort, consisting of individuals born between 1986-2005 (Markert, 2004). Compared to other generations, Generation Y consumers select a retailer based on the lowest offer while considering convenience aspects, such as a retailer being situated on their route home. Generation Y is one of the first generations to have grown up with technology and the internet (Krbová, 2016:39), making the generational cohort a distinctive target market

(Djamasbi *et al*., 2010). These individuals consider modern technology as essential in their lives and use it daily (Kamis & Ramlee, 2021:36). In addition, Generation Y individuals are a significant determinant of online shopping behaviour, as the consumers within this generational cohort account for the largest percentage of online purchases (Dhanapal *et al*., 2015:113; Jumbri *et al*., 2021:115). Furthermore, Generation Y consumers' purchase decisions take much longer and are more complex because they spend significantly more time on the internet obtaining and analysing product information about the price and quality, before making an informed purchase decision (Rahulan *et al*., 2013:164). For this generation, online customer reviews, particularly posted on social media or store websites, are the most crucial sources of information influencing their purchase decisions (Krbová & Pavelek, 2016:568).

To obtain insights and address this study's aim, Generation Y university students were targeted as the sample. This is because they are argued to be technologically astute (Kamis & Ramlee, 2021:36), influencers over peers, educated while obtaining a tertiary qualification and account for the largest percentage of online shoppers (Dhanapal *et al.*, 2015:113; Jumbri *et al.*, 2021:115). Sharing generational traits, students are more likely to shop online due to their need for convenience and scrutiny of products, prices and promotions (Rahulan *et al.*, 2013:164).

2. RESEARCH PROBLEM

The retail industry is changing because of the endless possibilities offered through technological advancements, which includes online shopping (Van Dyk & Van Belle, 2019:519; Shankar *et al*., 2021:13). Gupta and Ramachandran (2021:598) concur, highlighting that it is essential that brick-and-mortar retailers re-assess their business operations with the technological advancements taking place to ensure that the needs of the consumer are met, which, in turn, will lead to the attainment of business goals. However, García-Salirrosas *et al*. (2022:2) caution that especially within developing countries, consumers are sceptical of online shopping as they are mostly unfamiliar with technological advancements and, as such, prefer traditional shopping. Brooks (2022) asserts that even though online shopping is often perceived to be more convenient than traditional shopping, a variety of factors influence a consumer's decision to visit a brick-and-mortar store.

According to Sundström and Radon (2015:8), convenience can be a key driver to comprehend a consumer's preferred shopping channel. Previous research has investigated retail shopping convenience concentrating on the influence it has on consumer behaviour (Bulacan *et al*., 2022; Stranieri *et al*., 2017), retaining consumers (Moeller *et al*., 2009; Animashaun *et al*., 2016), customer satisfaction (Duarte *et al*., 2018; Kaura *et al*., 2015) and the effect it has on gaining a competitive advantage in the retail industry (Chen *et al*., 2019). Previous studies have also investigated the convenience of online shopping using mobile apps and websites and on shopping experience at the mall (Hussain & Siddiqui, 2019).

While there is evidence in the literature of the relationship between perceived convenience and behaviour (Khalifa & Liu, 2007; Beauchamp & Ponder, 2010; Jiang *et al*., 2013; Almarashdeh *et al*., 2019), there is a gap in the literature that reports the influence of perceived convenience on Generation Y consumers' online repurchase intentions. This study, being cognisant of the various theoretical, practical and managerial implications of such a research instigation, used the service convenience model (SERVCON) to address this research problem.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

This section includes a discussion of the theoretical framework that served as the foundation of the structural model, namely the service convenience model (SERVCON) and its antecedents, concluding with the hypotheses.

3.1 SERVCON: SERVICE CONVENIENCE MODEL

This study used the SERVCON model, developed and validated by Seiders *et al*. (2007) as a theoretical foundation. This theory proposes that five distinct factors, namely decision, access, benefit, transaction and post-benefit convenience contributes significantly to consumers behavioural intentions. While the model also includes factors such as satisfaction, shopping enjoyment and product category involvement, the scope of this current study included

perceived convenience variables and these were consequently extracted. From this foundation, similar research across other behavioural contexts followed (Khalifa & Liu, 2007; Beauchamp & Ponder, 2010; Jiang *et al*., 2013; Almarashdeh *et al*., 2019). Using the findings from these studies, this current investigation adapted the SERVCON model to measure perceived convenience with five specific sub-factors, namely access, search, transaction, execution and post-service convenience, which is argued to influence South African Generation Y consumers' online repurchase intentions, an extension of behavioural intent.

Repurchase intention

Fundamentally, behavioural intention refers to a person's disposition to execute a specific behaviour (Chan & Bishop, 2013) which depends on their positive assessment of engaging with the end behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Concluding from this is that consumers with a positive valuation to make online purchases will have a higher purchase intent than those who do not. Amongst various reasons, including convenience factors as argued by this study, consumers who had a favourable experience with an online retailer will likely make another purchase in the future. From a strategic perspective, online retailers must focus on gaining loyal customers who are likely to continue purchasing from them, with a ripple effect on the retailer's brand equity with free, uncoerced word of mouth marketing. These outcomes contribute to online retailer success above achieving one-time purchases. As such, this study aimed to determine whether perceived convenience significantly influences consumers' repurchase intentions, as per prior findings (Khalifa & Liu, 2007; Beauchamp & Ponder, 2010; Jiang *et al*., 2013; Almarashdeh *et al*., 2019).

Access convenience

Sneiders *et al*. (2000:80) describe access convenience as the ease and speed with which customers may approach a retailer, whether physically or virtually. Online shopping allows consumers to make purchases at any time of day, thereby eliminating traveling costs, effort and a need to interact in a physical environment. Similarly, consumers can buy products from multiple retailers, based country-wide and internationally, from anywhere they feel comfortable, such as from home, their workplace or school (Jiang *et al*., 2013:206). Besides the physical location of online retailers being irrelevant (Rohm & Swaminathan, 2004:750), access to them using the internet and mobile devices, whether a website or app, provides consumers with easy access to products and services. The statistically significant influence of access convenience on consumers' behavioural intention has been established in the literature (Seiders *et al*., 2007; Beauchamp & Ponder, 2010; Almarashdeh *et al.,* 2019). Consequently, this current study suggests that access convenience will have a statistically significant impact on South African Generation Y consumers' online repurchase intentions.

Search convenience

Besides consumers having access to online retailers, if their website, products and product information are challenging to find or needs extended effort, consumers are likely to bounce to a more convenient solution. Therefore, search convenience, referred to as the speed and ease with which customers identify and choose products that they desire to purchase (Seiders *et al*., 2000:80), is a crucial element in initial purchases, but particularly repeat purchases. Considerations to ensure a convenient search experience relies on online retailers ensuring an optimised website (Szymanski *et al*., 2000:313) that is easy to navigate (Childers *et al*., 2001:515) and to find products and important information (Wolfinbarger & Gilly, 2001:43). Prior findings suggest that a convenient search experience was a significant driver of purchase intentions (Seiders *et al*., 2007; Beauchamp & Ponder, 2010; Almarashdeh *et al*., 2019). Therefore, this study also theorises that search convenience will have a direct impact on South African Generation Y consumers' online repurchase intentions.

Transactional convenience

Building on the two prior factors, if a consumer has easy access and can easily find their desired products but are unable to make a purchase due to transactional barriers, then the individual will be deterred from the online retailer. Transaction convenience is achieved when the consumer can make an online purchase using multiple payment options and a seamless checkout process (Seiders *et al*., 2000:80; Jiang *et al*., 2013:206). With the absence of customer service available at physical locations, paired with consumers' preference for online shopping due to it offering faster transactions (Srinivasan *et al*., 2002:44), consumers must be able to complete a purchase product themselves and without extensive effort, at any time of day (Beauchamp & Ponder, 2010:53). This notion is echoed by prior research (Seiders *et al*., 2007; Beauchamp & Ponder, 2010; Jiang *et al*., 2013) with this current study expecting the same outcome in the context of South African Generation Y consumers' online repurchase intent.

Execution convenience

Initially referred to as "possession convenience" in the SERVCON model (Seiders *et al*., 2007), the nature of this variable, which relates to the speed and ease with which consumers receive products, resulted in this current study reformulating this variable to execution convenience. In support of this updated term, Główna (2016) explains that the "order execution process" is one of the most significant stages particularly for online shops and comprises all aspects of ensuring that an order is delivered in protected packaging, on time, at the arranged location, while allowing the buyer to track their products. Therefore, the term execution of the purchase is more appropriate and descriptive of the nature of this convenience experienced by the online shopper. Having been found as an important factor associated with buyer behaviour (Seiders *et al*., 2007; Beauchamp & Ponder, 2010; Jiang *et al*., 2013), this current study argues that the execution convenience South African Generation Y consumers associate with their preferred online retailer will impact their repurchase intentions.

Post-service convenience

Similar to the adaptation of the latter variable, this study suggests that post-possession convenience is better described by post-service convenience. That is, before a purchase decision is made, consumers are more likely to buy from an online retailer that has shipping, return and refund policies and after-sales customer service (Ertekin *et al*., 2021:4; Oghazi *et al*., 2018:192). The benefits associated with online shopping extend to the buyer's peace of mind and trust in the online shop that if they, for any reason, want to track their shipment, return products for exchange or refund, ease of receiving refunds while being able to contact customer support, they are able to do so, after the transaction and delivery took place. Post-service convenience is the last stage in the selling process where the online retailer has the opportunity to retain loyal customers and ensure their repurchase intentions (Seiders *et al*., 2007; Jiang *et al*., 2013), which this study aims to reaffirm.

3.2 HYPOTHESES

Per the literature investigation, five hypotheses were tested, as outlined below and shown in Figure 1.

H1. ***South African Generation Y consumers' perceived access convenience has a statistically significant direct influence on their online repurchase intentions.***

H2. ***South African Generation Y consumers' perceived search convenience has a statistically significant direct influence on their online repurchase intentions.***

H3. ***South African Generation Y consumers' perceived transactional convenience has a statistically significant direct influence on their online repurchase intentions.***

H4 ***South African Generation Y consumers' perceived execution convenience has a statistically significant direct influence on their online repurchase intentions.***

H5. ***South African Generation Y consumers' perceived post-service convenience has a statistically significant direct influence on their online repurchase intentions.***

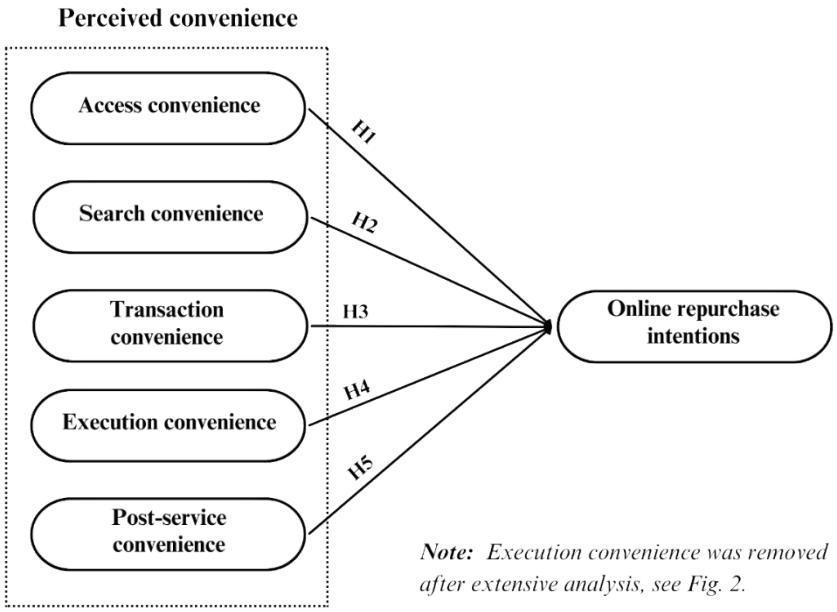

FIGURE 1: PROPOSED MODEL OF PERCEIVED CONVENIENCE AS A DRIVER OF SOUTH AFRICAN GENERATION Y CONSUMERS' ONLINE REPURCHASE INTENTIONS.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 STUDY DESIGN AND SETTING

This study was guided by a positivist paradigm perspective, employed a descriptive research design and measured data from a large, single cross-sectional sample. Accordingly, a quantitative self-administered survey approach was deemed most suitable and was limited to a specific and defined population element, namely Generation Y consumers. Argued to be technologically astute (Kamis & Ramlee, 2021:36), influencers over peers, educated while obtaining a tertiary qualification and accounting for the largest percentage of online shoppers (Dhanapal *et al*., 2015:113; Jumbri *et al*., 2021:115), most likely due to their need for convenience and scrutiny of products, prices and promotions (Rahulan *et al*., 2013:164), this study targeted the university student population. While the Generation Y cohort was born between 1986 to 2005 (Markert, 2004), this study targeted students aged 18 to 24, in 2023, the typical ages when completing a degree after leaving school. Collecting relevant and representative data relied on the respondents' experience with online shopping, which was an inclusion criterion.

4.2 STUDY SAMPLE PROCEDURE

The sampling procedure necessitated determining the target population, sampling frame, sampling method and sample size. In aggregate, this study targeted South African Generation Y students, aged 18 to 24, who were registered full-time at two Gauteng-based public higher education institutions (HEIs) in 2023; one traditional university and one university of technology. This selection stemmed from a non-probability judgement sampling approach, reducing the 26 public HEIs (Universities South Africa, 2021) to two in Gauteng, since the Personal Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA) in South Africa prohibited the researcher from obtaining a list of respondents and them being conveniently accessible to the researcher. Owing to the measurement instrument having 69 scaled items, according to the 5-1 principle (Memon *et al*. 2020:5), this study required 345 responses for structural equation modelling to be executed. To compensate for possible incomplete or erroneous questionnaires, this study aimed to obtain 400 responses instead. Furthermore, to ensure equal distribution and avoid sample bias, the researcher distributed 200 questionnaires per campus.

4.3 RESEARCH INSTRUMENT AND DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

A structured self-administered questionnaire comprising four sections was used to address this study's research hypotheses. This included a cover letter detailing the nature and purpose of the study and an informed consent statement. Screening questions ensured data collection from the intended target audience:

- Indicate your age at last birthday.
- Indicate whether you have purchased product(s) online in the past.

Potential respondents that failed to meet the criteria were advised to discontinue with completing the questionnaire. Should respondents have misinterpreted these screening questions, these cases were removing during data cleaning. Demographic information and online shopping background information were collected in sections two and three, respectively. The last section comprised the scaled items to measure the five perceived convenience dimensions and concluded with repurchase intentions. Before responding to the statements, the respondents had to first indicate their preferred online store and base their convenience perceptions on this specific store, referred to as Online Store X. Previously validated scales were adapted as shown in Table 5, indicating where each factor was retrieved and adapted from. All items were measured on a six-point Likert scale, ranging from one representing strongly disagree to six representing strongly agree.

After following the required procedures, including obtaining ethical clearance, gatekeeper's permission and preparing the questionnaires, the fieldworkers approached students on the two HEIs and requested their voluntary participation in the study. A mall-intercept type approach was used until 200 surveys were distributed on each campus. The completed questionnaires were returned to the research team immediately.

4.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Strict ethical procedures were followed during the execution of this study. This included obtaining ethical clearance from the university's relevant committee (Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EMS-REC); ethics number NWU-01842-22-A4) as well as Gatekeeper's permission from both targeted HEIs. No student respondent was coerced into completing the questionnaire, nor were they incentivised in any way. Participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous and respondents were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any stage without repercussion. No personal information was collected and informed consent was required to continue. Further, the researcher ensured that the questionnaires were stored in a safe location where only the supervisors and statistician had access to them.

4.5 DATA ANALYSES

IBMs SPSS and AMOS, versions 28, were used to analyse all data, with the statistical significance level set at $p < 0.01$. Analysis techniques and procedures comprised removing multivariate outliers via a Mahalanobis distance test and subsequently performing principal component factor and frequency analyses, descriptive statistics, a one-sample t-test, collinearity diagnostics and correlation analysis. Confirmatory factor and path analysis through structural equation modelling (SEM) were executed to test and validate the perceived convenience model.

These statistical procedures were executed to establish the data's internal consistency and composite reliability and validity (nomological, convergent and discriminant) of the data set and the significance of the latent factors. Model validation and path analysis were done using the covariance-based (CB-SEM) approach, a form of advanced regression analysis, as it is deemed "the dominant multivariate technique" (Hair *et al*., 2019). The HTMT values were also computed as an extra measure to ensure the discriminant validity of the model (Henseler *et al*., 2016). The results of the data analyses are reported in the succeeding section.

5. RESULTS

Of the 400 questionnaires distributed, 361 were returned, translating to a 90.3% response rate. Following the data cleaning process, 357 questionnaires adhered to the sampling criteria, but the final dataset consisted of 332 valid entries after multivariate outliers were removed (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). The success rate was therefore 83% and the dataset contained only complete entries without any missing data.

TABLE 1: TOTAL STUDY SAMPLE PROFILE.

Age	***f***	**%**	**Gender**	***f***	**%**
18	28	8.4	Male	126	38
19	48	14.5	Female	206	62
20	54	16.3	Other	0	
21	74	22.3	**Province**	***f***	**%**
22	68	20.5	E-Cape	7	2.1
23	30	9.0	Free State	36	10.8
24	30	9.0	Gauteng	216	65.1
Year of study	***f***	**%**	KZN	6	1.8
1st	23	6.9	Limpopo	13	3.9
2nd	99	29.8	Mpumalanga	11	3.3
3rd	137	41.3	N-Cape	1	0.3
4th	43	13	North-West	24	7.2
Post-graduate	30	9	W-Cape	17	5.1
HEI	***f***	**%**	Other	1	0.3
Traditional	148	44.6			
Uni of Technology	184	55.4			

The sample comprised more students who were registered at the university of technology (55.4%) compared to the traditional university (44.6%), with most being in the third year of their studies (41.3%), followed by second year students (29.8%). Unsurprisingly, the largest proportion of the sample originated from the target province, namely Gauteng (65.1%) with marginal representation from all eight other provinces, the second largest originating from the Free State (10.8%). Coinciding with the year of study was the students' age, where second- and third-year students are typically aged 18 to 21 (combined 61.5%), with a fifth of the sample represented by 22-year-olds. There was a sizeable representation from older students, aged 23 and 24 (18%), who are typically in their last year or pursuing a post-graduate degree. As for gender, while female respondents outnumber males 62:38, it does not suggest that females are more inclined to make online purchases, simply that more females were willing to participate in the study.

TABLE 2: ONLINE SHOPPING PREFERENCES AND BEHAVIOUR.

Device	***f***	**%**	**Shop Frequency**	***f***	**%**
Smart phone	270	81.3	Daily	2	0.6
Tablet	23	6.9	Weekly	34	10.2
Laptop	37	11.1	Monthly	231	69.6
Computer	2	0.6	Quarterly	56	16.9
Internet type	***f***	**%**	Annually	9	2.7
Wi-Fi	314	94.6	**Category preference**	***f***	**%**
Cable-based	2	0.6	Clothing/shoes	255	76.8
Mobile	16	4.8	Beauty	60	18.1
Search frequency	***f***	**%**	Food/groceries	172	51.8
Daily	51	15.4	Electronics	133	40.1
Weekly	138	41.6	Household appliances	14	4.2
Monthly	133	40.1			
Quarterly	10	3.0			
Annually	0	0			
Preferred online store	***f***	**%**	**Preferred online store**	***f***	**%**
Shein	77	23.2	Edgars	1	0.3
Takealot	126	38.0	Woolworths	2	0.6
Shelf life	1	0	Fashionova	7	2.1
Superbalist	45	13.6	Incredible Deals	1	0.3
Bash	5	1.5	Uber Eats	6	1.8
Sportscene	8	2.4	Game Stores	1	0.3
Mr Price	4	1.2	Lemkus	1	0.3
Mr D	7	3.1	Zara	2	0.6
Street Gym	1	0.3	BT Games	1	0.3
Nike	2	0.6	Heavy Notion	1	0.3
Clicks	1	0.3	Yaga	2	0.6
PNP ASAP	9	2.7	TFG Online	1	0.3
The Fix	2	0.6	Zando	1	0.3
Checkers Sixty60	11	3.3	Archive	2	0.6
Factorie	2	0.6	Other	2	0.6

As per Table 2, Generation Y consumers access online stores predominantly from a smart phone (81.3%), using a Wi-Fi network and has shown interest mostly in buying clothing/shoes (76.8%), food/groceries (51.8%) and electronics (40.1%). A clear observation is that Generation Y consumers search for items online more frequently than making purchases. For example, 15.4% of the sample searches for items online daily, yet only 0.6% make a purchase. Similarly, searches are executed weekly by 41.6% of the consumers and monthly by 40.1%, yet the actual sales are only experienced by the online shop mostly monthly (69.6%). This means there is a significant delay in action between search and purchase behaviour, suggesting that the online shopping experience is more hedonic in nature with purchase behaviour or utility motives being secondary. Alternatively, this behaviour can plainly be attributed to generational distinctions, namely that Generation Y consumers' take longer to make purchase decisions because they spend significantly more time online searching for and analysing product information before making an informed purchase decision (Rahulan *et al*., 2013:164).

As this was an open-ended question, 29 preferred online shops emerged from the responses. Notably, local online retailer Takealot was favoured by 38% of the sample, whereas the international online retailer, Shein, was favoured by 23.2%. Supporting the category choice of clothing and food is that 13.6%, 3.3% and 3.1% of the sample favoured Superbalist, Checkers Sixty60 and Mr D, respectively. Another observation is the lack of representation from popular

retailers such as Amazon.com and Makro.com, ranking fifth and sixth on the national online retailer preference report (Bashir, 2024). This same report echoes the study sample's preference of Takealot as the foremost online retailer in the country.

Tables 1 and 2 contextualise the findings of the study after having provided the sample profile and relevant background information. An important consideration for interpreting the data is that sample responded to the scaled items while keeping their favourite online shop in mind. Before constructing the measurement and structural models, the dataset had to be scrutinised, starting with dimension reduction, descriptive statistics and significance analyses.

TABLE 3: EFA, DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS AND ONE-SAMPLE T-TEST RESULTS.

Latent factors	Loadings	Commu-nalities	Mean ±Std. dev.	t-value	*p*
Access convenience (AC)	0.575-0.789	0.676-0.834	5.46 ± 0.724	49.291	<0.001
Search convenience (SC)	0.653-0.829	0.570-0.745	5.48 ± 0.610	59.119	<0.001
Transaction convenience (TC)	0.485-0.792	0.602-0.707	5.35 ± 0.596	56.605	<0.001
Execution convenience (EC)	0.497-0.731	0.498-0.670	5.25 ± 0.545	58.508	<0.001
Post-service convenience (PSC)	0.723-0.860	0.718-0.818	4.96 ± 0.797	33.357	<0.001
Repurchase intentions (RI)	0.699-0.813	0.626-0.779	5.14 ± 0.758	39.412	<0.001

Notes: Statistically significant at $p < .01$

Principal components analysis using the varimax rotation was performed on the 31 scaled items; six factors were extracted, explaining 67.36% of the variance in South African Generation Y consumers' perceived convenience associated with their online repurchase intentions. Table 3 outlines the EFA results, including the factor loadings and communality values. After scrutinising the results, two items were removed. Accordingly, the 29 retained items explained 68.39% of the variance, an increase from 67.36% after the removal of the items. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test and Bartlett's sphericity test returned satisfactory values [KMO = 0.933, Chi-square Bartlett test = 6210.255 (df = 406), p < 0.001].

The factor loading and communality values range between 0.485-0.860 and 0.498-0.834, respectively, confirming the construct validity of the latent factors to be specified in the measurement model. With the six valid latent factors, subsequent tests were executed, including descriptive statistical analysis and a one-sample t-test. For the latter test to be confirmed as statistically significant, the mean values for each factor must surpass the pre-set value of 3.5 (based on a six-point Likert scale) with a *p*-value smaller than 0.01.

This threshold was met as all factors returned the desired mean value surpassing 3.5 with a 99% significance level. The highest mean scores were recorded for search convenience (5.48 ± .610) followed closely by access convenience (5.46 ± 0.724). Three other factors returned mean values above five: transactional convenience (5.35 ± 0.596), execution convenience (5.25 ± 0.545) and repurchase intentions (5.14 ± 0.758). The lowest mean value was recorded for post-service convenience (4.96 ± 0.797). All six factors were determined to be statistically significant with $p < 0.1$. These findings considered, Generation Y consumers perceive their preferred or favourite online store easy to access from anywhere at any time, navigate and find products easily, complete transactions using a convenient payment process with multiple options, that this online store delivers products as and when promised and expected and can easily return or exchange products after the sale. Most importantly, these consumers have a high probability of repurchasing from their preferred online store.

The next step was establishing the data's nomological validity by analysing whether there was evidence of the correlation between all the factors and any collinearity concerns.

TABLE 4: BIVARIATE CORRELATION ANALYSIS AND COLLINEARITY DIAGNOSTIC RESULTS.

Latent factors	AC	SC	TC	EC	PSC	TV	VIF
Access convenience	1					0.289	3.456
Search convenience	0.833*	1				0.269	3.718
Transaction convenience	0.607*	0.632*	1			0.468	2.138
Execution convenience	0.474*	0.504*	0.571*	1		0.611	1.637
Post-service convenience	0.363*	0.363*	0.453*	0.399*	1	0.690	1.449
Repurchase intentions	0.309*	0.393*	0.439*	0.395*	0.461*	0.687	1.455
*Significant at $p < 0.01$							

Statistically significant positive relationships ($p < 0.01$) were recorded between all the pairs of latent factors planned for inclusion in this study's proposed model, ranging between r = 0.309-0.833, most relationships being classed as moderately strong (± 0.41-0.60) to strong (± 0.61-0.80) (Hair et al., 2019). Also, the absence of collinearity concerns was confirmed given the calculated tolerance values (TV) ranging between 0.269 and 0.690 and an average variance inflation factor (VIF) of 2.309 (Burns & Bush, 2014). Therefore, the nomological validity of the latent variables can be concluded.

With the prior compounded analyses considered, this study continued with structural equation modelling using the maximum likelihood method, which included constructing measurement and structural models to address the hypotheses.

5.1 MEASUREMENT MODEL

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using the maximum likelihood method was executed and a six-factor model comprising 29 items was specified for testing, with the first loading on each latent factor fixed at 1.0. After the first model was produced, several factors, such as low factor loading, validity not being achieved, led to the removal of six items, of which was the entire execution convenience factor. An immediate consequence was that H4 could not be tested using path analysis. A linear regression analysis was performed and it was concluded that this factor had no statistically significant direct influence on South African Generation Y consumers' online repurchase intentions (Std. $\beta = 0.001$; $t = 0.020$; $p = 0.984$, $p > 0.01$). Nonetheless, in the context of this study, it remains statistically inconclusive whether execution convenience had a significant direct influence on repurchase intentions.

The resulting model, comprising five factors and 23 items, produced 299 distinct sample moments and 81 distinct parameters to be estimated, leaving 218 degrees of freedom based on an overestimated model. Additionally, the model returned a Chi-square value of 584.188 at the .000 probability level. According to Hair *et al*. (2019), the Chi-square value empirically assesses the proposed theoretical structure's accuracy and statistical significance. The same scholars attest to the Chi-square statistic being the foundation for most goodness-of-fit model indices (Hair *et al*., 2019), although Malhotra *et al*. (2012) suggest that a statistically significant Chi-square is indicative of poor model fit given its sensitivity to sample sizes and number of observed variables.

Consequently, alternative indices were computed to confirm this study's model, which according to Gaskin *et al*. (2022), must include the Chi-square minimum discrepancy value divided by the degrees of freedom (CMIN/DF), the comparative fit index (CFI), standardised root mean square residual (SRMR) and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). Acceptable model fit is reached when CMIN/DF ranges between one and three, the CFI >0.95, the SRMR <0.08 and the RMSEA <0.06 (Hair *et al*., 2019; Hu & Bentler, 1999), although, Malhotra (2012) reports a RMSEA below 0.08 is acceptable. The model was also inspected for problematic estimates, including standardised factor loadings above 1.0 or below –1.0 and negative error variance values, the average variance extracted (AVE) and the squared root of the average variance extracted (√AVE). These estimates were

computed to establish the model's convergent and discriminant validity. The first is confirmed when the latent factor loading estimates and average variance extracted (AVE) values are larger than .50. Discriminant validity necessitates the square root of the AVE (√AVE) values exceed the correlation estimates between the latent factors (Hair *et al*., 2019) and the heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlation (HTMT) values be significantly smaller than one (Henseler *et al*., 2016), where the threshold for strict and liberal discriminant validity are 0.85 and 0.90 respectively.

Scale reliability was tested by computing Cronbach's alpha (α) and composite reliability (CR) values, where Malhotra *et al*. (2012) suggest a result of .70 and above for the scale or factors to be considered statistically reliable. The level of statistical significance was set at the 99% confidence level ($p < 0.01$) throughout the analyses, where Gaskin *et al*.'s (2023) AMOS plugins were executed to obtain the validity and reliability estimates. This study's measurement instrument of five factors and 23 items produced a combined α value of 0.940, based on the standardised items, where independent latent factor α values ranged from 0.827-0.915.

Table 5 details the measurement model estimates, including the latent factor description, its coinciding item statements and assigned codes, the authors the items were retrieved from, followed by the standardised regression weights (SE), the error variance terms (squared multiple correlations) (Err. Var.), the α and CR values, AVE, √AVE values and the relationships between each of the paired latent factors.

The model proposed in this study and the resulting analyses outlined in tables 5 and 6 can conclusively be validated using the measurement model (CFA) findings. That is, the model fit indices met the required thresholds, where the CMIN/DF = 2.679. CFI = 0.929, SRMR = 0.071 and the RMSEA = 0.071. While the CFI fell slightly below the desired level <0.95, Table 5 indicates no problematic estimates, where the standardised regression weights (SE) range from 0.662 to 0.866 with squared multiple correlation values between 0.438 and 0.749. The model was also confirmed to be highly reliable, with Cronbach alpha and CR values ranging between 0.827 and 0.915, exceeding the suggested 0.70 (Malhotra *et al*., 2012), thus indicating the model's internal consistency and composite reliability.

TABLE 5: ESTIMATES FOR THE MEASUREMENT MODEL

Latent factors & items	Authors	Code	SE	Err. Var.	α	CR	AVE	√AVE
Access convenience (AC)	Beauchamp & Ponder (2010); Almarashdeh & Alazzam (2019)				0.915	0.911	0.673	0.820
"Online Store X is always accessible."		O_AC_1	0.863	0.745				
"I can shop at Online Store X anytime I want."		O_AC_2	0.740	0.548				
"I can order product(s) from Online Store X from anywhere (e.g. home, work, residence etc.)."		O_AC_3	0.853	0.728				
"Online Store X's website/app is easy to find."		O_AC_4	0.862	0.742				
"Online Store X's website/app loads easily."		O_AC_5	0.775	0.601				
Search convenience (SC)	Beauchamp & Ponder (2010); Almarashdeh & Alazzam (2019)				0.901	0.902	0.605	0.778
"Online Store X is easy to navigate."		O_SC_1	0.863	0.744				
"Online Store X is well-organised."		O_SC_2	0.788	0.622				
"Online Store X provides useful information (such as the price of products)."		O_SC_3	0.792	0.627				
"I can find desired product(s) quickly on Online Store X."		O_SC_4	0.713	0.508				
"Online Store X's website/app is user-friendly."		O_SC_5	0.775	0.601				
"The product classification on Online Store X is easy to follow."		O_SC_6	0.727	0.528				
Transaction convenience (TC)	Beauchamp & Ponder (2010); Jiang ***et al***. (2013)				0.827	0.827	0.546	0.739
"The checkout process at Online Store X is fast."		O_TC_2	0.731	0.534				
"Online Store X verifies the payment status quickly (e.g. sends a message after the payment is received)."		O_TC_3	0.763	0.583				
"My purchase at Online Store X is completed easily."		O_TC_4	0.793	0.629				
"Online Store X has a convenient payment process."		O_TC_5	0.662	0.438				
Post-service convenience (PSC)	Jiang *et al.* (2013); Seiders *et al*. (2007)				0.881	0.890	0.670	0.819
"Online Store X's return or exchange policy is clear and understandable."		O_PSC_2	0.786	0.618				
"It is easy to return or exchange the product(s) that I have purchased from Online Store X."		O_PSC_3	0.845	0.714				
"Online Store X takes care of product returns or exchanges promptly (e.g. they reply quickly to emails or messages)."		O_PSC_4	0.834	0.695				
"Online Store X resolved any problems I experienced after my purchase."		O_PSC_5	0.809	0.654				
Repurchase intentions (RI)	Khalifa & Liu (2007); Aren *et al.* (2013)				0.848	0.849	0.586	0.765
"I will regularly shop online in the future."		O_RI_2	0.758	0.575				
"I will recommend online shopping to people around me."		O_RI_3	0.740	0.547				
"I consider online shopping my first choice"		O_RI_4	0.686	0.471				
"I will continue shopping online as much as possible."		O_RI_5	0.866	0.749				
SE: Standardised regression weights								
Correlations: $p<0.01$	AC ↔ SC: 0.939; AC ↔ PSC: 0.383; AC ↔ RI: 0.395; TC ↔ AC: 0.740; SC ↔ PSC: 0.399							
	SC ↔ RI: 0.479; TC ↔ SC: 0.779; PSC ↔ RI: 0.539; TC ↔ PSC: 0.509; TC ↔ RI: 0.581							

Additionally, all the standardised loading estimates and AVE values exceeded 0.50, combined with the CR values exceeding 0.70, concluded the convergent validity of all the latent factors. As for the model's discriminant validity, statistically significant relationships ($p < .01$) were computed between each of the pairs of latent factors. Also, given that the √AVE for AC, SC and TC are smaller than their correlation with SC, TC and AC, further analysis to conclude discriminant validity was required, which, according to Henseler *et al*. (2015) and Henseler *et al*. (2016), involved computing the HTMT ratios of the correlations. The HTMT values for the correlations in the measurement model are outlined in Table 6.

TABLE 6: MEASUREMENT MODEL HTMT VALUES

Latent factors	AC	SC	TC	PSC
Access convenience (AC)				
Search convenience (SC)	0.836			
Transaction convenience (TC)	0.631	0.673		
Post-service convenience (PSC)	0.364	0.367	0.453	
Repurchase intentions (RI)	0.340	0.415	0.488	0.469

Accordingly, all HTMT ratios fell significantly below one, ranging between 0.340 and 0.836; thus, the discriminant validity of the model can be concluded (Henseler *et al*., 2016).

5.2 STRUCTURAL MODEL

With the model having been validated, a structural model was developed, excluding the EC factor. The the R^2 value (R.Sq) indicates that the four remaining perceived convenience factors, which relates to the amount of variance explained by the independent variables, explained 45 percent of consumers online purchase intentions . The results are displayed in Figure 2 and Table 7.

FIGURE 2: MODEL OF THE INFLUENCE OF PERCEIVED CONVENIENCE ON SOUTH AFRICAN GENERATION Y CONSUMERS' ONLINE REPURCHASE INTENTIONS

As per Figure 2, AC, SC, TC AND PSC explained 45% of South African Generation Y consumers' online repurchase intentions. This indicates that other variables explain the remaining 55%, besides convenience factors and needs to be identified and tested. Nonetheless, Table 7 reports the findings from the hypotheses testing process.

Table 7 outlines the regression coefficients (β), both unstandardised and standardised, the standard error (SE) estimates and *p*-values estimated per hypothesised path and the outcomes. While H4 is inconclusive, H1-3 and H5 can be accepted.

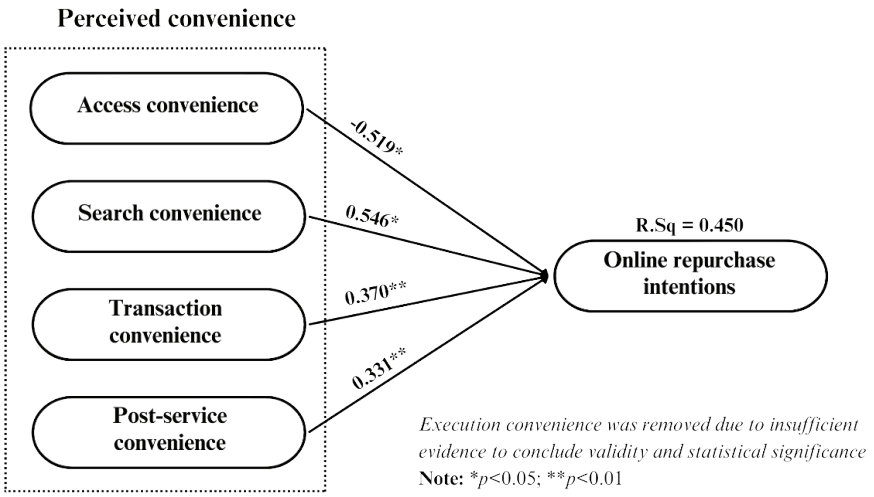

TABLE 7: STRUCTURAL MODEL ESTIMATES PER HYPOTHESISED PATH.

H	Paths	Unst. β	Std. β	SE	p-values	Outcome
H1	AC → RI	–0.378	–0.519	.054	0.029	Accept
H2	SC → RI	0.484	0.546	.064	0.035	Accept
H3	TC → RI	0.398	0.370	.050	0.001	Accept
H4	EC → RI	-	-	-	-	Inconclusive
H5	PSC– → RI	0.284	0.331	.020	0.000	Accept

Notes: β: beta coefficient; SE: standard error; *p*: two-tailed statistical significance.

AC = Access convenience, SC = Search convenience, TC = Transaction convenience, EC = Execution convenience, PSC = post-service convenience, RI = Repurchase intentions

Post-service convenience (β = 0.331, *p* = 0.000, *p* < 0.001), transaction process (β = 0.370, *p* = 0.001, *p* < 0.01) and search convenience (β = 0.546, *p* = 0.035, *p* < 0.05) had a statistically significant positive, direct influence on the sample's repurchase intentions. Although, contrary to prior findings (Prabarini & Setiawan, 2022), access convenience (β = –0.519, *p* = 0.029, *p* < 0.05) had a statistically significant negative influence on repurchase intentions, which is in line with the findings of Vyt *et al*. (2022). This finding suggest that should South African Generation Y consumers' preferred online store not be accessible at any time or from anywhere or should the website/app not be easy to find or not load easily, the consumers will still have the intention to engage in online shopping in general.

6. DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Several key findings and contributions emanated from this investigation. Primarily, this was among the first studies to investigate the role that perceived convenience plays in South African consumers' online repurchase intentions. This study identified crucial online shopping preferences and behaviours, offering valuable insights for industry stakeholders. For example, Generation Y consumers prefer browsing and purchasing predominantly from smart mobile devices, with no difference between apps and websites. They access these shopping platforms by relying on Wi-Fi connections, where they search for items more frequently than making purchases. Addressing the gap between search and purchase frequency is vital, with factors such as hedonic browsing, information availability and promotional offers influencing buying decisions (McGill, 2022; Sendoso, 2022). Popular shopping categories for Generation Y consumers include clothing/shoes, food/groceries and electronics, underscoring the need for a diverse product range, accessible information, competitive pricing and regular promotions. Notable online retailers preferred by respondents include Takealot and Shein.

As for the SERVCON model tested in this study, Generation Y consumers' preferences for a broad variety of online retailers, could have led to the inconclusive finding for the execution convenience factor. At this point, the execution of the purchase process did not significantly influence repurchase intentions, which is contrary to prior studies (Seiders *et al*., 2007; Beauchamp & Ponder, 2010; Jiang *et al*., 2013). Other findings, such as search, transaction and post-service convenience having a statistically significant positive influence on Generation Y consumers' intent to buy from the same online retailer, suggest that most of the stated websites and apps allow consumers to search for desired products, easily complete transactions and they are satisfied with the policies and customer service offered by the online retailer. These research findings concur with other investigations findings (Seiders *et al*., 2007; Beauchamp & Ponder, 2010; Jiang *et al*., 2013; Almarashdeh *et al*., 2019).

Although, contrary to the theoretical expectation and prior research (Seiders *et al*., 2007; Beauchamp & Ponder, 2010; Almarashdeh & Alazzam, 2019), access convenience, while being significant, had a negative effect on repurchase intentions and as such, if the access convenience of Generation Y consumers' preferred online store is perceived in a negative light, it will not hinder these consumers to engage in online shopping in general.

Based on the aforementioned discussion, several recommendations emerged:

1. Online retailers must optimise their websites and apps for smart mobile use to ensure customers return, based on this convenience (Almarashdeh *et al.,* 2019). They must also ensure fast-loading websites and apps to enhance navigation and minimise bounce rates.
2. A thorough understanding of Generation Y consumers' search and purchase motives will allow them to identify specific tactics to decrease the time between search and spend frequency. Thus, if the retailer uncovers that an abundance of product information availability and a fun purchase experience can enhance conversions, they are advised to incorporate them into their buying process. Furthermore, strategies such as push notifications and special deals can help overcome barriers and drive sales.
3. Online retailers, whether they are preferred platforms like Takealot or Shein or competitors aiming to increase their market share, must understand the importance of aligning their offerings with consumer preferences. For instance, they could follow Takealot's lead by offering a wide range of products including clothing, shoes, electronics and groceries, thus becoming a one-stop-shop and enhancing convenience.
4. Online retailers must ensure that customer orders are delivered in protected packaging, on time, at the arranged location, while allowing the buyer to track their purchase progress, as this will result in a higher likelihood of repurchase behaviour. To confirm the importance of this convenience type, more extensive research would be beneficial to understand consumers' behaviour across retailers.
5. Online retailers must ensure website and app visitors can easily find the product information they seek. This involves integrating a master and category search function into their platforms and and providing sufficient product information, including prices, to enable consumers to make informed decisions.
6. Ensuring ease of executing transactions is vital to both purchase and repurchase intentions. This includes the online retailer ensuring a variety of payment options, such as EFT, bank transfers, Visa and Mastercard payments, PayFast, scan to pay and other third-party integrations. Other vendors, such as Takealot, offer the consumer an interest-free credit payment option, which is limited to a specific period, using a specific supporting service (Mobicred and Payflex). This platform also allows a point-based service to be used, including eBucks and Discovery Miles. The transactional convenience is possibly one of the main reasons consumers prefer this platform.
7. Online retailers that emphasise rigid and detailed return policies and processes n build trust and credibility, thereby ensuring repeat purchase behaviour from consumers.

6.1 THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

The foremost interested parties in theoretical advancements include academic scholars and researchers, who will be able to extend this model and apply it to their contexts. The perceived convenience factors tested in this study that had a statistically significant influence on South African Generation Y consumers' online repurchase intention, namely access, search, transaction and post-service convenience only explained 45% of the variance in their behaviour. Therefore, this study's SERVCON model can be reevaluated and possibly extended to include other variables that were proven to be drivers on repurchase intentions.

6.2 PRACTICAL AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The foremost interested parties in practical and managerial contributions include various industry stakeholders. These stakeholders include but are not limited to, online shop software engineers and developers, the online retail brands, their management and employees and marketing professionals. By considering this study's findings, these stakeholders should ensure access to online shopping websites that are optimised for search engine optimisation (SEO), easy to navigate with a speedy loading time, while ensuring product and related information is easy to find. Further, ensuring customers can make transactions seamlessly while offering a variety of payment options will drive their purchase behaviour and preferences for this online store. Then, while not proven as statistically significant,

the high mean value recorded for the variable still indicates that online retailers must ensure that their products are delivered as promised, to the correct location and offer shipment tracking as part of executing the purchase. Lastly, implementing fair returns and shipping policies is crucial to consumers and will encourage repeat purchasing behaviour, especially from online retailers that have them in place. Overall, it is the responsibility of the brand's management team to ensure the implementation of these strategies and to provide effective leadership.

7. CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study applied the SERVCON model, where access, search, transaction and post-service convenience were determined to be statistically significant drivers of South African Generation Y consumers' online repurchase intentions. While execution convenience, based on the reported mean value, was deemed important to these consumers, it is inconclusive whether it was a statistically significant driver of repurchase intentions, thereby warranting further investigation. One possible outcome links to the limitations of this investigation. A non-probability, quantitative sample was utilised, predominantly consisting of a small percentage of the Generation Y cohort, primarily students. The investigation should be extended to other consumer demographics who also engage in online shopping to provide enhanced and more specific industry recommendations. This extension should encompass data collection to all provinces and from the three largest active generations, namely Baby Boomers, Generation X and Generation Y, thus including individuals born between 1946 and 2005 (Markert, 2004).

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