

# **Branding and E-commerce service quality for a small company Case Company Kip-Fashion**

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<p>E-commerce has developed and metamorphosed dominantly. Presently in the fashion industry, there is unequivocal competition within e-commerce retailers. The purpose of this paper is to delve into the brand-building and service quality concerning small e-commerce online stores. The study explores the limitations of a startup e-commerce shop and to identify features that may assist in progressing and sustaining the online store. This study considers the role of brand-building activities in the small retailer's e-commerce environment. Thus, facilitating the benefits and character of e-commerce service quality that congregates relevant knowledge for operating and bolstering an e-commerce website.</p> <p>Qualitative research was administered with a case company. The data is collected by way of an interview with the case company, in addition to secondary sources to determine the performance of branding and e-commerce service quality in a startup e-commerce shop as well as ascertain their benefits. Based on the findings, the case company has not been benefiting from brand-building activities. Nevertheless, they suggested criteria for service quality improvement.</p> <p>The results of the study further strengthened the brand experience, which entails that creating exclusive and satisfactory brand empiricism would lead to augmented impression amidst online shopping customers in such a way that will leverage the integrity of the brand.</p>	

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**Keywords**  
e-commerce, brand building, customer relationship, online store

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

There is an increased reliance on advanced digital channels established on the enlightenment they administer in the e-commerce store. How the e-commerce sector operates within the environment is dramatically influenced by this motion. The tremendous boom in the worldwide use of information and communications technology (ICTs) is the most compelling consumption with belief driving the world economy and e-commerce today. Kaynak et al (2005) suggest that the immediate emergence of e-commerce has changed the structure and essence of the online retail store like a bat out of hell that it is fundamentally developmental when it was once progressive. Electronic commerce has become one of the foremost simple and easy ways to transact business on the internet. Systematically the e-commerce enterprise empowers a customer to salvage intensity and time. How caution and carefulness drive far and large is being turned around by high-tech means of arrival.

Ward and Lee (2000) defined brand- building as an act of making a distinction that is bounded by goods or services when opposed to competitors. This can be achieved when an organization catalyzes their possessions, budgets, activities, and targets them to brand-building goals. Kapferer (2008) details brand building activities as the customer's identification along with your enterprise and services. Brand acknowledgment is incorporated into it- the understanding of potential customers to perceive your brand symbol or signature and the affiliations they carry with the company single-handedly. Precisely, branding enhances an organization's sale to the grand slam. It aids to center an organization on basic procedures that attracts attention and retention.

Brown et al. (2006) expound that implementing yearning collaborative personality encompasses combined brand-building activities. A company's brand-building activity symbolizes their potential anchor of associations. It reflects the manageable subgroup of cooperatives that circumscribe the company's assumption of identity, which is intended to advertise importance, divergence, and specialty (Van Riel et al., 2001).

There are also a few difficulties with the establishment of the online branding activity, notwithstanding that there are favourable mention and character references for the unification of pricing pandemic buying and selling. The tendencies that exceeding the digital business environment motivate the rise of the influential and comprehensive moment. Not to mention, that the essentials and basic principles of this online intensity and boost can questionably and tentatively control ongoing and prevailing cooperatives. By the same token,

their appearances and development could be imaginably susceptible, thereby necessitating controversy and managerial mediation to nip in the bud the long pull of advertising drive, influence, and competence that repudiates the online business environment. (Reibstein, D. J. 2002). The related prospect has been signified by other researchers like Balmer, (2001) suggested that branding is made to attract customers and potential buyers that are more interested in purchasing product that is captivating and appealing according to their demand. Any start-up e-commerce shop that embarks on consolidated service quality that connects to the intending customers in an effortless and uncomplicated service is dynamic in progress. That technique or approach is built upon a painstaking and judicious policy that preceded the online launch. This has a compelling influence on the output of any small e-commerce shop that is willing to contain the chance to be broadly embraced based on their straightforward and unambiguous operations. (Ezrachi, 2015).

Small organizations have different perceptions of branding activities according to their propensity and recurrently may depend on preceding know-how and their conclusions are directly or indirectly linked to this viewpoint Tan and Donald (2010). Brand building of a company's offering has a symbolic performance in a small company's favourable outcome, and at the essence of retailing a start-up company's beneficence. The role of branding in implementing competitive and ambitious dominance to a small company is a far-reaching and essential area in a collaborative retailing environment. It is generally agreed upon that the essential and indispensable standard of branding and e-commerce service quality are without exception appropriate and relevant to the small and large e-commerce organization.

According to (Quinn, 2004), stated that the progress of start-ups e-commerce website management and brand building have been deterred factually by the significant expenses, low quality of internet providers, and the dependability and cost of conveyance systems. Nevertheless, e-commerce is developing quickly from a fragmented base, as branding and logistics improve, to become considerably quicker. It is for this reason essential that website management and branding are recognized and emphasized as fundamental proceedings (Chaffey, 2009). Brand-building activities will enable small organizations to attain the same level as other large companies in the e-commerce market and bring customer satisfaction. Branding can be specifically indispensable in a small e-commerce business environment in manipulating and influencing consumer awareness as well as compelling purchasing decisions, reliability, and trustworthiness (Ha, 2004).

## **1.2 Aims and Objectives**

This research aims to strengthen the perception of the benefits and relevance of brand-building and e-commerce service quality for start-ups. Another aim is to establish the best solution to participate in among the diversified options for e-commerce brand-building.

The following is required to achieve this:

- a. Conducting a review of existing literature on the subject.
- b. Making interviews with selected case companies.

The research will answer the questions below:

- a. What are the perceived benefits of brand-building to small company's?
- b. What suggestion can be given to Kipfashion to strengthen customer relationships?
- c. What unique foundations can be established in initiating the Kipfashion brand?

## **1.3 Limitations and Structure of the study**

The thesis will be likely affected by a limited number of responses due to social distancing. The study is based on an e-commerce retail shop which may limit the result of the finding to be most relevant to clients with an online retail shop. In this research, a semi-structured interview using skype and zoom was performed. Face-to-face interviews would most probably have resulted in more detailed responses.

This paper has six chapters:

Chapter 1: This gives a broad prospect to the background of the topic and the aim and objectives.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Background and Literature review. This chapter presents the definition and provides the theoretical foundation fundamental for the subsequent sections.

Clarification of the concept and the influence of e-commerce, in addition to recent studies relevant to the subject.

Chapter 3: The chapter presents the guide to the technique strategy and the measures to oversee the study. The proposition and game plan that was appropriated in the study was clarified by the writer and admittance of how the data were obtained and used. The author's analysis is provided with conviction where the key emphasis of the idea can be observed.

Chapter 4: The chapter presents the results and analysis of the author's findings based on primary data obtained from interviews.

Chapter 5: The discussions and conclusions of the study were evaluated and figured out in this chapter and endeavors to address the previous research question.



Chapter 6: The following chapter ends with the drawbacks and recommendations. A requirement for extra investigation will be very important.

## **2 Theoretical Background/ Literature Review**

### **2.1 Literature Review**

Internet and e-commerce are closely wrapped towards mega and developing firms. But they can achieve tremendous benefits to start-up companies if it is applicable as an ideal business purpose. According to Wang & Benbasat (2010), the impact of brand building and service quality on the e-commerce website is consequential. The e-commerce business environment is speedily gaining a considerable advantage for small scale industry. It is auspiciously becoming the essential route to the commercialization of the SMEs productively. It has metamorphosed into a fantastic place for small e-commerce businesses to compete in the online business environment. It would have been troublesome for start-ups to be well-known, but the online platform shows up as the foremost and proficient technique that leverages SMEs to prevail in the competitive business environment. The online business environment shifts generally as it is programmed and run by computerization instruments. Small scale industry that has set surpassing and more advanced tactical targets will begin to create a marketing strategy for the accomplishment of the landing-place. To interact with persuasively, start-up companies in the e-commerce business environment need to recognize the essential features that affect and exploit their target customers. (Treiblmaier et.al., 2008). The main controversy for the upcoming e-commerce shops is to augment their brand and service quality capacity, but this is a slow process with no universal recipe on how to solve it. In the comparatively long term, the realization of future benefits can be achieved. The degree of understanding of brand building in the e-commerce business is very important. Agreeing to Stockdale and Standing (2004) this can be a fascinating necessity for future growth. The result of the online shop is entitled to be contradictory if the advancements are not taken into thought.

Despite the compulsion, some of the small e-commerce shops are creating and reinforcing their brand-building that assures admissible points of distinctness to customers. According to Quinn (2004), brand-building is discordantly based on the age and size of the company. The administrative approach inside a small e-commerce business environment is one that is profoundly exclusive and peculiar to respective companies. Moreover, the two most relevant perceptions that e-commerce websites must identify and unceasingly work on are the brand building and e-commerce service quality and, as a consequence the customer satisfaction, which is both contemplated key determinants that certify their viable belligerent improvement and expansion on a long term. Ashworth et al., (2006) note

that e-commerce service quality that is well realized attracts and retains customers by advocating the value, prominence, and behaviour.

Conferring to Oliver (2010), customer satisfaction is the intellectual shabby state arising from the emotion encircling disqualified and disproved perceptions coupled with the previous feelings of a customer regarding their experience. Customer satisfaction can be exceptionally assumed from his objectivity as a progressing assessment or appraisal of the astounded deep-rooted in product purchase and customer participation. The definition of Hansemark & Albinsson (2004) is marginally distinctive from that of Oliver: Satisfaction is the customers' contentment desire. It is a perception that a product or service characteristic, or the product of service itself, provides a delightful level of consumption-accompanying achievement. The emphasis of Hansemark & Albinsson's focus is on achieving a certain satisfaction in terms of buying. Consumer satisfaction is described in this study as the satisfaction of the customer concerning his or her previous buying experience with a given e-commerce retailer. There is every tendency for even a loyal purchaser who happens to be malcontent to turn down offers of the preferred e-commerce vendor. It is understandable that when a buyer is disappointed, he/she is obligated to switch to favorable substitutes and in this manner embrace a competing proposal. The international transaction has been accompanied by a lot of swindles and this brought about frustration and dissatisfaction for the customer and even though there are solutions like PayPal, these solutions are far from infallible. It thinks that the satisfaction of a loyal customer brings about a magnificent and impressive increase in income.

The service quality of any e-commerce online shop facilitates in establishing the satisfaction of buyers and intending customers, and this usual procedure costs next to nothing than the act of reclaiming a discontented customer. It has evolved as one of the first-rate e-commerce business organization's preferences. It is highlighted that the service quality of e-commerce has a decisive outcome in e-commerce customer satisfaction.

It is relevant to observe that business practice in an extensive company differs from that of a small company, thus the e-commerce needs of a small company are appreciated through an analysis of the uncommon attitudes of small businesses and their dealings (Chiu et al., 2005).

Consumers' can be attracted to an e-commerce small firm depending on its quality of service, product, and payment security. Consecutively, the service quality of the organization, for instance, product quality, delivery time, site navigation, and optimized technology being used by the company (Chaffey, 2009). A large company is usually restricted by bulky series of actions to achieve results while a small company can maneuver expeditiously and more conveniently appraise the impact on consumers and other emerging associates.

## 2.2 Theoretical Background

This theoretical background (figure 1) comprises concepts in addition to their definitions and reference to relevant academic writing. The intention is to determine the structure that can hold or support brand-building activities in a small e-commerce website. This idea was generated from reviewing the brand identity system according to Aaker, (1996). Besides studying the mechanism of developing and producing a brand image (Lindroos, Lindroos and Nyman 2005, 23). In the competitive business environment such as e-commerce, developments in service quality and branding activities have predisposed acceleration and growth to many start-ups with diverse objectives. The second dimension encompasses the readiness to keep customer's expectations and satisfy their demands. The framework (figure 1) shows that e-commerce service quality and online trust is a demanding factor in the advancement of e-commerce. Once these factors are well-established between the start-up companies and the consumers, then online loyalty will be determined (Aaker, 1996).

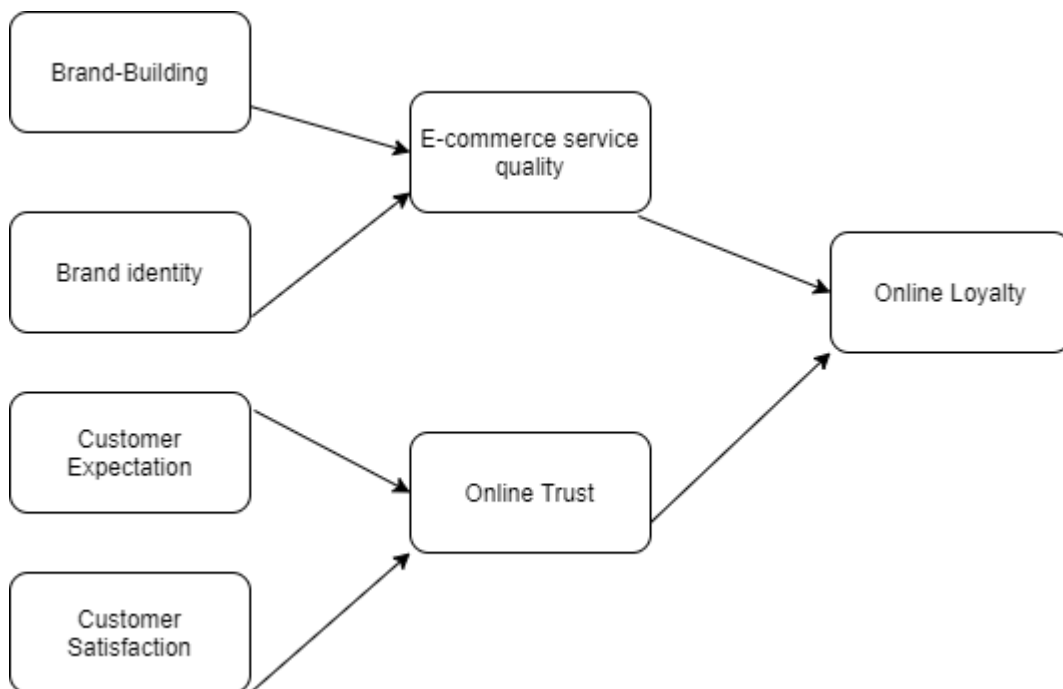


Figure 1: Visualization of the Theoretical Background

### 2.3 Definition of E-commerce

Electronic commerce (e-commerce) can be defined as an act of trade that involves the exchange of goods or commodities under a set of jointly acceptable situation that will appease both parties (Lee & Turban, 2001). E-Commerce specifies to all categories of electronically connected business dealing, with on the internet shopping being the most prevailing and undistinguished. Most people assume that e-commerce means online shopping, but that is only the tip of the iceberg. It envelopes the full range of making purchase and obtaining services online, bond transactions, procuring, and installing software from start to finish (Burgess, 2002). The world today has seen an improvement in the field of technological applications in its daily endeavors. To most writers and scholar's e-commerce has been one of the greatest tenets of such a great movement. Before I start, let me have the pace to define what e-commerce means. There are so many definitions of e-commerce but the most appropriate that I have chosen is e-commerce is a software technology solution that allows you to build storefronts.

The World Trade Organization (WTO, 2019b) characterizes electronic commerce as the creating of goods, dispersion, retailing, purchase, or distribution of goods and services. Romero, C.Q.& Diego Rodríguez (2010) define the term as the purchase and sale of intelligence, material, products, and services via computer networks. As no interpretations of e-commerce are generally assent with another. The definition provided by Ordanini, A., Rubera, G (2010) will be adopted in this paper, as any business-related undertaking that draws in someone who purchases and someone who gives an object in exchange for money over the electronic media of the web.

Electronic buying and selling, also known as e-commerce to a considerable percentage of consumers, means shopping online utilizing the internet and web pages. Nevertheless, e-commerce envelopes an exuberance immense reach, combining all the methods connected to an organization that encompasses buying, selling, leasing, procuring, and booking. E-commerce shops, therefore, must be compelled to adopt every available management strategy which is imperative to business boom (Treiblmaier & Strebinger, 2008).

## 2.4 E-commerce service quality

Service quality in e-commerce plays an imperative role in industries, especially start-up companies to survive in a competitive business environment. The quality of e-commerce service is very important to SME companies, particularly for lasting and deep-rooted sustainable development. As market competition escalates, the knowledge and urgency of service quality development become more and more valuable (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). E-commerce service quality correlative benefit is an impression of the general competitiveness of an industry. Each company's service quality, advancement capability, business uprightness, and principle have solid impacts on the branding of the business. The e-commerce service quality is a consideration of the company's total accruing aggressiveness. Through the unification of revenues and basics, branding values expand the business (Romero, 2010).

Brodie et al., (2006) view e-commerce service quality opinion by the consumers about their anticipations of the services acknowledged by a specific service provider. While Abimbola et al., (2007) defined service quality in e-commerce as the interpretations from the absolute participation and understanding of the service in terms of outstanding and first-rate quality of the e-commerce service online delivery.

E-commerce service quality is defined as access in which the development and procedure of the company rotate about the establishment, advancement, and stability of e-commerce service quality in open-ended and continuing cooperation with target consumers to accomplish enduring competitive benefits in the form of service quality (Lee & Lin, 2005). Ha and Stoel (2012) note that the demanding role either a service quality is to be appropriated, continue to be motivated by the company's approach pointing to e-commerce quality direction amid the marketing preparation phase. Abimbola & Vallaster (2007) firmly propose that the service quality of e-commerce, as anticipated by consumers, anchors from the identification of what they perceive that e-commerce industries should render to their concepts of the accomplishment of companies that implements and supports the service. Burgess (2002) illustrates that the accomplishment aspect alone predicts customers' observable signification.

In their study, Lin and Sun (2009) noted e-commerce service quality and the satisfaction of customer are the noticeable establishment, yet are complementary in that the customer satisfaction conciliates the effect of previous assumptions of the quality of e-commerce service to motivate an improved service quality awareness and concept to be developed. This is facilitated by Eisenhardt & Graebner (2007) who suggest that as long as e-commerce service quality and customer satisfaction are the remarkable establishments, that

an instinctive relevance dominates amidst them, and the concept and awareness of service quality influences perception of customer satisfaction which, successively impacts prospect online retention.

### **2.4.1 Brand Building**

Brand-building is recognized as a vital foundation in an e-commerce business environment that enlarges the correspondence and compatibility of a company accompanying its out-side environment that has consumers as their ultimate substantial unit (Goward, 2015). Companies that partake in brand-building activities aspire to establish their resources by demonstrating an illustration that can be emphatically recognized by customers (Bickle, 2011). Small companies will have an innate capacity to dominate distinguished brand value and brand identity and this consecutively ushers the company into advancement.

The online network has unlocked an advanced business convenience, especially access to distinct markets springing from the stretched-out capacity that comes with the internet. This advocates that impending new markets, probably in distant places, depends upon the branding management. E-commerce is the means to transmit the needs of new markets, and brand building is the thing that must be in a firm position for the market to be influenced to respond (Nistorescu et al., 2008). That is the sole reason the internet and brand building are paramount. The phrase "Branding" drives far beyond an elementary trademark and symbol. With consumers in any given niche having hundreds of choices, the branding of any e-commerce retailer is the one thing that causes customers to choose their products over their competitors. This proves brand-building activities as a prerequisite than it ever was as it has to saturate every single touch the organization has got with its market. Tan, Donald (2010).

A greater number of organizations regard branding as a package design, logo, and advertising. One extensive characteristic of brand building is the capacity to respond to changes in the business environment and market dynamics so that exceptional transmission of brand essence is secured and sustained (Aaker, 2006). Whilst an organization can have a brand, the brand is not the organization itself. A detailed contrast can be captured between how the organization does business completely and how it is anticipated by its consumers. Ward and Lee (2000) implied that consumers with minor efficiency became overloaded with information compelling them to return to an earlier brand they know while using the internet for purchasing decisions.

## 2.4.2 Brand Identity

The brand identity of any organization, especially in the e-commerce business environment has become a prerequisite part of the buying process. With the predominance of online shopping and social media, e-commerce shops cannot sustain to disregard the nitty-gritty of indoctrinating in the brand identity Bengtsson & Anders (2003). A brand that is well identified overwhelms a consumer's attention towards a certain brand, arouses consumer awareness about the product, and optimized its appearance Ravichandran et al., (2009). Brand identity can be described as a delicate effect that challenges the genuineness, validity, and quality of a company and facilitates as a channel of building up resourceful and competitive influence (Keller, 2008). A brand identity is an exceptional description of what a company performs, produces, or serves as, it symbolizes the foundation of activity for every little thing that occurs in the company (Ulas et al., (2008). According to McEwen & William (2008) brand identity is far more than consumer goods and services are given, since these goods can be scarce, exceptional, unusual, limited, palpable, perceptible, verifiable, and ecstatic distinguishing features that set them apart from other products created and outlined for the same purpose. Having a long-lasting and reliable brand identity means being widely recognized by customers and retaining a satisfactory positive image that will strengthen a company in attracting attention regardless of exiting competitors (Keller, 2008). H & M is a prevailing example in the fashion industry that mixes sustainability with transparency. A typical example is Coca-Cola, which is known to be a global leader in the field of soft drinks. However, their accomplishment is not in their fashion design organization but in their competence and proficiency to offer and sustain an excellent brand identity in the mind of their customers over the years.

With the online business environment expanding more influence under statics, consumers have great domination of brand identity. Kapferer (2008) also notes that the outstanding approach to grasp what the brand represents generally is to delve into the meaning of brand identity. The study by Marshak (2000) stated that companies can cut acquaintances through an effective online presence by up to 70%. Conferring to the same study, 86% of all consumer inquiries can be resolved online. As seen in Figure below, online shoppers that exceeded 60% confirms that brand identity seems more upscale and valuable. About 50% of consumers say that its brand identity makes them more enthusiastic about shopping more while 40% of online consumers are more probable to advocate a brand identity to their friends.



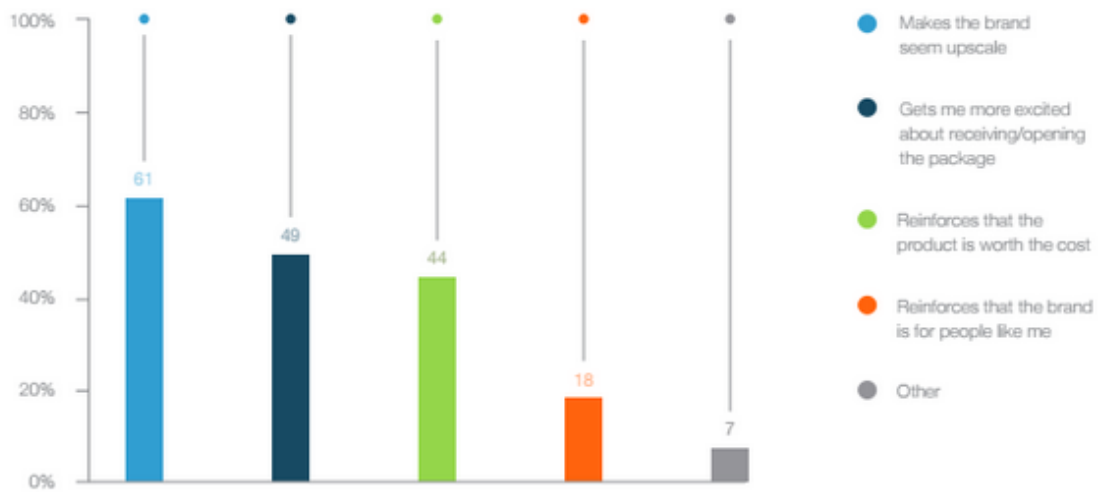


Figure 2: Overview of online shoppers by brand identity (eshopworld, 2016)

### 2.4.3 Online Trust

The capability of a brand inhabits in its competence to conform its uniquely disposed trust better than any competitor. Brand trust has been a persistent subject matter as seen in various pieces of study. It is a controversy that makes a weighty impact on an enormous purchase decision. Also, transparency captivates consumers to brands. Online trust can be defined as the perception of the customer about the potentiality of a brand to function in conformity to its warranty (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Trust as well involves prevailing anticipation because it cannot exist without some prospects of being in error (Horppu et al., 2008). According to H. Y. Ha, (2004) trust is the assurance a customer has in a precise brand. For a customer to build a relationship with a specific brand, trust is vital because, without trust, the progression of a consumer's engagement to a brand may not be achievable. A customer who considers the brand is more likely to remain loyal to the brand. Also, a customer who believes in a brand is pleased to share some insight into their interest, anticipations, and attitudes.

According to Sultan et al., (2002), there are three underlying dimensions of trust:

- Credibility

- Emotional comfort
- Quality of the company

The study affirms that the customer's understanding of trust is driven by the online store and customer's characteristics, and that trust intercedes the contingency between these reasons and consumer action comporment.

#### **2.4.4 Online Loyalty**

Online loyalty indicates the positivistic perspective in favor of a brand, which encompasses contributory behaviour from the consumer. The engineering, perceiving, and anticipating customer loyalty in e-commerce are demanding action for long-run profitability (Horppu et al., 2008). To favourably carry out these activities is demanding due to the complicated mix of both business management and consumer factors that may leverage and drive loyalty. Eggert & Ulaga, (2002) states loyalty as a deeply made commitment to regularly re-buy or sustain a preferred service or product reliably within the prospect notwithstanding the circumstantial impacts and retailing pursuits with the capability to transact management.

Nowadays, online loyalty is regarded as fundamental to business boom and it is one of the e-commerce approaches, which raises the trading effectiveness in the long term, and it leads to the organization's expediency due to the customer repurchase.

Retaining the customer's loyalty and cherishing them for not selecting the competitor is among the necessary bases for attaining profit in this present competitive world (Sultan et al., 2002). With the remarkable aggrandizement of e-commerce, the impression of online loyalty has turned into a dominant confrontation for many online business environments. To comprehend what determines online loyalty and greases the wheels of customers to buy an assured online brand we need to define the elements that exploit the customers' recognition of brand trust within the e-commerce environment. Underneath are the factors impacting online loyalty (Parasuraman et al., 2005):

- Empowering companions to utilize the website
- Suggesting the online stores to associates
- Advertising affirmative testimony to everyone about the online store
- Selecting the online store to be the primary choice for future purchases

Considering that unsatisfied consumers have the disposition of alternatives and can easily make their purchase from the competitor's preferences; therefore, it is indispensable for any organization to appease its customers and build them loyal.

#### **2.4.5 Customer Expectation**

Parboteeah et al., (2009) noted that the expansion of the e-commerce business environment has gained a great deal of upswing among SMEs. Most small-scale e-commerce shops are twisting their deliberation on how to preserve new customers and are left in a bearing to contend with larger companies. The spotlight is gradually shifting to the consumer, as a result the real challenge now lies in keeping the consumer rather than just getting them. Dimitriadis (2006) suggested that customer expectation exemplifies the confidence that assures customers' knowledge of the e-commerce business environment along with the product, benefits, and information implemented by the e-commerce system at any podium of the internet shopping procedure. It is considered that customers' anticipations impact the appraisal of e-commerce service conditions, expected value, and customer satisfaction with the online shopping system.

Gensler et al. (2007) mention that an outstanding e-commerce website needs to convey to the customers a reason to come back. An appealing product can captivate online shoppers to the company, but it is what happens next that is essential to the favourable outcome of the organization. Thus, assured processes never go out of fashion, e.g., understanding the customer's expectation. The brand image plays a major impact in influencing the purchasing decision of the customer. Above 50% of online customers will be convinced to make a purchase of a product with a clear and attractive visual, which will give any company a huge boost and attract more intending customers (figure 2 below).

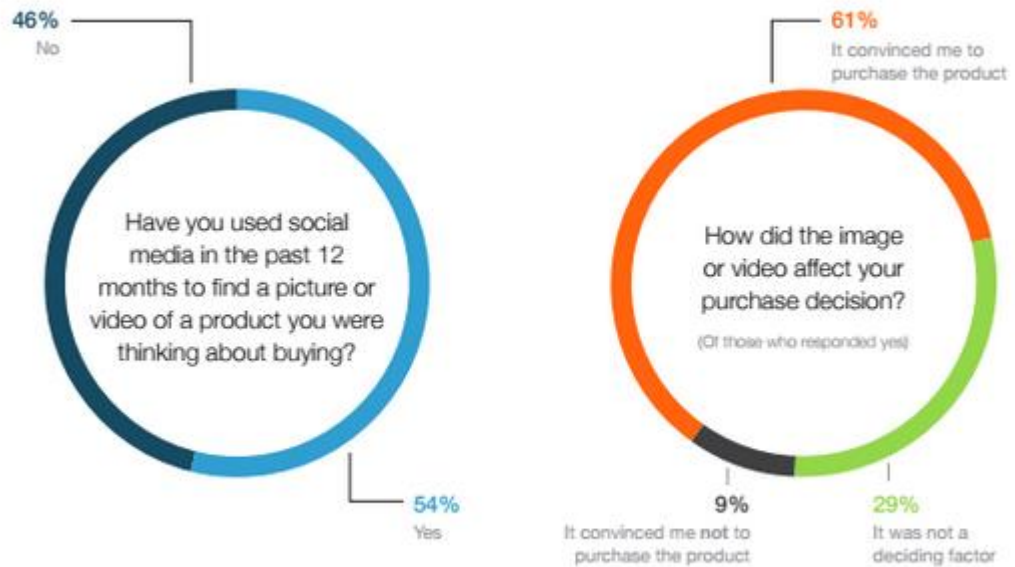


Figure 3: Overview of customer expectation of branding (eshopworld, 2016)

#### 2.4.6 Customer Satisfaction

According to Zatalini et al., (2016) customer satisfaction as the name implies refers to the extent to which a consumer is satisfied with an organization's business transaction. This is an essential determinant in the e-commerce business environment because a company does not retain its clients apart from owning tremendously satisfied customers. A surpassing or more advanced intensity of consumer satisfaction is expected to contribute to the loyalty of online customers.

Be that as it may, the impingement of satisfaction on online loyalty is comparatively complicated (Dimitriadis, 2006). Besides, Lin et al (2011)., believe that customer satisfaction impacts consumers to keep coming back to procure more products on the company's website.

Huffmire (2001) proves that for the start-up companies to have a constant and lasting advantage, they must firmly build upon the perception of customer satisfaction. It is necessary for owners of small e-commerce shops to improve on their branding activities according to what satisfies and retains a customer. Reibstein (2002) pointed out that the lifelong accomplishment of any e-commerce brand-building activity is counting on their efficiency to satisfy the customers and keep them coming back.

Suh & Han (2003) established customer satisfaction as the string that associates the brand image of an e-commerce retail shop with customer loyalty. Startup companies must recognize the complexities of securing consumers to have confidence and in the long run, become loyal to the brand. Until this is understood and put into practice, they are being deeply rooted in the competitive industry is beyond the bounds of possibility. In an e-commerce business environment, customer satisfaction is a controversy repeatedly examined by researchers. One of the fundamental objectives of both large and small e-commerce shop is customer satisfaction. It can be accomplished in diverse approaches and affiliated to goods and services (Dimitriades, 2006).

### **3 Research Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Approach**

Qualitative and quantitative research techniques are generally used when conducting a study. In this research, the qualitative research method is used through an interview to gain a profound insight into the service quality and brand building for a small company in the e-commerce business environment. Secondary data was collected from various academic journals, blogs, books, online posts, and conferences, keeping in mind the goals and objectives of the research, and to explain the need for the study.

This case study is a distinct and underlying subject as it aims to scrutinize a distinguishing phenomenon, brand building, and service quality, in a meticulous framework, the case company. A case study is a comprehensive, confined exploration of a single entity, for example, a company, a campaign, a group of persons, or an event, which is constrained by time and place (Flyvbjerg, 2011). The case is studied for its endemic advantage. An influential case study adopts one case to hike awareness about a unique theme with the assumption to be able to establish or synthesize theory from it. Decisively, a cooperative case study utilizes data from multiple cases to correlate and analyses them for thesis expansion purposes (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007).

Kipfashion is the target of this case study, which happens to be the researcher's work placement company. Kipfashion is an exclusive online retail and discounts commercial center for African fashion that highlights and exhibits the world's radiant and brilliant African design skills. The company is in Lahti, Finland with affiliate companies in Togo and China. The company's core values are service quality and customer satisfaction accountability, competence for rejuvenation, and reverence for the environment. The target of the interview is to comprehend the case company's intention concerning brand-building and quality of their service in the competitive business environment. Another reason for selecting this company was that during my internship, the manager drafted a proposal for a total makeover and rebranding of their e-commerce shop. In addition to pursuing the awareness of ethically manufactured products inspired by African prints and share them with the world.

## **3.2 Data Collection**

The collection of data is crucial to interpret the research questions. According to Halcomb (2016), data collection has implications in resolving the research questions. This can be accomplished by taking advantage of primary data or appropriating secondary data. For performing qualitative analysis, there are numerous techniques. Surveys, questionnaires, and interviews was apportioned as the elementary approach in analyzing this qualitative fact-finding. Interviews have been proven to remain prevalent and demonstrated success resulting in its endorsement for a qualitative study.

### **3.2.1 Secondary Data**

Secondary data is the collection of data by somebody excluding the actual user, it connotes that the data is previously accessible, and somebody scrutinizes it. This type of data is customarily available to researchers and individuals considering that they are predominantly shared openly. This, be that as it may, implies that the information is often common and not custom-made particularly to meet the researcher's needs as primary data does.

### **3.2.2 Primary Data**

Primary data are unique perceptions collected by the research worker or his representative for the primary time for any examination and used by them within the measurable examination. The primary data is one sort of imperative information. It is a collection of information from authentic facts. Below are three distinctive primary data methods:

- Data collection through surveys-the researcher used the means of interviews to collect data from an individual entity.
- The researcher conducted the survey and consequently collected the data. In this method, questionnaires were utilized to collect exact and unique information. This strategy was valuable for small data collection and not enormous or massive information.
- The researcher adopted devices like telephones, iPad, and mobile phones to assemble information. Most times, the data collected in this method are factual and instantaneous but may not be explicit and appropriate.

In this study, the data were primarily collected employing interviews with the selected client. Even though the interview happened to be the fountainhead of this analysis, it has its purposes and drawbacks. The prevailing symbol of this analysis is the ability to gather productive and valid information that was crucial to resolving the research questions. The truth of this method is that it saves time as it was carried over a brief period and a better

presentable technique for an amateurish author. Semi-structured interviews do not require impressive nor magnificent groundwork but contrarily, the interviews can turn out to be long-drawn-out and tedious. (Galletta, 2013). The reliability and validity of the systematized interviews tend to be exceptionally optimized in quantitative analysis, nevertheless, the significance and focus are on the observation of the data obtained primarily in qualitative examination (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

All those that participated were guaranteed secrecy and concealment of every information gathered except otherwise by permission. The author prepared an interview implementation guide to sustain the time frame allotted for the interview in (Table 1) below. There were weighty and ruling questions that were set up, e.g. How the organization engages and conducts business in e-commerce was questioned to initiate the qualitative segment of the interview. Even though interviews and observations were conducted, the organization reports, and testimonies were outlined and examined to support the pronouncement of the discoveries. Most of the interviews were carried out by using skype for business and zoom technology due to social distancing. A formal introductory question was asked during the exchange of pleasantries to obtain information about the current level of e-commerce service quality in the company. This information made a difference primarily to justify the first research question and to eliminate doubt about the uncertainty of the company's e-commerce management. The additional part of the interview was set up like an interaction section to draw out and straighten out the effect of brand building and the potential benefits of enhanced quality of e-commerce services. The interviews lasted 30 minutes and the answers were recorded and re-written adequately to avoid the loss of important data and to grant a thorough analysis.



Table 1: An interview implementation guide

	Guidelines	Reason
1	Before the interview, the researcher developed questions for the interview according to the information needed.	To save time
2	The researcher exchanges greetings and re-explain the purpose of the research, and confidentiality of the content.	To create a good impression and make the interviewee feel at ease
3	The interviewees to introduce themselves, their years in service, and their position.	To set up a foundation for mutual trust and remain objective
4	The information is at once documented as is being received.	To avoid data loss
5	The researcher keeps a clear and comfortable attitude before, during, and after the interview.	To create an atmosphere to communicate without restriction
6	Outline and compile key data shortly following the interview.	To guarantee consistency and increase the reliability of the result

Table 2: Outline of the company's interview

Position of the respondent	Length of the interview	Technique used	Employee service years
General manager	25 minutes	Skype	7 years
Digital operations manager	30 minutes	Skype	5 years
Customer service rep.	30 minutes	Zoom	4 years
Logistic manager	25 minutes	Zoom	6 years
Digital marketing manager	30 minutes	Zoom	5 years

### **3.3 Data Analysis**

A confined approach was utilized to assemble and analyze the data collection, as suggested by Bernard (2000). In practice, the information retrieved subsequently underwent a translation into another medium. This includes typing down the recorded audio into word format and then progressed to classify, arrange, structure, and thereby ascertaining meaning to it.

The study edged forward to combine all the analysis of the clients' interview that mirrors our operation and further determined the documentation accessed from the same extent, in the same manner with additional information about the organization that was not from the interview. The analysis did not go outside the scope of the investigation, which implies that it was necessary to correlate the retrieved information from the case study with contemporary concepts inside the scope and our theoretical background. Subsequently, in analyzing both correspondence and characteristics bounded by approach retrieved data, then the discoveries and conclusions that were experienced with the case study were presented.

A semi-structured interview technique was used to bring together the information. The interview was conducted by skype and zoom due to the global pandemic with 5 experienced representatives and managers in their various fields (See table 1). This semi-structured interview thus formed the core of the empirical material analyzed. The main criterion for the selection of the interviewees was that they had years of experience operating in the e-commerce business environment. The data collected was documented to avoid misinterpretation of information. Secondary data was also collected from their website.

### **3.4 Validity & Reliability**

Reliability, replication, and validity are the three utmost outstanding precedents for estimating business research (Bryman & Bell, 2015). In any case, Bryman & bell (2015) also notes that the different ideal models are more appropriate and fitting when qualitative research is to be permeated and penetrated such as this proposal. Reliability is broadly depicted as the intensity to which the results could be duplicated by the successive identical

procedure. To establish the reliability of this study, we have worked hard to be as unbiased as possible for the duration of the case study. The validity, on the other hand, can be defined as the competence of surveying what is engaged to be surveyed. For example, the participants were all given prior information regarding the objective of the study and to choose a suitable time, date, and technique to increase the validity of the study.

The validity of the study was mentally analyzed during the interview by designing an interview guide that aligns with the research question and the objectives of the thesis. There was no random selection but the appropriate individual with satisfactory knowledge about the field of study was chosen and interviewed. In addition to establishing and intensifying our analysis with relevant literature within the field.

The report was worked on by the analyst in great confidence to set up the unwavering quality of the study. Each interviewed question was different from their colleagues since they work in a different department with an exclusive assignment, which validates that their ideas and perception will be exceptional. The purpose of this study was to ascertain that our personal beliefs, code, and ethics did not interfere with the handling of the research and the result gotten from it, therefore the researcher was as objective as feasible throughout the case study. The data was documented and reviewed before each interview elapses. However, the adaptability of the findings might not be too substantial through time since the e-commerce business environment is evolving continually. Therefore, it must be noted that this paper is established on observation from a singular case study company.

## **4 Results and Analysis**

The data that was collected by utilizing semi-structured interviews will be analyzed in this chapter. The relationship and lack of balance between the collected data and the theoretical background provided in chapter 2 will be analyzed.

### **4.1 Background of the Case Company**

Kipfashion is a fashionable African clothing and accessories e-commerce retail and wholesale marketplace. The organization has been operating for over 7 years now in the e-commerce field of business. They execute their business in B2B and B2C sectors. Their perception is to initiate and generate a passionate and spontaneous network, reciprocity, and enthusiasm to consumers globally. Kipfashion's main goal achievement depends on their peculiar line of prevalent features, design, and accessories that channel on one kind of interesting way of life.

The company's core values consist of customer satisfaction responsibility, trust, and authenticity of data responsibility, product availability, making sure that items are largely in stock. Kipfashion acknowledges environs and social responsibility. These ethics and obligations are the foundation for the enhancement of the brand.

#### **4.1.1 E-commerce service quality in case company**

The organization serves the opulence consumer sector and must, therefore, advocate demanding service quality guidelines. The service quality requirement is so rigid at the various stages, such they have metamorphosed into a pattern comparatively than an absolute operation. Eisenhardt & Graebner (2007) indicated from the e-commerce service quality theory that their impression on boosting the quality of the service will heighten and intensify the expansion of the benefits. The company showcases Africa's brightest design, print, and blend of traditional techniques with a contemporary design aesthetic. Brodie et al., (2006) found that the stable expects of consumer service quality awareness were the components and determinants of the service provider. Based on Romero, (2010) theory, accomplished service quality will hold in high esteem the significance to preserve their position in a competitive market such as e-commerce. Their ideology is supported by creating an e-commerce fabricate style shop that promotes multilateral business dealers, collective operations, partnerships, and independent professionals who proceed with their ambition and impulse from the African multifarious collection of design. The product and its delivery are the fundamental sectors of the service quality impression.

E-commerce service quality expresses how smaller companies are critically administering stages of variation in contrast to that of the larger e-commerce companies (Lee & Lin, 2005). Similarly, the case company has considered this as they encountered intimidation from other competitors at their early stages.

“It was not a predetermined act for us to cold-shoulder the idea of service quality, but we were entangled with a business-to-business channel where the retail comparison is microscopic. Service quality enhancement is beneficial to SMEs like ours and measures are being put in place to refurbish the quality of our services.”  
(General Manager)

The service quality of the e-commerce business environment mostly indicates a serviceable quality dimension at the same time to the trustworthiness of the service provided Chaudhuri & Holbrook, (2001). The information retrieved supports the review of Chiu et al., (2005) that e-commerce service quality is valuable for a small company to sustain its continuity and durability in the competitive e-commerce business environment.

#### **4.1.2 Brand-Building**

All 5 people interviewed confirmed and delivered a satisfactory assurance that conforms with the study according to Tan & Donald (2010). Bickle (2011) pointed out that the organizational brand layout illustrates how the company is imperatively implementing points of distinction against competitors. The fact that Kipfashion has extended its merchandise line, in consequence, they are in the time expanding their brand-building capacity.

“In the beginning, the company’s brand encountered vigorous comportment because of low brand consideration which creates awareness for the product in the business environment but does not convert their interest into buyers. We now realize that brand-building activities and values are exemplified by customers’ purchase agreements. In the process of invading the competitive market, we as a team decided to utilize one of the company’s previously current brand styles. In addition to resources and energy allotment, its time consuming to build a brand that will capture the interest of potential customers and retain the existing buyers, especially for a growing e-commerce shop like ours. Irrespective of the fact that this development will propel our company into a new business podium that may be subjugated existing rivals.”  
(Customer Service Rep.)

The response from the digital marketing manager confirms the study (Ward and Lee, 2000) which argues that whereas brand building is motivated by the prevailing product form, the brand-building will propose an opportunity for the brand to develop. A brand

building generates a brand identity to the product line that works across the product and its customer support units. Thus, allowing the customers to view the relationship between products which they may have overlooked. The purpose of brand building is to establish a durable brand asset that can provide the company with a combative influence. Brand building is recognized to be adding perceptibility and restoring confidence to the customers that the company is competent in fulfilling the vision.

The manager further emphasized that Kipfashion employs several platforms for its strategic relations and delivery. The marketing team takes care of internal network-website, email marketing, and social media. While the digital operations team takes responsibility for the advertisement and Google AdWords. While the organization's intercommunication mediums are diversified and dispersed throughout the company, all these details support the studies (Nistorescu et al., 2008) notes that harmonizing and consolidating them in a standardized and uniformed style is indispensable. The organization, at this phase, now has a substantial awareness of the market and brand building activities to better popularize their brand and their benefits for Kipfashion's employees thereby enabling them to play a meaningful aspect in the branding movement.

#### **4.1.3 Brand Identity**

When we talked about brand identity, the digital operations manager reveals that their brand identity depends upon a long-term perception of marketing decisions. He further stated that whatever the organization does on its marketing program has the aptitude to change the customers' view about the brand that is in affirmation with the theory Bengtsson & Anders (2003). According to the explanation by Keller (2008) brand identity must be handled over time by emphasizing the meaning of brand identity, and indispensably effecting adjustment to the branding program by distinguishing the recent sources of brand identity. Brand identity improvement of Kipfashion does not earnestly encompass the exertion of determining the brand identity by its customers.

“For me, our brand identity cannot be reckoned with the semblance of H&M, etc., because we do not have a far-reaching and complete branding program. In the beginning, I thought that a start-up company like ours does not need much at this stage. Nevertheless, we are remodeling and developing a better approach towards branding activities despite that not endeavors are rather invested in conveying the brand identity by the core values of the company.”  
(General manager)

However, it can be seen from the literature review (Kapferer, 2008) that the company did not exhibit the same set of values as its competitors in the e-commerce market.

“We have proposed a recognized necessary act for the brand-building identity of competence and exquisite profit to the understanding of consumers, and at this moment we are working on mobilizing the visible aspect of fashion and significance in its identity, but our team is strategizing on how best to augment the online shop by adding more trendy brands thereby making our online store feelable and palpable for intending customers.” (Digital Marketing Manager)

Ultimately, it has become apparent that it is indeed applicable for e-commerce start-up companies to benefit considerably with brand identity thereby leading them to deep-rooted in the competitive business environment.

#### **4.1.4 Online Trust**

As proposed by Ha (2004), the aspiration to building online trust is deliberated to have an immense priority. It is amazingly crucial presently for Kipfashion to generate online trust as they are boosting their brand identity. The e-commerce environments are broad and loaded with online shops that may have bad quality services and bad products, which causes dissatisfaction and a lack of trust for customers when purchasing products online. This conforms with Ha (2004) findings on the significance of brands in building online trust towards an online store. The general manager explains that they are concentrating on re-vamping their online trust by upgrading their privacy policy and payment methods. He assured that they are uniformly readjusting and refurbishing themselves and can as well resolve feedback instantaneously. Howbeit, the manager’s answer was in the affirmative when asked if the views and targets are communicated within the organization.

“We endeavor to be credible in all businesses that we venture into. How we correspond and initiate our service quality is reflected in this. It ought to be reflected and expressed in all the businesses we offer and deliver to our customers. Upholding a high degree of service in all our platforms is very valuable to us. We ought to constantly express the same principles, whatever the contact medium”. (General Manager)

Another core value for Kipfashion is exchanging information clearly, which the digital operations manager outlined at the time that it is being spontaneously strengthened through the uninterrupted various channels of communication. According to the interviewee, they had done substantial systemic work to be understood the way they want to be regarded.

#### 4.1.5 Online Loyalty

Kipfashion believed that online loyalty is proof that customers are satisfied. And the business will not flourish if the customers are not satisfied. Considering the customer is the priority for any organization (Eggert & Ulaga, 2002). The digital marketing manager explained:

“We are at the customer’s beck and call and persistently thrive to adapt to their objectives according to what is essential.”

In conjunction with Sultan et al., (2002), online loyalty depends on the performance of the start-up company to advertise their brand in a manner that captivates the intending customer and retain them.

“The reality is that we are a viable and growing start-up company with positive aspirations to remain perceptible in the e-commerce business environment. The distinction within our organization is without deviation linked to the value of being attentive to the customers' needs even though we have restricted budgets.” (Logistic Manager)

The literature review shows that online loyalty does not only exemplify the connection surrounded by the customer and the brand but also communicated the aftereffect from the values of the brand. As it is very crucial to keep customers online loyal into consideration,

Consequently, even though Kipfashion has taken an action towards supplying exceptional and superior designs with affordable services in comparison with its competitors. A few factors are described by Parasuraman et al., (2005), which will enhance and sustain online trust. However, the assistant customer representative explained that they confronted more complications with their identity outside Africa due to the fact their brand perception was inferior. Conclusively, the core values of an organization should be where all the business’ enterprises emanate. This value constructs the integrity of the organization, which is expected to be precise and unambiguous, flexible, and complex, in addition to intensity to be able to communicate trustworthy material (Laudon 2014, 531). And in line with this, most of the interviewees concurred to having a clear vision of what was purposed to get through, and, in all views, they had basic principles as ground rules.

Considering that the retail business has gone through awful promotion and advancement regarding production and service quality recently, we were astounded that those interviewed did not make emphasize the influence of transparency in building online loyalty. The marketing manager only stated that they are into consideration how to advertise their brand better and higher from its competitors.



“The challenge is that customers may find plenty of products somewhere else besides, and that means we have to deliver to them palpable and tangible reasons to keep coming back to us and become loyal”. (Marketing Manager)

Finally, Kipfashion can make a distinction by establishing and advocating an exclusive e-commerce fashion brand experience. As suggested by Eggert & Ulaga, (2002) that a clear and definite online fashion experience will enhance the company’s boost in the competitive industry and certainly a factor why customer prefers it. Horppu et al., (2008) studied that the outstanding brand experience will always bring a customer back to purchase more and thereby being loyal to the online store, as it enables them to comprehend the value proposition that the brand provides relative to other competing companies.

#### **4.1.6 Customer Expectation**

It is obvious all through the interviews that the comprehensive strong desire for the success of digital marketing has been immense. This is a form of commitment marketing. Gensler et al. (2007) found that customer expectation is accomplished when the brand makes them aim for a long-term commitment, online loyalty, and influence the customer’s behavior.

“We are prioritizing the customers' expectations before profit. In addition to that, we are also utilizing social media platforms, e.g., Facebook, Instagram, along with websites and blog posts for marketing and building community for consumers.” (General Manager)

As can be identified from the below figure. Social media is a hypersensitive channel and feel the necessity for specialized proficiency to pay attention to human interactions. A first-class social media guru can be efficient in converting the business from a cost center to a profit center according to Parboteeah et al., (2009).

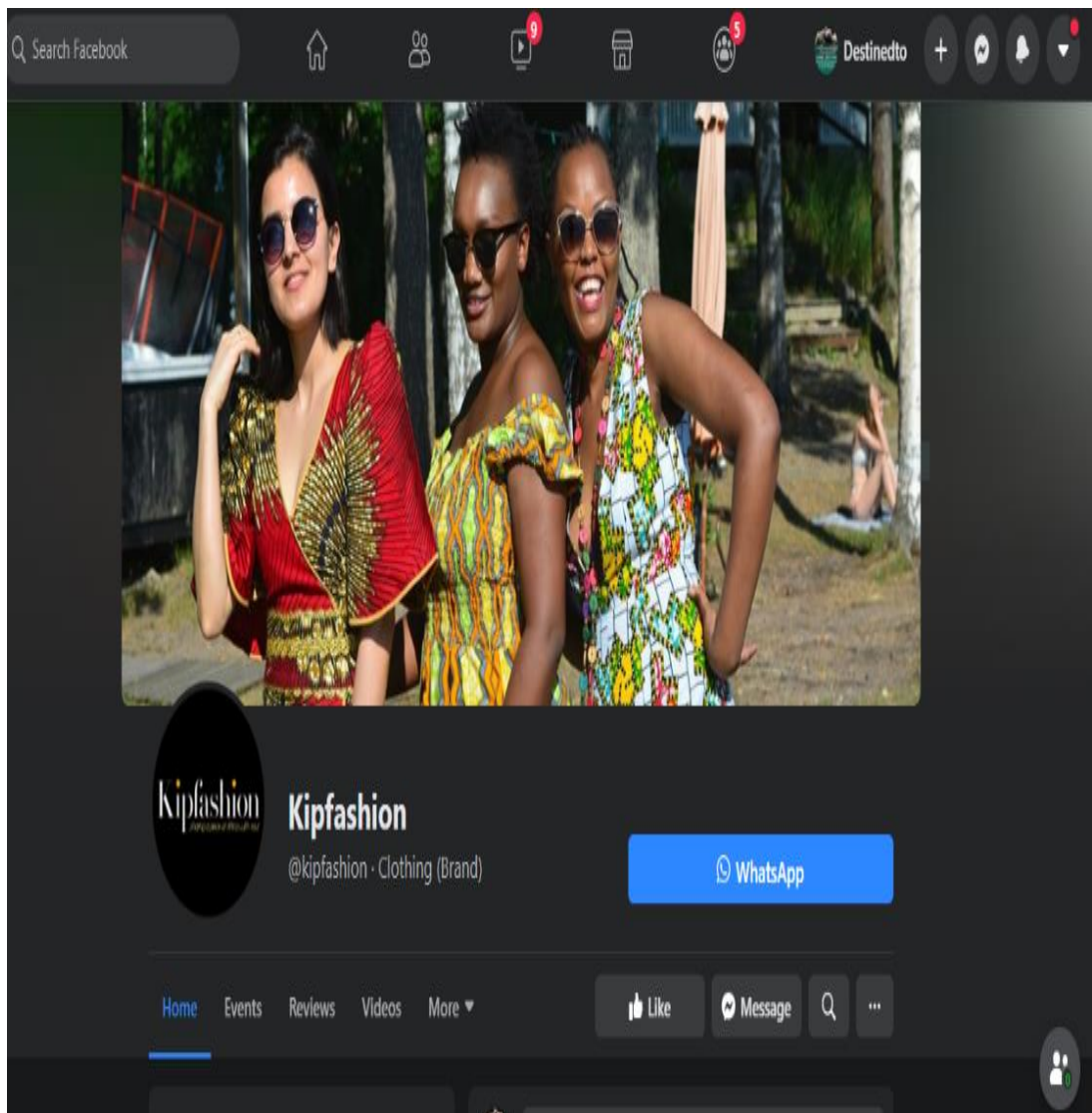


Figure 4: Kipfashion social media channel

The general manager highlighted that customers' expectation regarding the security of their data is strikingly guaranteed at Kipfashion. The digital operations manager explained that they do not demand unnecessary private details from customers. He stated that they always ensure the below for their safety and that of their customer:

- “(a) There is no need for us to collect every possible information, especially if they are sensitive.
- (b) Customer's credit card numbers are imperative to simplify a speedy check-out. Nevertheless, we do not retain them on online servers.
- (c) We thrive to maintain the usage of SSL encryption to hinder hackers from intercepting data exchanged between a web browser and a server.
- (d) We are also PCI DSS Compliance as this is a globally endorsed benchmark for e-commerce security which authorizes the website as one that is secured to transact money with.

(e) We review and set up access controls for admins, vendors, and even customers we request them to use strong passwords and two-factor authentication.” (Digital Operation Manager)

#### **4.1.7 Customer Satisfaction**

According to Dimitriades (2006), customer satisfaction occupies a distinguishing factor in the e-commerce business. Its relevance has received so much concentration as it invokes the stability of the relationship between a customer’s repeat patronage and relative perception. Suh & Han, (2003) advocates the evolution of satisfying customers with certainty as well as building factors as a dominant force to e-commerce boost. The general manager explained that they had recently conducted a study that gave them improved insight and an exceptional understanding of how their customers identify them in a competitive business environment. While the customer service representative made it clear that they must put into consideration the bargaining power of customers to refrain from swerving to the competitor’s shop.

Kipfashion has been broadening its business through the upsurge of its export and vendor network. They have also offered vouchers and customized delivery to their loyal customers thereby attracting continuing and keen interest customers. One of the interviewees explained that they once had a limited range of products available due to the global pandemic. It took some time during the period to figure out and discover the pivotal boost of the market, which may have led to the scarcity of products and delays being shipped. According to the general manager, the quality of their service to their customers has enhanced their growth and they are thriving to sustain their reputation because trustworthiness travels speedily in the way customers rate the quality of services and products of the online retailer. In the literature by Abimbola et al., (2007) the e-commerce service quality plays a valuable part in exceeding customer satisfaction, and the responses from the interviewees serve as a confirmation that the company is actively engaging to remain relevant in the online business environment.

Presently, Kipfashion engages a blended organizational structure with business agency and division that is accountable for diversified duties. They have been dealing with other departments in times past, but this recent collaboration because of the global pandemic is quite challenging but worth doing.

“Use of help desk software to assist in managing the customer inquiries better and respond to them faster.  
They have utilized the implementation of live chat to allow customers to get an instant response.  
Using the customer satisfaction score method to enumerate and gain insight into what is progressing or regressing.  
Leverage social media.  
Create easy navigation on the website.” (General Manager)

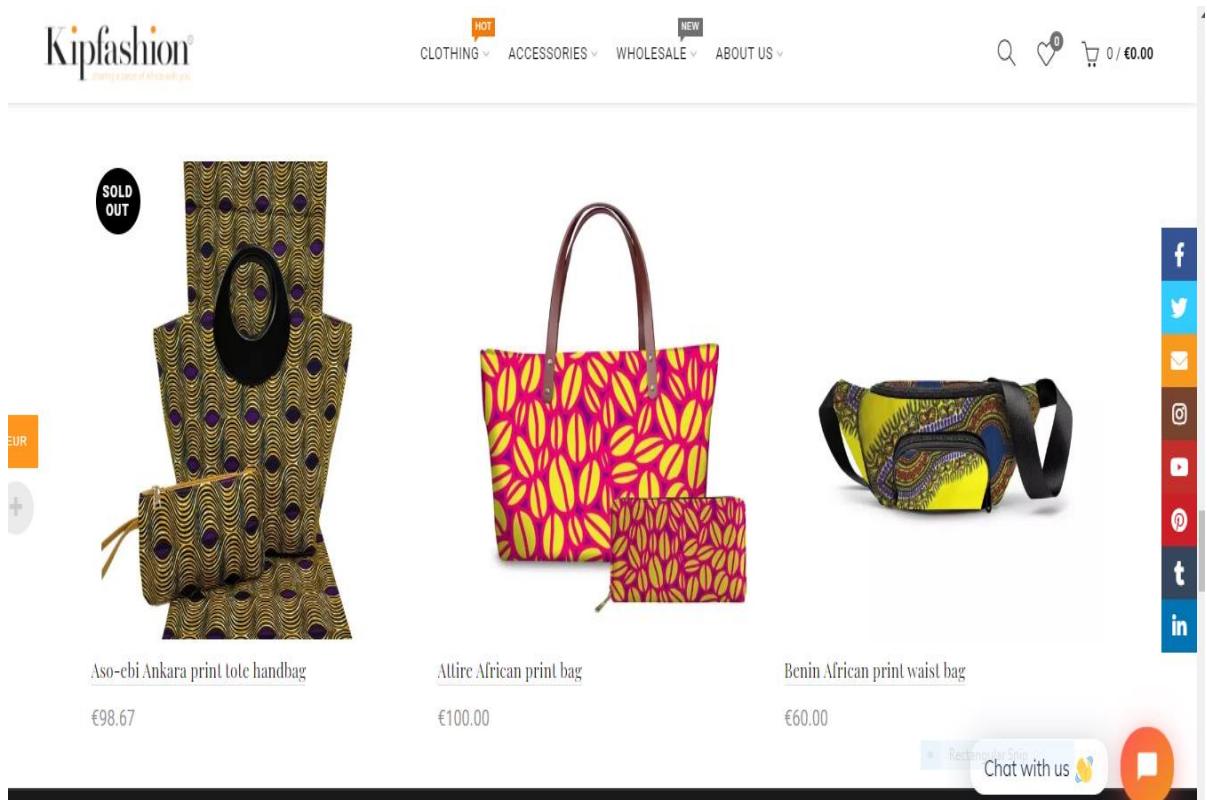


Figure 5: Kipfashion exemplary navigation menu

The above (figure 4) further illustrates the study by Zatalini et al., (2016) which stated that the online shop should be implemented with easy, simple, and insightful navigation that customers are familiar with. The links to category landing pages should be placed at the top-level navigation labels so that customers can instantly understand what the labels represent as they scan it as these key factors can influence customer satisfaction in online shopping.

## **5 Discussion and Conclusion**

This study intended to strengthen the perception of brand building and service quality development in the small company's e-commerce business environment. The research question will be outlined here, resulting in a more rational and conclusive summary.

### **5.1 What are the perceived benefits of branding to online retailers?**

There was a prevailing point of view about the perceived benefits of branding in an e-commerce shop. In Kipfashion's case, they are presently building up the identity of their brand. Brand building is an indispensable target for any organization especially for the case company that functions in a setting that is distinguished by competitors that have been in the business for donkey years, brand building is no less than a necessity for benefit. Brand building sweetens the kitty by establishing a firm existence for the e-commerce environment. Within this report, the online shops are directly concentrating on being viewed as a smoothly continuous enterprise with capable digital marketing aspirations ahead.

In recent transformation, focusing on consistency to be viewed as an unyielding, tenacious, unswerving, and trustworthy brand is an unconditional essential yardstick for organizations that operates in the e-commerce environment. The approach of perceptibility has evolved, and it centered on being palpable and accessible. Despite the booming noise in the market, it is paramount to be perceived notwithstanding the place of business transaction with the customer. Branding makes the e-commerce business environment more forceful considering the proliferating traffic to the online site and enthusiasm complements as a progressively significant point of contact with the consumers and the likelihood of providing an enhanced shopping experience via the e-commerce shop.

Kipfashion does incorporate the product connected attributes in the advancement series of action to achieve the result of the brand building. This attribute is also utilized to a few magnitudes e.g., in their comparatively discount offers and free delivery. This is because of their ambition to be recognized among the top e-commerce shop.

## **5.2 What suggestion can be given to Kipfashion to strengthen customer relationships?**

To reach more customers and build up their customer relationships, Kipfashion must adopt vital strategies depending on their target. The following suggestions below are expected to be maintained and modernized to remain relevant in the e-commerce business environment:

- They must certify that the e-commerce shop is reachable from all kinds of devices (laptops, phones, PC, etc.).
- Even though their web design is responsive, implementing a mobile-friendly theme is paramount. Because their e-commerce shop will attract more customers and make more deals over those that do not have one because of their mobile-friendly online store.
- Kipfashion must focus on persistent, dependable, and constant content marketing that happens to be among the powerful marketing strategies that make an impact presently. With this content strategy actualized into the store, they can afford greater value to their customers.
- It is crucial to create an online shop with stunning product photos and pictures to attract probable, likely, and potential customers because customers cannot access the product outside of the brick-and-mortar environment and make their purchase decisions solely based on item reviews and imagery.
- The organization should avoid customers discarding and abandoning their shopping carts by assuring that the interface navigability is uncomplicated and painless.
- In as much as email marketing is essential but it should be done with the user's consent to avoid winding up in the 'SPAM' folder.

### **5.3 What unique foundations can be established in initiating the Kipfashion brand?**

The key benefit of initiating the company's unique foundation is in their creating a quality, positive, and exceptional company image with its brand credibility for the business. This foundation facilitates them to achieve accomplished attention concerning the strategic brand-building procedure which swivels around the designing and creating of specific marketing activities.

Now, Kipfashion is conducting an analysis that will clarify and estimate their brand performance after carrying out diverse brand-building activities. This will adequately expound how methodically their brand penetrated the minds of customers in as much as predictions are meant to exceed. Particularly when it comes to e-commerce client benefit, automating all beyond alleviating a strike empowers potential customers to accomplish cognizant purchases by giving nitty-gritty answers to common questions.

The unique foundation for Kipfashion depends on the consistency and durability of the brand. The advantage of joining forces with a product team is a perfect way to remain constant to the vision and mission thereby being outstanding and noticeable from their competitors. They can start on a small budget and assess which approach awards the maximum return on investment.

### **5.4 Conclusions**

The objective of this paper was to enumerate the perception of brand-building and service quality in the upcoming e-commerce business organizations. E-commerce has the wherewithal to extremely enhance how organizations transact trade and interact with customers in their online business environment. It is evident from the study that online business transaction has compelling and significant domination in the way business sectors and individual organizations carried out business activities.

This paper emphasizes the existing study on the idea that the benefits of brand-building are as persuasive in the well-established e-commerce business company as it is in the small and upcoming online stores. In addition to contributing supplementary observation about the performance of brand-building in the e-commerce business environment. This illustrates a substantial connection between the diverse business sector and its choice of branding.

The case company is doing a considerable amount of improvement in its service quality, brand-building, and creation of trust in utilizing divergent forms of payment. Regardless that the results are focused on a relatively vast empirical review, this study should not be scrutinized as providing conclusive exploration as it revolves around a proposition subject to continuous change due to technological advancements and evolving consumer behavior.

Small organizations sometimes assume that brand-building is very costly and thereby avoiding it. Even though branding and service quality requires time, resources, and energy, but its reward cannot be overemphasized. A remarkable number of them are not well enlightened concerning the benefits of branding and service quality. Their center of attraction is marketing good products and making adequate profits in preference to brand-building activities. Kipfashion advanced and still furthering their branding activities as a result of the competitors' deep-rooted brands. As it respects the external validity of our findings, it should be noted that the conclusions are focused on the e-commerce business environment, so more empirical studies should be carried out in multifaceted settings to extend our understanding into the principle and scope of brand-building benefits.



## 6 Limitations and Recommendations

This analysis was administered as a qualitative study concentrating solely on the small company's e-commerce business environment. For this reason, the findings can be inaccurate, possibly, other studies with larger companies need to be carried out in other e-commerce shops in the future, to review the findings of this analysis and find possible issues. Furthermore, the structure of interviews conducted, and the duration of the content review was limited. This can also imply that some concerns should be posed as to whether the findings of this research can be applied to all e-commerce companies, particularly if their enterprise terrain varies greatly from the company studied in this report. It is paramount to understand that the choice of company was based on who met the selection yardstick, and on who was amenable to cooperate. For this reason, the findings can be deceptive.

Conferring to our constrained study and perception, we made our best exertion to implement excellent and improved research by substantial, authentic, and predictable data. Advanced study with more divergent quantitative research methods will make it possible to grasp the topic even more predominantly and the findings to be more broadly hypothesized. E-commerce is a constantly developing and transforming market environment utilizing digital innovations and prospects, and it will therefore be important to scrutinize and delve into how upcoming e-commerce entrepreneurs can uphold and sustain these technological advancements as competitive dominance. Several capabilities are surrounding the topic for potential study. While this research has studied the e-commerce service quality and brand building in the fashion and accessories industry, it can also extend to different types of retailers, thereby being of great usefulness to many e-commerce small shops. Based on our survey and experimental study, we would like to acknowledge some critical suggest to Kipfashion:

- The company should contemplate enhancing an adequate budget for the advertisement to remain relevant competitively.
- The company should concentrate on solidifying the brand building operations to enjoy its full benefits.
- The company's workforce can work efficiently and precisely if they can be provided with annual/quarterly training courses on branding and service quality best practices.
- It is appropriate to execute an additional survey after the social distancing because the outcome of the supplementary survey may differ and confer an extensive approach and awareness.

In conclusion, this study will be of immense and tremendous advantage for small companies in the e-commerce environment to take advantage of brand-building activities and service quality best practices to benefit, flourish and attain good outcomes in the

competitive fashion business. The study contributes to the benefits and intensification in the e-commerce business environment by instigating, exploring, and conciliating the depiction of branding and service quality in the context of SME firms. Thereby distinguishing and signifying the necessity for a collaborating procedure towards e-commerce service quality and brand-building activities by small companies.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1

#### Interview Document

##### E-commerce

- Please give a general view of your company and your focus areas?
- When did you trigger your e-commerce business?
- What is your purpose for starting an e-commerce business?
- What are your biggest challenges now as a small e-commerce industry?
- Which sections are you focusing on? Who would you like to impact?
- What is the sole mission of the company and the channels you are using to communicate it?
- Do you make, manufacture or work with distributors that need access to your site?
- Do you have any competitors and in what way do you differ from them?

##### Branding-Building

- What are the major constraints in terms of branding and service quality in the fashion design industry?
- How would you improve branding and service quality? In what manner have you done well?
- How do you perceive the benefit of your service quality with other competitors?
- Does your branding and service quality attract the audience?
- As a general manager, why does your branding activities matter?
- Briefly explain the perceptiveness of your brand.
- What is it that characterizes your brand building activities?
- How would you define your level of passionate connection to your brand?

##### Digital Marketing

- What do you find most challenging about digital marketing?
- As a digital marketing manager, do you think is difficult to retain customers?
- Which platforms do you use to run digital campaigns?
- How do you pull the wires in displaying to the public the key features and ideas of your new designs and selections?
- What are the strategies to remain feasible in the industry?
- What kind of regular shoppers' detail do you have permission to??



## Customer satisfaction

- How do you utilize the customers' information?
- Do you think your core values are understood by the customers?
- How do customer trust and satisfaction work for you?
- As a customer service representative, what is your perception of customer satisfaction?
- How do you solve your customers' problems?
- What distinguishes a satisfied customer?
- Among your customers, what does trust look like?

Appendix 2

Kipfashion social media channels

The image shows a screenshot of the Kipfashion Instagram profile. At the top left is the 'Instagram' logo. In the center is a search bar with a magnifying glass icon and the word 'Search'. On the top right are 'Log In' and 'Sign Up' buttons. The main content area displays a grid of posts:

- Post 1 (Top Left):** A woman in a yellow and red patterned dress. Text: **SUMMER SPARK**, Sharing a piece of Africa with you, [WWW.KIPFASHION.COM](http://WWW.KIPFASHION.COM)
- Post 2 (Top Middle):** A woman in a red, white, and black patterned dress. Text: THE SUMMER CHIC STYLE **GUIDE**
- Post 3 (Top Right):** A woman in a yellow and blue patterned dress. Text: **Stylish**, Tell us your story and win a free dress of your choice!
- Post 4 (Bottom Left):** A collage of images including a smiling woman's face and a woman in a headscarf. Text: **Dive Styly**, [gram.com/p/CDYNgBbjr-/](https://www.instagram.com/p/CDYNgBbjr-/)
- Post 5 (Bottom Middle):** A black background with white text: **STORY**, Share your African stories with us, Share a piece of Africa with us, [www.kipfashion.com](http://www.kipfashion.com)
- Post 6 (Bottom Right):** A woman in a colorful patterned blazer. Text: **Africa blazer**



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POSTS

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