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THE PERCEIVED ROLES OF E-LEARNING IN TRAINING SALES EMPLOYEES IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

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2013-10-10
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THE PERCEIVED ROLES OF E-LEARNING IN TRAINING SALES EMPLOYEES IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

A research report submitted to the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration (MBA).

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October 2012

ABSTRACT

The study of human capital and the economy dates back to mid-1950's with the neo-Classical Growth Theory (Solow, 1956) which indicated the important role that technology and human capital play in progressing an economy and hence, a company which operates inside that economy. Therefore, just as human capital development is important in economic growth; training and development needs are an important focus because it directly affects the growth and improvement of the organisation by empowering employees to become more effective and efficient in their jobs.

Technological progress in the training dimension has seen a significant increase in the use of alternative mediums to transfer knowledge. One prominent development in this area has been the rise of E-Learning. This term is not restricted to the use of desktop computers but also includes alternative mediums of… such as video conferencing and personal computer devices. The perception of employees with regards to the role that E-Learning contributes towards their development provides a useful insight into the effectiveness and value of this type of leaner-centred teaching.

Fifteen semi-structured interviews with sales employees, sales managers and senior managers from a variety of Toyota dealerships were conducted. The responses indicated that the use of E-Learning was effective for all respondents. However, perspectives differed slightly between those of employees and managers. From an employee perspective the results of this research identified that the perceived role of E-Learning in training sales employees was that it contributed to increasing the knowledge and skills of employees. Although, from a managerial point of view, the role was identified as time and cost saving. When analysing the combination of results the conclusion was that E-Learning did indeed improve the knowledge and skills of employees. Therefore this result can be linked to one of the identified roles of E-Learning.

DECLARATION

I, Alasdair Kelly, declare that this research report is my own work except as indicated in the references and acknowledgements. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.

Alasdair John Kelly

Signed at ……

On the …….. day of …… 2012

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The MBA has been one of the greatest challenges and adventures in my life and this journey would not have been possible without the help and support of a few people.

First of all I would like to thank my family, Mom, Dad, Alison, Vaughan, Mhairi and Mike. Your support, caring attitude and patience during the past two years have enabled me to succeed in a dream. In the good times, challenging times and long nights, your unselfish and positive attitudes made me realise the importance of family. I know that words can never really express true feelings but thank you.

To Rija, my supervisor, whose enthusiasm, knowledge and dedication to education still amazes me: Thank you for providing me with direction and guidance during this research process.

There are certain individuals whom I would personally like to thank. Adam Treki, a long-time friend and fellow WITS MBA student, thank you for encouraging me to pursue this MBA and for the long talks- which helped keep my sanity when times were tough. To Warrick Tordiffe, a class mate and true friend, thank you for the advice, assistance and beers. To Sue Cloran: an inspiration and a truly remarkable woman, my gratitude cannot be easily stated, but thank you for everything. Trish Cook: a family friend, thank you for the different perspective on this research.

I would also like to acknowledge all those people who gave up their time to be interviewed as part of this research and express my sincere gratitude to them.

Lastly, I would like to extend a very special thanks to my classmates of the MBA class 2012. All I can say is that we made it through based on each other's support. The world is now yours, so go forth and achieve your destiny.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this research is to identify the roles that E-Learning has on the training of sales employees within the automotive industry in South Africa.

1.2 Context of the study

The South African Automotive industry forms part of the manufacturing sector and represents 4.1% of the country's GDP (StatsSA, 2011), employing 28 147 persons (NAAMSA, 2011). It is the leading vehicle producer on the African continent and contains major investors such as Volkswagen, Mercedes-Benz, Toyota and Ford. According to NAAMSA from 2011, South Africa produced 253 265 vehicles which included cars, light commercial vehicles, heavy trucks and heavy buses. This was an increase of 15.3% from 2010 (NAAMSA, 2011).

Human capital, and the study thereof as an important contributing factor of economic growth, was presented by Romer (1990) in his correlation to his earlier work on the endogenous growth theory. Previously, knowledge was only classified as a public good, but in 1990, Romer (1990) corrected this misconception to include human capital and technological design. Therefore in his 1990 explanation of the production function, final output did not solely depend on capital and labour inputs but also was dependent on human capital as well (Romer, 1990).

Thus, the importance of human capital logically leads to the use of training as a means to develop human capital and capabilities. The term 'training' refers to the *"systematic approach to learning and development to improve individual, team and organisational effectiveness"* (Goldstein and Ford, 2002, pp 25).The benefits of training and development not only impact the individual, but also the organisational performance and society as a whole (Aguinis and Kraiger, 2009). Examples of these benefits include innovation, empowerment, profitability and improved organisational reputation but it should be noted here that they also

depend on the type of training and delivery method (Aguinis and Kraiger, 2009). In the automobile industry in South Africa, the AIDC (Automotive Industry Development Centre) conducts several collaborative programs with local and provincial governments to support local industry. The Skills Development and Training Department aims to identify gaps in training and address the needs of the industry to meet its global challenges (AIDC, 2012).

Technology has brought some welcome advancement in training into the work place and is shaping the future of adult learning (Edwards, 2001). Several years ago training and development was primarily conducted by means of supervisor-facilitated training whereby case studies, brainstorming and field visits were used to deliver content to employees (Bonk, 2002). However, with technological development, new methods such as E-learning (Electronic Learning) and M-Learning (Mobile Learning) have been introduced to organisations and now web-based training is flourishing as a training delivery method (Bonk, 2002). This allows for learning to take place whenever there is connectivity. Today, employees and development officers do not have to be confined to a fixed, concentrated point, but can complete on-line training and offsite learning (Bonk, 2002). Furthermore, business is further leveraging off these advancements and that polycom, Skype and Live Meeting are increasing the availability to access information and that E-Learning is benefitting from these platforms (Chunwijitra, 2011).

In the latest Global Competitiveness Report (Klaus Schwab, 2012), South Africa was ranked as an efficiency driven market. One of the most problematic factors for doing business in the country is the inadequately educated workforce. South Africa ranked 127 out of 142 countries in terms of its quality of primary education and 130th in terms of it pay and productivity. However, with regard to the extent to which the latest technologies were available, South Africa was highly ranked at 39th: and 30th for business absorbing new technology. This shows how SA is fast becoming more computer orientated even though access and speed is behind international trends, it is still a growing traction. Another area in which South Africa was rated above the mean was in terms of attracting and retaining talent (Klaus

Schwab, 2012). Taking these factors into account, this leads to the question of what the roles of technology (specifically E-Learning) are in training sales employees within the automotive industry in South Africa?

1.3 Problem statement

To identify the different (and possible) roles and effectiveness that E-Learning has on training sales employees in South African automotive companies.

1.4 Significance of the study

The significance of this study will serve several purposes. Firstly, it will highlight the effectiveness and value of E-Learning in the training of employees. Secondly, it will fill the gap in that no comprehensive piece of research has been conducted in South Africa with respect to the roles that E-Learning plays in employee training.

Furthermore the study will potentially provide value to international and local companies who are interested in furthering their employees' skills and knowledge through training. This will directly benefit potential investors, institutions, communities and business throughout the region. The study will also possibly provide guidance to senior management, including HR directors as to the impact that E-Learning has on training within their respective organisations. This could provide guidance in the implementation of new training programs. Lastly, the research will be of potential benefit to employees in terms of their understanding of E-Learning and the impact it has on their career development, by removing the replacing the *status quo* that learning needs to happen in a classroom environment.

1.5 Limitations of the study

The study will be limited to the following contexts:

- Only South Africa will be considered as the area of research.

- Only the automotive industry will be considered.
- NGO's and the public sector are not being considered for research.
- Only one automotive company will be analysed in terms of the roles.
- The study will focus on E-Learning
- The respondent group will consist only of employees involved in vehicle sales.
- The research will not enter into the debate on how to measure performance or the return on learning from training programs.

1.6 Definition of terms

Automotive: "Relating to or concerned with motor vehicles." (Dictionaries, 2012b)

Human Capital: "The skills, knowledge, and experience possessed by an individual or population, viewed in terms of their value or cost to an organisation or country." (Oxford Dictionaries, 2012b)

NAAMSA: National Association of Automobile Manufacturers of South Africa

Training: "Systematic approach to learning and development to improve individual, team and organisational effectiveness." (Goldstein and Ford, 2002, pp 25)

Development: Refers to activities leading to the acquisition of new knowledge or skills for purposes of personal growth. (Aguinis and Kraiger, 2009)

E-Learning: "E-learning is commonly referred to the intentional use of networked information and communications technology in teaching and learning." It is also known by other terms such as online learning, virtual learning, distributed learning, network and web based learning. (Naidu, 2003)

Perception: “The way in which something is regarded, understood, or interpreted.” (Oxford Dictionaries, 2012b)

Technology: “The application of scientific knowledge for practical purposes, especially in industry.” (Oxford Dictionaries, 2012b)

1.7 Assumptions

The following assumptions have been made regarding the study:

- An initial assumption is that a body of work for this research problem is undeveloped for the South African context.
- It is assumed that there will be sufficient knowledge to determine the roles of E-Learning in training.
- The number of respondents will be sufficient to gain adequate data.
- All respondents will convey industry information honestly and truthfully. False or incorrect data will have a severely negative impact on the study’s findings.
- All views and opinions of experts is a valid source of dependable information on which to build the produced findings and recommendations.
- All respondents will have extensive experience in training of employees or they will have been trained.
- Respondents will also have in-depth knowledge of the South African automotive industry training requirements.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The current business world is dominated by an increasing competitiveness, market globalization, continual technological advances and changes in work organization; therefore, the survival of a company implies the execution of sustainable competitive advantages (Aragon-Sanchez, 2003). One area, amongst others, where companies can achieve this advantage is through development of their workforce in terms of skills and knowledge. This literature review summarizes the academic studies pertaining to human capital, training, development and E-Learning.

2.2 Background Discussion

2.2.1 *Human Capital and technology in the economy*

Neoclassical Growth Theory is an economic model which tries to explain the growth of world economies towards what Solow (1956) described as a *'steady state'* by using the factors of production namely capital, productivity and labour (Solow, (1956); Swann, (1956). This classical exogenous model however does not take into consideration other factors of production such as institutions, entrepreneurship, or technology progress. This in turn gave rise to the endogenous or Modern Growth Theory which was of the conviction that economic growth is an endogenous outcome of an economic system, not the result of forces that impinge on… from outside (Romer, 1994) and there is no incentive for the economy to slow down and it will therefore continue to expand indefinitely (Romer, 1990). This theory promotes the notion that countries' economies are diverging from each other and hence why some societies experience effective economic growth while others do not (Romer, 1994).

The relevance and importance of the preceding point is that in an economy in which companies operate, there are several factors that can lead to economic

growth (Abramovitz and David, 1996). Whilst some of these factors, whether in isolation or in combination, show correlation to growing economies in developed and developing nations, the key element is that technology and human capital do play a role in the progression of an economy and hence a company which operates inside that economy. A study conducted in Italy by Bronzini and Piselli (2009), showed that human capital had the strongest direct impact on regional productivity (Bronzini and Piselli, 2009).

In more up to date terms, human capital represents the investment people make in themselves to enhance their economic productivity (Olaniyan and Okemakinde, 2008). Babalola (2003) was of the opinion that the rationale behind this investment is based on three influences:

1. The new generation must be given knowledge which has been accumulated by previous generations,
2. The new generation should be taught how to use this knowledge to introduce new processes, production methods and social services,
3. People must be encouraged to introduce entirely new ideas, products, processes and methods through creative approaches.

Lastly, for human capital to have a role in economic growth and development, education must be of the highest quality and meet the skill demand of the economy (Babalola, 2003). This is especially important because it takes into consideration the context of primary, secondary and tertiary education in South Africa.

2.2.2 *Training and development*

Training and development is at the heart of any organisation that pursues persistent growth and improvement (Kriemadis and Kourtesopoulou, 2008) . It is a process of learning which is provided to new and existing employees thus acquiring knowledge and technical skills and developing attitudes of behaviour that allow them to become more effective and efficient in their jobs. In the world of

competitive economies, where markets have become more globalised, it is no longer sufficient for organisations to rely on advancements in technology, but rather their survival and growth depends not only on the rate of their adaptation to new technological, economic and consuming conditions but also on the level of their human resource development (Kriemadis and Kourtesopoulou, 2008).

Traditional training has provided employees with the knowledge, facilities and the teaching of the skills necessary to perform their job role in a more deliberate manner (Kriemadis and Kourtesopoulou, 2008). Specific employee training benefits such as increased profits, higher productivity rates, better retention rates and increased company loyalty are some of the main benefits that were revealed through the literature (Kriemadis and Kourtesopoulou, 2008). Also, Cetron and Davies (2005) suggest that:

> *"'…life-long learning is nothing new; it's just a way of life. Companies that can provide diverse, cutting-edge training will have a strong recruitment advantage over competitors that offer fewer opportunities to improve their skills and knowledge base."*
>
> (Cetron and Davies, 2005, pp. 53-53)

In addition to this, training is provided not only because it improves labour productivity but it is also used as a signal to the employees that an organization cares and values its relationship with its employees (Pfeffer, 1981).

Dressler (2003) identified a five-step training and development process that is recognised as useful for any organisation. The first step is a needs analysis in which the organisation identifies the necessary skills for its employees, it analyses the current skills base and develops specific training objectives (Dressler, 2003). This could take the form of questionnaires, interviews and observation. Step two involves the planning of the actual training program, which may be done either internally or externally. Step three, refers to the validation, in which the organisation is able to confirm that the training program developed satisfies and adheres to the needs analysis. The next step is the implementation of the

program: and finally, evaluation of the training constitutes the fifth and final step (Dressler, 2003).

For training to be effective, the trainees need to be motivated to learn, the learning outcomes should be relevant to the needs of the organisation and there needs to be a transfer of learning (Alvarez, Salas and Garofano, 2004). In terms of this effectiveness, Alvarez, Salas and Garofano (2004) were of the opinion that four sets of factors would affect the effectiveness of the training. Namely:

1. Needs analysis: how trainees learn, what needs to be learned, and who should be trained
2. The individual characteristics of the trainees, personality traits, demographics, cognitive ability, and attitudinal constructs including goal orientation and self-efficacy
3. Variables that measure the organization's support for the transfer of learning, HR policies, trainee selection
4. Design and delivery of the program: practice, feedback, and coaching

(Alvarez et al., 2004)

However, an area in which most organisations falter in training is in the last step: evaluation and measuring of results (Dressler, 2003). Kirkpatrick's (1975) classic model can be used for any training type to evaluate the training program at four progressive levels.

Table 1: Kirkpatrick's four levels of training evaluation (Kirkpatrick, 1975)

Level	Evaluation type	Evaluation description and characteristics
1	Reaction	Reaction evaluation is how the delegates felt about the training or learning experience.
2	Leaning	Learning evaluation is the measurement of the increase in knowledge - before and after.

3	Behaviour	Behaviour evaluation is the extent of applied learning back on the job - implementation.
4	Results	Results evaluation is the effect on the business or environment by the trainee.

This original model has been adapted to include Return on Investment (ROI) and is also knows as Jack Phillips' (1996) Five Level ROI Model; this essentially converts the data from Level 4 to monetary terms and then compares this to the cost of the training program (Phillips, 1996). This is particularly important for organisations in terms of reporting on the success of their training programs.

Corder (2002) suggests that there are two types of teaching and learning methods: learner-centred methods and teacher-centred methods. “Learner-centred methods include such activities as simulation, role-play, games, discovery learning, experiential learning, tutorials, brainstorming, buzz groups and snowballing, case studies and problem solving, flexible learning, open learning, and distance learning, group discussion, seminar, small groups, displays, project, and field trips. The teacher-centred methods comprehend lecture, explanation, talks and presentation, and demonstration (Corder, 2002). Additional types of human resource training and development include: simulation training, job rotation, coaching, mentoring, behaviour modelling, action learning, outdoor training and new age training.

In conclusion, the training and development knowledge base that training programs aim at is an effective investment in employee’s empowerment and an increase in organisational performance. Training can also be viewed as a form of over-investment in the employee/ organisational relationship which employees reciprocate by performing better on core tasks (Tsui, Pearce, Porter and Tripoli, 1997). The main phases of the training process are the needs analysis, planning the program, its validation, and final evaluation. Some evaluation elements are the degree of satisfaction, the level of skills acquisition, the change of behaviour and the performance results (Kriemadis and Kourtesopoulou, 2008).

2.2.3 *Adult Learning*

Theories about adult learning describe ways in which adults embrace knowledge, skills and attitudes. There are many different adult learning theories, which can be grouped into five main classes. These include instrumental learning, self-directed learning, experiential learning, perspective transformation and situated cognition (Abela, 2009). Of these, self-directed learning focus particularly on the individual learner (Abela, 2009). Prominent amongst these self-directed theories is andragogy. Andragogy (adult learning) is a theory that holds a set of assumptions about how adults learn. According to Knowles (1984), who defines andragogy as "the art and science of helping adults learn". Andragogy assumes that adults:

1. Are independent and self-directing,
2. Have (various degrees of) experience
3. Integrate learning to the demand of their everyday life
4. Are more interested in immediate problem centred approaches and
5. Are motivated more by internal than external drives

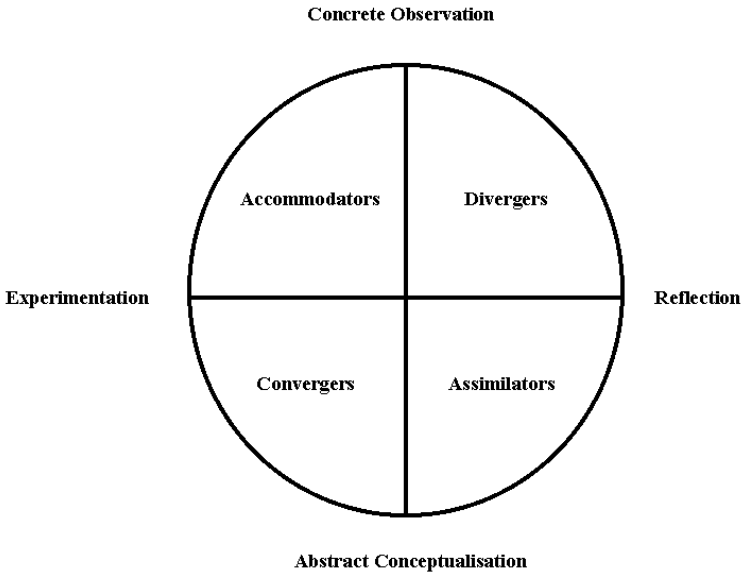
(Abela, 2009)

Knowles (1984) states that adult learners are intrinsically motivated, but fail to indicate extrinsic motivation e.g. the part the teacher plays as a source of motivation. Mezirow's (1997) Transformative Learning concept however, looks at the structures and mechanisms through which adults assimilate and comprehend their experiences. Essentially, the concept effects change in the 'frames of reference' used by the adult learner and these are a reflection of the biological and cultural assimilation of the adult learner. The concept further stresses the importance of the teacher in enabling learners to question and reflect on their own assumptions (Mezirow, 1997).

Also, reflection is excluded from Knowles's (1984) concept of adult learning despite being an integral part of adult learning skills. This is however covered in the second part of Kolb's (1984) learning cycle. Kolb (1984) identified individual differences in the process along two axes, on a vertical axis representing how an

individual prefers to capture information and a horizontal axis denoting a preference for how an individual processes information (Kolb, 1984). These are then classified as four preferences or learning styles and are referred to as **accommodators, divergers, convergers and assimilators**, as can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Kolb's learning cycle (Kolb, 1984)



2.2.4 *Training and company performance*

Romer (1986) stated that the process of being engaged in an activity generates learning effects and this allows those who are engaged in those tasks to become more efficient at performing them (Romer,1986). Training in work organizations is an area of applied psychology research and it is particularly well suited for making a clear contribution to the enhancement of human well-being and performance in organisations, in the work environment as well as in society in general. Training, may not only affect declarative knowledge or procedural knowledge, but may also enhance strategic knowledge, defined as knowing when to apply a specific knowledge or skill (Kozlowski, Gully, Brown, Salas, Smith and Nason, 2001).

Currently, there seems to be general agreement about the importance of training as a tool to aid companies in the development of sustainable competitive

advantages based on their human resources. However, the investment of companies in training activities is still very low. Aragon-Sanchez, Barba-Aragon, and Sanz-Valle (2003) ascribe this largely due to the fact that organisations do not evaluate the effects of training on performance and therefore they do not know its economic impact for the company (Aragon-Sanchez, 2003).

Arthur et al (2003) conducted a meta-analysis of 1152 data points from 165 sources and ascertained that in comparison with no-training or pre-training states, training had an overall positive effect on job-related behaviours or performance. The most effective training programs were those including both cognitive and interpersonal skills, followed by those including psychomotor skills or tasks. However, the benefits varies depending on the type of training delivery method, the skill or task being trained, and the measure used to assess effectiveness (Aguinis and Kraiger, 2009).

Also, in a study conducted on the relationship between training and organisational performance in several European countries (Aragon-Sanchez, 2003), results indicated that some types of training activities, including on-the-job training and training inside the organisation using in-house trainers, were positively related to most dimensions of effectiveness and profitability (Aragon-Sanchez, 2003). Further to this Garcia (2005) concluded that training programs oriented toward human capital development were directly related to employee, customer, and owner/shareholder satisfaction as well as an objective measure of business performance (García, 2005).

2.2.5 *Training of sales employees*

Sales orientated organisations must be able to respond positively to changes in the marketplace in order to remain competitive and with the increasing demands being placed on sales organisations, the importance of the relationship between sales management and high productivity is evident (Shepherd and Ridnour, 1995). Therefore, the necessity for training and development has increased significantly, so much so that effective training of sales staff has the potential to

meaningfully affect an organisations bottom line. Castleberry, Stephen and Tanner (1986) point out that one of the most important ingredients leading to success in the personal selling position is training. In this environment employees need to have the correct product knowledge, customer service skills and positive attitude to deal with the tough task of face-to-face selling.

Sales training typically has three stages: assessment (determination of training needs and objectives), training (selection of the training facilities, trainers, program content, and methods of instruction ,and program implementation), and evaluation (assessment of program effectiveness) (Dubinsky, 1996). These three stages are not mutually exclusive.

In an exploratory study into sales management training practises, Shepherd and Ridnour (1995) found on the job training had the highest effectiveness rating and was most extensively used, whilst the opposite was true for home study and outside courses.

Table 2: Training approaches: Use and perceived effectiveness (Shepherd and Ridnour, 1995)

Training Approach	Used Extensively	Used Moderately	Used Slightly	Effectiveness[1] Rating
On-the-job Training	37%	17%	25%	5.3
Workshop	28%	30%	24%	5.5
Classroom "Lecture Style"	17%	30%	16%	5.2
Field Coaching	13%	20%	20%	5.0
Field Travel	11%	13%	27%	4.3
Outside Courses	3%	9%	19%	4.1
Mentoring	5%	7%	18%	4.4
Home Study	2%	7%	9%	3.2

In terms of the training approaches, role play and seminars showed high effectiveness ratings and usage but self-study and interactive video had the lowest ratings. The high ranking of role play here shows an emphasis towards active learning which is conducive to positive sales results (Shepherd and Ridnour, 1995).

Table 3: Training methodologies: Use and perceived effectiveness (Shepherd and Ridnour, 1995)

Training Approach	Used Extensively	Used Moderately	Used Slightly	Effectiveness[1] Rating
Role Play	24%	22%	25%	5.1
Seminar	15%	23%	25%	4.6
Case Studies	15%	14%	28%	5.0
Work Books	13%	17%	29%	4.1
Video-Tape	8%	26%	13%	4.4
Panel Discussion	3%	7%	20%	3.6
Interactive Video	2%	6%	5%	2.5
Simulation	2%	8%	1%	2.7
Audio-Tape	1%	17%	16%	3.5
Self-Study	1%	10%	16%	3.5

Table 3 outlines the content that was used most widely during the study.

Table 4: Content of sales management training: Non-sales management specific (Shepherd and Ridnour, 1995)

Content Area	Extensive Coverage	Moderate Coverage	Slight Coverage
Performance Reviews	25%	23%	20%
Setting Standards & Goals	18%	32%	15%
Recruiting & Selection	18%	25%	14%
Motivational Skills	16%	30%	25%
Training Techniques/Skills	15%	18%	20%
Team Building	13%	18%	23%
Psychological Assessment	10%	6%	14%
Terminating	9%	5%	14%
Facility/Staff Management	8%	5%	10%
Managing Diversity	3%	9%	18%

Finally, sales managers should insist that training programs are based on a thorough needs analysis and evaluated to ensure that correct needs are being achieved. Failing to incorporate these practices could result in a training investment that provides no returns or at best a trainee that cannot relate the outcomes of training to performance in the field. This can ultimately lead to a short lived period where sales training is funded at its current high levels (Erffmeyer, Russ and Hair Jr, 1991).

2.2.6 *Technology Acceptance Model*

Throughout the world many companies are trying to manage an increasingly diverse and dispersed workforce. Governments, private companies and universities have been forming partnerships with other organisations in different countries and on different continents. This has increased the need for communication and training and is driving the need for technology to support such ventures (Isaacs, Morris, Rodriguez and Tang, 1995).

Technical progress can be understood as the process of new product development, and understanding how knowledge and skills contribute to this process can shed light on the introduction of new technologies (Messinis and Ahmed, 2008). In training there are various methods, procedures and tools used to aid development and transfer knowledge which include training plans, needs assessments and audit reports. All of these have been influenced by technology over the past decade but it is not only the development of technology that impacts learning and training, it is also the learner or user (Messinis and Ahmed, 2008).

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) theory (Figure 1) is useful in explaining the usage behaviour of information technology (Davis, Bagozzi and Warshaw, 1989). The theory was built upon Ajzen and Fishbein's (1977) theory of reasoned action that asserts that beliefs could influence attitudes, which lead to intentions to use and finally actual usage behaviours. Understanding the causal relationship would be helpful in explaining IT (including E-learning systems) adoption behaviour. The perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEOU) represent beliefs finally leading to actual use of IT. These can be defined as follows:

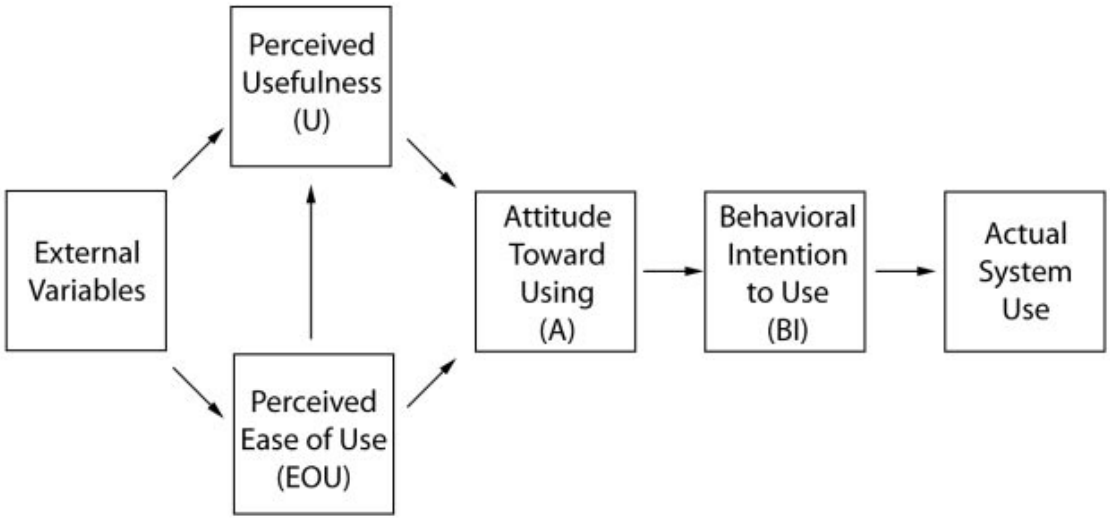
1. Perceived usefulness is the degree to which a person believes that a particular system will enhance his or her job performance (i.e. by reducing the time to accomplish a task or providing timely information).

2. Perceived ease of use is the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system will be free of effort.

(Ajzen and Fishbein, 1977)

Two other constructs used in TAM are the attitude toward use and behavioural intention to use. The attitude toward use is the user's evaluation of the desirability of employing a particular information system's application. Behavioural intention to use is a measure of the likelihood a person will employ the application (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1977). Both attitude and behavioural intention are critical in studying the use of information technology, as is indicated by Wu, Tsai, Chen and Wu's (2006) Technology Acceptance Model illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Technology Acceptance Model (Wu, Tsai, Chen and Wu, 2006)



2.2.7 Learner support

Both the learner and the teacher have significant roles to play in training, however, the instructor is obliged to put forward information which is relevant, topical and most importantly useful to an employee. Robertson (1995) identified various components of learner support which should be taken into consideration for the successful transfer of knowledge. These include:

1. Personal contact between learners and support agency people acting in a variety of support roles and with a range of titles, individual or group, face-to-face or via other means;
2. Peer contact;
3. The activity of giving feedback to individuals on their learning;
4. Additional materials such as handbooks, advice, notes or guides;
5. Study groups and centres, actual or virtual (electronic);
6. Access to libraries, laboratories, equipment and communication networks

(Robinson, 1995)

Added to this, Gagne's Theory of Instruction (Gagne, 1970) focuses on conditions of learning which can be external and internal. The internal conditions deal with previously learned capabilities of the learner whilst the external conditions deal with stimuli presented to the leaner (Corry, 2006). However, Corry (2006) does state that these steps are not flawless and there are problems creating objectives and rigidity of the instruction.

Gagne's nine general steps of instruction for learning are:

1. Gain attention,
2. Describe the goal,
3. Stimulate recall of prior knowledge,
4. Present the material to be learned,
5. Provide guidance for learning,
6. Elicit performance "practice",
7. Provide informative feedback,
8. Assess performance test, if the lesson has been learned and
9. Enhance retention and transfer.

(Gagne, 1970)

2.2.8 *Perception*

The main aim of this research is to identify the perceived roles of E-Learning in training sales employees. Therefore, it is critical for the reader to have a basic knowledge of what is regarded as perception. Professor Hoffmann (2011) in his lecture on knowledge and innovation management, states that the concept of perception is a key dimension in understanding the flow of ideas. Also, human perception is to a high degree an individual and subjective process that differs from person to person. He also quotes Lindersmith and Strauss (1956) as stating that perception is the way in which an individual responds to any sense or impression which he detects (Hoffmann 2011).

Rogers (1995) investigated employee's perception of innovation and here he noted that before an employee can have their own impression on technology, they must be able to adopt innovation and this requires a change of behaviour. This behaviour is a function of the interaction of the individual and their environment and in order to change behaviour the previous equilibrium (notion) must be removed, then a shift towards the new notion occurs and finally the modified behaviour must be stabilised (Rogers, 1995). Essentially, employees need to embrace new technology through a change of behaviour, and then they can ascertain their perception of the technology (Rogers 1995).

2.3 E-Learning

Walton, Weller and Concole (2008) stated that there is a crucial need to establish new forms of learning using internet technologies which can release the potential for learning. However, there are many groups currently excluded from this learning opportunity.

The development of the internet, improvement of computers and new advanced software has enabled companies to become more efficient, more profitable and continue to grow. The use of technology in business today is widespread from payroll systems to intranet capabilities, and this has also had an effect on how

employees are trained (Aragon-Sanchez, 2003). This technology is not the cause of anything either positive or negative, but instead should be thought of as a tool that society can use to shape the (learning) environment (Edwards, 2001).

As previously mentioned, diversity in the work force has increased and multiple generations work within the same environment. According to the report from the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (Kennedy, 2009), under-25 year olds are far ahead of their teachers in understanding and using digital technologies and this group wants to import their social networking spaces wholesale into their E-learning. The report also states that there is much more variety amongst both teachers and learners in their ability and willingness to deploy the new technologies for learning (Kennedy, 2009).

2.3.1 *E-Learning defined*

E-Learning can be further defined as the use of telecommunication technology to deliver educational content and training, and although it is still an emerging source of recent education, the market has a growth rate of 35.6% (Sun, Tsai, Finger, Chen and Yeh, 2008). Essentially, E-Learning depends on the use of computers as learning tools whereby instructors publish various learning materials on a platform and users participate through computer networks. However, E-Learning is not limited to the use of computers but also consists of the use of other equipment such as video conferencing (Isaacs, Morris, Rodriguez and Tang 1995).

Other terminology around E-Learning states that technology-delivered instruction (TDI) continues to become increasingly popular in industry (Paradise and Patel, 2008) but researchers have been slow to study factors that facilitate or limit its effectiveness. TDI includes web-based training and instruction on single workstations, PDAs and MP3 players, as well as embedded just-in-training in work-related software (Rogers, 1995). This technology usually has two components: (1) a hardware aspect, consisting of the tool that embodies the

technology as a material or physical object, and (2) a software aspect, consisting of the information base for the tool. (Rogers, 1995).

In a study conducted through 295 questionnaires, Sun et al. (2008) determined that in order for E-Learning to be successful, the course quality is the most important concern in the learning environment. The results also indicated that the learners' computer anxiety, an instructor's attitude toward E-Learning, the E-Learning course flexibility, the E-Learning course quality, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and diversity in assessment are the critical factors affecting learners' perceived satisfaction (Sun et al., 2008). Together, these seven factors are able to explain 66.1% of the variance of user satisfaction. Also, flexibility is viewed as an important factor in E-Learning satisfaction and another advantage of online education is its flexibility in which learners choose the most suitable learning methods to accommodate their needs (Sun et al., 2008).

In terms of satisfaction, the same study conducted by Sun et al (2008) into the critical factors affecting learner satisfaction, the conclusions state that technological design plays an important role in students' perceived usefulness and ease of use of a course. These will then impact on students' overall satisfaction. However, no single factor in the technology dimension has a significant effect on E-Learner satisfaction. From their interactions with students and observations of the technology in use, they found it reasonable to claim that the technologies used in E-Learning environments are fairly mature and that computer self-efficacy is required to apply those skills leant to the broader environment (Wu et al., 2006). Most E-Learning systems are constructed in a high-speed network environment where software and hardware are superior to those of non-E-Learning environments for parallel processing of multimedia streaming data (Sun et al., 2008).

Correctly designed multimedia learning materials provide greater potential to overcome the limitations of traditional print media in supporting the development of scientific understanding, (Garnett, Oliver and Hackling, 1998).

In the long run, the expectations for technology (E-Learning) to contribute to the longer-term aim of educational change are:

1. Increase the effectiveness of education,
2. To increase the flexibility and accessibility of education,
3. Increase the attractiveness of education and
4. To decrease the workload for employees

(Hashim, 2009)

2.3.2 *Mediums of E-Learning and delivery methods*

With the advancement of technology over the past decades, new technologies have brought about improved methods of engaging learners and new patterns of social and intellectual interactions among learners (Akinwamide, 2009). The table below (Table 5) shows some of the different technologies used in an individual's development and also shows the learner and the trainer's role in the process.

Table 5:Technological enhancement of a pre-writing stage in writing pedagogy (Akinwamide, 2009)

Task	Technology involved	Individual's role	Teacher's role
Brainstorming	Palm-top, laptop, teleconferencing, etc.	Reviewing and making inputs through inter/intra connectivity	Facilitating ideas
Imagining	Notepad Advance organizers	Direct inputs through comparison of notes	Moderating activities
Mind-mapping	Lap-top, mobile technology	Editing and suggesting ideas	Facilitating and Moderating inputs
Watching movie	Projector, laptop, monitor, etc.	Logging ideas in electronics devices for comparison	Answering questions and explaining concepts

The different technologies involved in delivering training are however not limited to the above mentioned and are often a combination of several types. E-Learning

delivery methods vary according to the type of E-Learning, the user and the available technology. These various delivery methods can be summarised as such:

1. Print (E-Text, textbooks, E-Zines)
2. Video (streaming video, video tape, satellite transmission, cable)
3. Audio (streaming audio, audio tape)
4. Review and exams (electronic, interactive, paper)
5. Communication – Asynchronous (email, listservs, threaded discussion, weblogs, forums)
6. Communication – Synchronous (chat, videoconferencing, teleconferencing) (WorldWideLearn, 2011)

Also, E-Learning courses provided to individuals or employees can be found in many variations or combinations of types such as:

1. Purely online - no face-to-face meetings
2. Blended Learning - combination of online and face-to-face
3. Synchronous - set time (phone/internet classroom sessions) (Wang, 2011)
4. Asynchronous - student directed, self-paced learning
5. Instructor-led group
6. Self-study
7. Self-study with subject matter expert
8. Web-based
9. Computer-based (CD-ROM)
10. Video/audio tape

(WorldWideLearn, 2011)

2.3.3 *Benefits of E-Learning*

Computer based multimedia learning materials are widely used in Open and Distance Learning (ODL) including E-Learning, and these have revolutionised instructional training practice by enhancing active learning through interactivity and exploration (Kulasekara, Jayatilleke and Coomaraswamy, 2011). The

integration of technology with educational content has an important bearing on learners' development, enabling them to experience learning through multi-sensory representations. This has been achieved through the use of media elements (E-Learning delivery methods) in reinforcing the portrayed message (Kulasekara et al., 2011).

The interactivity built into multimedia technology has further allowed learners to proactively engage in learning tasks and has changed the way teachers teach and students learn (Tse-Kian, 2003). For example, learners have the choice to self-test and review material as many times as required in order to guarantee mastery (Mcgrath, 2012). However, the success of any teaching and learning process depends on the effectiveness of communication. These days information and communication technology plays the role of patient teacher – it consistently works at the learner's pace, assisting them to acquire sets of information, skills and facts (Owolabi, 2009). This has resulted in the modern role of teachers changing to that of mediators instead of instructors to pupils in search of knowledge in this digital age.

E-Learning does provide many advantages and benefits over traditional teaching methods and some of these can be summarised as follows (Welsh, Wanberg, Brown and Simmering, 2003):

1. Content can be delivered across multiple locations irrespective of geographic restrictions,
2. Training can be delivered to many employees quickly,
3. It increases learner convenience and flexibility,
4. Manages growth in the amount of information employees need to learn,
5. Leaner activity can be tracked and monitored,
6. Reduces travel, time off job and off-site training costs,
7. Promotes greater understanding of other cultures especially through video-conferencing (Simmons and Markwell, 2001).

Other research reveals the following advantages of E-Learning (Authoring, 2002):

1. It is self-paced. Most E-Learning programs can be taken at a learner's convenience.
2. It provides a consistent message. E-Learning eliminates the problems associated with different instructors teaching slightly different material on the same subject. For company-based training, it is critical to have this consistency.
3. It can be updated easily and quickly.
4. It can lead to increased retention and a stronger grasp on the subject as many elements in E-Learning can be combined to reinforce the message.
5. It can be easily managed for large groups of students.
6. Whist it encourages diversity, it paradoxically creates programmes that are more specifically tailored to the market needs than traditionally validated programmes (Forman, Nyatanga and Rich, 2002).

Despite these numerous advantages of E-Learning it should be noted that Arbaugh and Duray (2002) point out that failure can still be a reality and this can be very costly for any organisation

2.3.4 *Challenges in E-Learning*

Even though E-Learning in training and education has noteworthy advantages, it is not without its challenges. Oppenheimer (1997) reported that the number of jobs requiring computer skills increased by 12% from 1983 to 1993 and the pay for jobs involving computer skills showed an average increase of 10% to 15%. (Oppenheimer, 1997). This is a concern for employers in terms of basic literacy, computer literacy, and hence training in the working environment. If employees do not possess the basis computer skills required to develop their capabilities, they may be overlooked for training and possible job promotions.

Secondly, E-Learning transfers more control to learners to make decisions about what and how to learn (Aguinis and Kraiger, 2009). Compared to traditional learning in which instructors play an intermediate role between learners and learning content, the learning scenario in E-Learning is completely different. Instructors no longer control the content delivery and learners have a possibility to combine learning content by their own (Hashim, 2009).

There are also counter arguments to the advantages of E-Learning especially around increased responsibility. Firstly, time constraints increase pressure on employees to perform their daily activities and the time spent on learning new technology can negatively affect performance; however this is more applicable to the older generation (Kennedy, 2009). Also, by removing employees from the typical classroom learning, there can be a negative social impact (Simmons and Markwell, 2001) as employees are no longer engaging with each other and this further promotes the loss of new ideas. Further to this, computers in particular only engage two senses, hearing and 2-dimensional sight (Oppenheimer, 1997) which does not fully utilise an employee's sense of feel or touch.

Although technology is more widely available than in the past decades, some areas especially rural areas lack sufficient infrastructure to communicate and realise E-Learning possibilities. Added to this is the rate of advancement of technology (Moore's Law) which can render previous technologies obsolete (Moore and Benbasat, 1991). Both these factors have negative implications for content delivery and the availability of the content itself.

Further challenges of E-Learning are (Welsh et al., 2003):

1. High up-front investment costs,
2. Significant effort and planning with applicable implementation,
3. Required time to prepare users for training,
4. The instructor has to make sure that the materials being used in the online course equals the quality of traditional methods and that this has been adapted to the online course (Álvarez-Trujillo, 2008).

5. The student's equipment needs to meet the technological requirements of the training otherwise they will not be able to work efficiently (Álvarez-Trujillo, 2008)
6. By not completing the courses, time, money and effort are wasted.
7. Many employers don't realistically allow enough time to learn and review E-Learning content.
8. Some E-Learning modules provide cursory information and not the required in-depth information that one can gain from instructor led training.
9. Lack of assistance before, during and after E-Learning training can provide a negative experience.
10. A lack of motivation and confidence to learn online content can negate the intended advantages (Educause, 2003)
11. Distractions can cause the learner to find it very difficult to focus on learning (USPCpro, 2010).

2.3.5 *Roles of E-Learning in training*

Firstly, it is important to understand what is meant by the term role. It can be defined as a function or position i.e. this research aims to identify the function that E-Learning plays in training sales employees (Cambridge Dictionaries, 2012a)

The role of information and communication technology (ICT) in the learning process has been both tremendously complementary and limited (Barab and Duffy, 2000). ICT skills are either taught in a vacuum without establishing relevance to learners' contexts or as add-on activities instructed by the teacher in the classroom. However, ICT resources and tools on the internet, multimedia and related technologies are acknowledged by learners and tutors as offering a wider arena of learning support. Additional resources, explanations and glossaries are available at the touch of a button and through various web links (Thomas and Knezek, 2002).

In this literature review it was found that there are several roles that E-Learning serves in training and learning. Some of these are independent but others are

dependant and complementary of other roles. The identified roles that E-Learning plays in training can be summarised in Table 6.

Table 6: The roles of E-Learning in training

No.	Identified role of E-Learning in training	Reference
1.	To increase self-motivation and lessen dependency on formal environments	(Welsh et al., 2003)
2.	Enable employees/ scholars to take control of their own learning	(Mcgrath, 2012)
3.	Reach out to otherwise untouched regions	(Welsh et al., 2003)
4.	Deliver more accurate content via multiple mediums	(Kulasekara et al., 2011),
5.	Constructive as opposed to passive knowledge acquisition	(Nanjappa and Grant, 2003)
6.	Provide a richer and more exciting (entertaining) learning environment	(Nanjappa and Grant, 2003)
7.	Provide a platform for shared space and focussed deliverables	(Peter, 2008)
8.	Helps to share the cognition in the community of learning	(Doak, 2009)
9.	Acts as a catalyst for education diversity	(Forman et al., 2002)
10.	Encourages freedom to learn	(Forman et al., 2002)
11.	Provides equal learning opportunity	(Forman et al., 2002)
12.	Participants can choose programs that are useful to their work and helpful for their career advancement	(Chang, 2003)
13.	All E-learning related events at a particular online net-work become centralised, which integrates staff training, executive education, knowledge management and research together	(Chang, 2003)
14.	Improve the knowledge and skills of office-workers	(Chang, 2003)

2.4 Conclusion of Literature Review

The literature review has defined some of the possible roles of E-Learning in training and has also stated some of the benefits and challenges of using this type of technology in the work environment. In concluding this section, according to Barab and Duffy (2000), information and communication technology were found to be complimentary but limited in the learning environment.

2.4.1 *Research Question 1:*

How do sales employees perceive the roles of E-Learning in their training within the automotive industry in South Africa?

2.4.2 *Research Question 2:*

How do managers perceive the roles of E-Learning in training sales employees within the automotive industry in South Africa?

3 CASE SITE

3.1 History of Toyota in South Africa

Toyota South Africa celebrated the 50th anniversary of its presence in South Africa in 2011, and the story of its growth, transformation and adaption to the local and international market is quite a remarkable one. In the early 1960's Albert Wessels, an entrepreneur, was interested in bringing a new vehicle brand into the country to rival the already present GM, Ford, Astin Martin (to name a few). Through investigating other brands he came across Toyota and travelled to Japan to begin negotiations to become the South African agent. After further negotiations with the South African government around an import licence for 10 Toyopet Stout pick-up trucks, Toyota granted him the agency and thus Toyota South Africa was born (Houghton, 2011).

With the initial success of the Stout (344 units were sold in 1962), management began to consider the desirability and possibility of having its own manufacturing plant. At that time all vehicles marketed by the company were produced by Motor Assemblies in Durban. Towards the end of 1964, Toyota bought an 85% share in Motor Assembly and with the intention of assembling vehicles with 45% local content, Toyota was granted permission to import passenger car kits. This saw the arrival of the first Corona into the country (Houghton, 2011).

The story of success continues from the late 1960's and some of the key points are highlighted below (Houghton, 2011):

1967- Toyota becomes the commercial vehicle market leader

1971- First vehicle (Stout) comes off assembly line in Durban

1972- Business of the year for the third time and Hino truck arrives in SA

1975- Corona introduced to the market (which went on to be a world top-seller)

1980- Toyota again receives the award for attaining the top spot in total vehicle sales

1982- Annual sales exceed 100 000 units

1985- 200 000th Hilux was built and dealerships grow to 320

1991- Dr Albert Wessels passed away

1994- Toyota receives Best of the Best award from Toyota Motor Corporation (TMC), one of only 3 countries out of 161 distributors worldwide

1995- The stallion logo was replaced by the triple ellipse

1997- Prius hybrid vehicle launched

1999- Celebrates 20 years' market leadership

2002- Corolla celebrates 20 years as the country's top-selling passenger car

2006- Sales achieve 151 056 units for a 21.1% market share

2008- Toyota SA Trucks becomes a stand-alone operation Hino SA

2011- 50th Anniversary

Today, Toyota SA still remains a leader in vehicle manufacturing (including export models such as the Hilux, Fortuner and Corolla) and sales of passenger and light commercial vehicles as well as trucks and the Lexus model. Included in their bouquet are maintenance, finance and insurance divisions, and the second hand vehicle market (Automark). In total they employ over 1970 sales people across all divisions at 190 dealerships (Houghton, 2011).

3.2 Training

Toyota is particularly dedicated to training their employees and this established through two mediums, the Toyota Academy and via E-Learning. The first dedicated training centre was established in 1978 to ensure world-class quality and productivity. Subsequently with the increase in the numbers of employees and the necessity of additional training, the company makes use of a number of other facilities. One of the key elements of the Toyota Way is 'continuous improvement', and in order to achieve this, Toyota SA places a strong emphasis on 'lifelong learning' through education and training. This provides employees with opportunities to improve their qualifications, learn new skills, and upgrade and align these skills with the new demands and technologies (Houghton, 2011).

The training of sales people was identified early on as a necessity. One of the major breakthroughs came when the management was convinced that all sales staff needed to be properly trained on new models before they were launched. Up until that point it was the responsibility of the dealer principle to return from a gala function and then be expected to train his team. Subsequently, pre-launch training with informative sales guides proved to be most effective in gearing up salesmen for the arrival of new models (Houghton, 2011).

In November 2006, a new shift in training occurred with the opening of the Toyota Academy of Learning for Africa. The importance and its role in training and education was highlighted by the Deputy President of SA performing the official opening. The Academy bases its training on four areas: employees, dealers and distributors, suppliers and community development. Each areas requirements are addressed by individual training 'schools' and further enhanced by the use of E-Learning. This aligns to national skills development and job creation within the industry (Houghton, 2011).

In terms of sales employees, each level (employees, managers and senior managers) has a predetermined learning pathway which is a combination of live workshops and E-Learning. Each employee is required to complete certain levels within a timeframe and the dealerships receive monetary rewards for having

employees complete the required levels. The different courses focus on product knowledge, sales techniques and customer service with credits being awarded which can be used towards obtaining the following qualifications from UNISA:

1. Course in the introduction to marketing management.
2. Course in introduction to sales and marketing.
3. Program in advanced marketing management.

3.3 E-Toyota

E-Toyota which is the in-house E-Learning program for Toyota was designed to complement the Toyota academy and allow staff to spend more time ‘on the floor’ selling vehicles and saving costs. It is targeted towards the sales force in order to provide a blended learning experience across product knowledge and marketing. Improvements or developments in the course content are identified by the dealer councils and dealer forums, and then updated by Toyota IT and the platform hosting company Fuelonline. This process is in-line with the five step Dressler (2003) method.

The basic outline of the learning pathway is:

1. Employees complete E-Learning content on a particular product.
2. At the end of this module, there is a test in which an employee must achieve 80% or higher. If not they must redo the module.
3. From here, employees move onto the various other modules within the level.
4. Once the entire module in a level is completed they complete a random assessment of questions in order to progress through to the next level.
5. Currently there are 4 levels for sales employees to complete with an additional level for managers.

4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The objective of this research was to identify the perceived roles that E-Learning has in training sales employees within the South African automotive industry.

In this section, the methodology that was used to conduct this research is outlined. Firstly, the use of qualitative research is discussed and justified as this research report is exploratory in nature (Creswell, 2003). Furthermore, as the research was aimed at a range of perceptions, qualitative methods are particularly well suited to gain a final conclusion of the research question. Secondly, this section then investigates the advantages and disadvantages of the chosen methodology before outlining the population and sampling methods that were used. The actual research instrument that was proposed is then discussed along with the procedure for collecting the data. To identify and anticipate the potential weaknesses in the research, the limitations are stated before a description of the validity and reliability is discussed.

Finally, a brief conclusion summarises the key methodology points from this section.

4.1 Research Methodology

The use of a qualitative research method is particularly well suited to research that is exploratory in nature (Creswell, 2003). The aim of this research was to identify the different roles that E-Learning has on training sales employees within a South African context. Therefore, the phenomenological paradigm (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010) is applicable to this research.

It must be noted here that the adoption of information technologies by individuals and organisations has been an area of substantial research interest since the early days of computerisation, however research efforts to date have led to mixed and inconclusive outcomes (Moore and Benbasat, 1991). This has been due to the lack of a theoretical foundation for such research. Inadequate definition and

measurement of constructs have been identified as major causes of such outcomes. In a study examining the diffusion of new end-user IT, the authors decided to focus on measuring the potential adopters' perceptions of the technology. Measuring such perceptions has been termed a "classic issue" in the innovation diffusion literature, and a key to integrating the various findings of diffusion research (Moore and Benbasat, 1991).

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2010) qualitative research studies typically suit the following purposes:

- To reveal the characteristics or qualities of people, processes, relationships, systems, and even situations.
- To allow the researcher to:
    - Gain new insights in respect of the phenomenon being studied;
    - Develop new concepts about a phenomenon; and/or,
    - Determine the problems that exist within a phenomenon.
- To allow the researcher to test the validity of certain claims, theories or generalisations within a real world context.
- To enable a researcher to evaluate the effectiveness of certain policies, practices or innovations.

However, qualitative research does have some limitations and shortcomings. According to a number of authors, qualitative research has been criticized for the lack in structure, objectivity, its inability to explain cause-and-effect relationships, large sample sizes, numeric data, established guidelines and clear data analysis conventions (Yin, 2009), (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010) & (Bryman and Teevan, 2004).

4.2 Research Design

Qualitative research of this nature was experimental, exploratory and interpretivist. This is due to the required information being based on the interviewer gaining a thorough understanding of the personal experiences of the respondents through an in-depth semi-structured interview. The semi-structured interview enabled the researcher to elicit views and perceptions from respondents that were interviewed (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010). Using a semi-structured approach also contributed to the validity of the interviews as it focused the interview process on the intended topic and thus focussed the interviews in measuring and describing what it was intended to do.

Some further advantages of in-depth semi-structured interviews that made it appropriate for this research include a high level of researcher control (Creswell, 1994) , the researcher had the ability to prompt and probe if necessary (Pirow, 1990) and respondents could provide historical information if necessary (Creswell, 1994).

Disadvantages of the in-depth semi-structured interviews include: information gathered can be skewed because it is seen from the respondents perspective, the interviewer can illicit bias (Creswell, 1994) and the researcher may misinterpret the intended meaning of some responses (O'Sullivan, Rice and Saunders, 1994). In order to overcome these disadvantages research questions were explained if necessary, and responses repeated back to the respondent for confirmation and certain literature was referred to in order to align meanings since the interpretation of E-Learning concepts is known to vary.

The interview process, in this research report, consisted of fifteen interviews with employees at various levels within Toyota S.A. Each face-to-face interview was conducted at the place of work in a private on-site location with the interview being audio recorded and the results partly transcribed for analysis and backup purposes. This enabled the researcher to return to the data at a later stage and review the interviews for greater detail on a specific comment or statement.

This research worked from an interview guide and an introduction and a number of questions were read out to the respondents to ensure consistency. It was understood that the semi-structured interview would provide an opportunity for participants to willingly share their views as to their understanding of the roles of E-Learning in training sales employees.

4.3 Population and sample

4.3.1 *Population*

The population for this research consisted of general sales employees, sales managers and senior managers within the Toyota S.A. There were no limitations as to age, race, gender or educational background. However, it was necessary for the members of the research group to have been employed within the industry for more than one year. This was required in order for the employees to have well developed perceptions of the E-Learning used in sales training within the industry. In terms of differentiating the different positions, sales employees main activities involved all the aspects of vehicle sales including customer relationship and completing financing administration, they were not involved in any management activities. Sales managers were primarily involved with the supervision of sales employees and sales activities whilst the main function of senior managers was the operation of the dealership and the various divisions.

4.3.2 *Sample and sampling method*

Due to the nature of this research, a representative sample of employees from the population was drawn from the organisations various offices around Johannesburg. This convenience sampling was not expected to affect the research data in any way.

As opposed to random sampling, convenience sampling was used as the respondents are people to whom the researcher could gain access. Therefore the

sampling was based on the convenience of access for the researcher (Creswell, 2003)

The following table outlines the list of potential respondents

Table 7: List of potential respondents

Description of respondent type	Number to be sampled
Senior Manager	3
Sales Manager	4
Sales employee	8

4.4 The Research Instrument

The research instrument used was a face-to-face semi-structured interview with the researcher working from an interview guide which consisted of open ended questions. These questions were asked in a structured manner but at the same time allowed for the respondent to have a significant amount of flexibility in their response (Creswell, 2003). The nature of this type of interview allowed for probing and a discussion of each question (Walker, 1985).

The interview questions are listed in Appendix A and were intended to extract the facts and perceptions from the respondent who was required to analyse and solve the research problem. The interviews commenced with a formal introduction of the researcher and a brief background into the research and the objective. A number of introductory background questions were asked in order to serve as an introduction to the interview and help the respondents to feel at ease. These introductory questions were based on the respondent's role, tenure and the context of the organisation they worked for, but the introductory questions did not form part of the actual data that was analysed as part of the research. From this point on the semi-structured interview commenced. A few specific probe questions, where deemed appropriate, were employed by the researcher in instances when the researcher wished to gain a deeper understanding of a certain

perspective of the respondent; or in instances when the respondent did not provide sufficient information on a certain perspective.

4.5 Procedure for Data Collection

The researcher contacted a senior manager at Toyota S.A. directly by telephone informing him of the research and enquiring if Toyota would allow the employees to partake in the interviews. At this time, the researcher informed the manager of the purpose of the study, the subjects to be covered and the research process, including the expected duration of the interviews. As a further measure, the researcher also asked if electronic correspondence detailing an outline of the research and its objectives could be sent to the potential respondents for attention and acceptance.

Upon acceptance or refusal from the respondents, either verbally or electronically, electronic correspondence was sent thanking the respondents for their reply. In instances where respondents agreed to partake in the interview, the correspondence also thanked the respondents for their willingness to participate in the study and confirmed the place, date and time of the interview. Each respondent was offered a copy of the research report, which provided an incentive for participating in the research. Importantly, respondents were also offered the opportunity to confirm their willingness for their responses to remain anonymous and confidential.

The semi-structured interview process took place at the various dealerships. This was the most convenient arrangement for the respondent and the familiarity of the location also made the respondent feel more at ease in talking to the researcher. This also aimed to lessen the disturbance created by the interview during the course of working hours. Upon the consent of the individual respondents, each interview was recorded; notwithstanding the potential risk of respondents' becoming alarmed or self-conscious at the prospect of being recorded (Bryman and Teevan, 2004). In addition, handwritten notes were taken during the interview. Upon returning from the interview, the researcher listened to the recording and

filled in any gaps in the written notes. The actual interview was not transcribed. The interview recordings are not appended to the current research report, but are safely stored as a reference should there be a need to refer to them in the future.

The researcher was aware that by his very presence, the responses provided may in some way already be altered to the exact response the respondent wished to provide (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010). Therefore, the researcher made every effort not to lead the respondents in their responses during the interview, and also facilitated an open discussion around the research questions.

4.6 Data Analysis and Interpretation

The conclusions of this research were not predetermined and neither was a hypothesis developed prior to the completion of the study. Therefore the approach to the data analysis followed an inductive approach as opposed to a deductive one (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). Essentially the categories for the data were not predetermined, but materialised from the data set. One of the preferred methods to achieve this inductive analysis of the data was to use 'the constant comparative method' as referred to by (Maykut, Maykut, Morehouse and Morehouse, 1994).

Using this method of data analysis involved a simultaneous comparison of all fifteen interview transcripts from which the raw data was collected for this study. Added to this is the process of inductive category coding which took place as all fifteen transcripts are analysed (Saunders et al., 2009). This means that as themes and ideas emerge, they are categorised into units of meaning and compared to other units of meaning. Initially this was done using coloured highlighters and pens to colour code themes and units of meaning. These units of meaning can then be refined and developed, allowing the researcher to explore and discover relationships and patterns that appear. In this way, a better understanding and new insights were gained into the perception of the roles of E-Learning.

This content analysis is a detailed examination of data in a systematic way so as to identify patterns, perceptions and themes (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010). Therefore, the data analysis technique that was employed is themed content analysis. Thematic analysis closely resembles content analysis in that the researcher looked for and identified common and recurring themes in the data (Burns, Godlonton and Keswell, 2010).

In this instance, content analysis was conducted on the information (interview data) gathered during the in-depth semi-structured interviews. The interview recordings were reviewed and form the basis of the information from which the analysis is conducted. This was done by using coloured pens to identify and colour code the central themes that stared to emerge from the data. Once this initial analysis was completed, the data analysis was further refined by tabulating the central themes. Therefore by using tables, the key factors and/or themes from the interviews were identified. These can be viewed in chapter 5.5.

The data from all the interviews could then be integrated and synthesised into one document in the form of a table, and the frequency of each specific factor and/or theme indicated on that same table. Unusual responses, which had significantly differing views, could then be specifically noted by using a different colour dot on the tables.

This process demonstrated common themes and factors identified across all respondents, and enable the researcher to interpret the results in such a way as to develop a deep and clear understanding of the issues. No other quantitative analysis or statistical technique was used or conducted on the results.

Throughout the data analysis and interpretation process, the researcher undertook to critically review the results with due reference to the literature.

4.7 Limitations

The research conducted faced a number of limitations. These included:

1. The research was exploratory in nature and only a limited number of respondents were interviewed from one company.

2. The respondents, who agreed to be interviewed, may have been different from those who were not available or not prepared to be interviewed.

3. The nature of the questions dealing with the training of employees speaks to the skill, ability to learn and perception of the individual which may have skewed the respondent's answers.

4. Single researcher bias. The methodology could be limited by the researcher's abilities and his integrity and sensitivity. The results may therefore be open to misinterpretation, whether intended or accidental (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010). However, the researcher undertook to adopt strict procedures and a standard protocol in order to minimise and overcome this limitation, and

5. The fact that only a Johannesburg based organisation was approached may affect the results as other automotive companies are based in other locations in South Africa.

4.8 Validity and Reliability

The quality of research, that is to say the ability of the research to stand up to outside scrutiny and the extent to which the research can be relied upon is largely dependent on the reliability and validity of the research (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe 1994 cited by Bush 2002).

Validity refers to the ability of the research to accurately describe that which it is intended to describe (Bush, 2002). Specifically in this research report, it is whether

the semi- structured interview schedule measured what it was intended to measure (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010).

Reliability, on the other hand, refers to the extent to which a measurement procedure provides the same answer whenever and however it is conducted (Bush, 2002). Reliability also refers to the consistency of the results being repeated over a period of time and the accuracy with which they are repeated (Joppe, 2000). These two tools can be thought of as a way of assessing the quality of the research (Golafshani, 2003).

All research needs to install measures that scrutinise the worth of the research being conducted. For this reason the concepts of validity and reliability have been established to provide creditworthiness. Validity determines whether the research does indeed measure what it has been deployed to do so (Joppe, 2000).

4.8.1 *External validity*

> *"External validity of a research study is the extent to which its results apply to situations beyond the study itself"* (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010, pp 99)

As the research conducted encompasses responses from a limited number of respondents who are not randomly selected, it is not possible to generalise findings; but it may be that the findings from the research will be of value and applicable to other organisations in South Africa.

4.8.2 *Internal validity*

> *"Internal validity of a research study is the extent to which its design and the data it yields allow the researcher to draw accurate conclusions about cause and effect and other relationships within the data"* (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010, pp 97).

In order to enhance internal validity and ensure that the findings of the research are congruent with reality, each respondent was provided with a summary of the findings and invited to comment on them. Also, respected academics with

background knowledge of the topic were approached and asked to comment on the summary findings.

Further to this, the data will only be valid, provided the interview is conducted in a manner where the respondent is not influenced or led in any direction by the researcher, and is free to provide and make comments as he/she wishes. It is for this reason that the interview was conducted at the premises of the respondent. It was also the duty of the researcher to be objective in the analysis of the data, and in the interview technique. The objective was for the researcher to conduct the interview in a neutral manner and not to lead the respondent to answer in a specific manner.

4.8.3 *Reliability*

Reliability refers to the probability that a research procedure or method would produce the same or similar results if repeated (Bush, 2002). Therefore, it is the ability of a measurement instrument to provide a consistent answer whenever and however research is conducted. Reliability is thus the extent to which there is confidence that replication of a research process will be consistent (Bush, 2002).

It is acknowledged that a highly structured research method can improve the reliability of the research. A semi-structured interview can thus compromise the reliability of the research because it favours flexibility and the interviewer may not follow the exact structure for every interview (Bush, 2002). The researcher therefore may probe or prompt respondents differently and so reliability can be diminished (Bush, 2002).

Nevertheless, semi-structured interviews are rooted in the interpretative paradigm and it is almost certain that no two interviews will have exactly the same results (Bush, 2002). The distinctive human nature of the interview is a crucial factor in formulating an understanding of perceptions, feelings and attitudes. Therefore this flexibility is vital in ensuring the validity of the research. So, in conducting qualitative research there is often a tension between reliability and validity, but what it loses in reliability it can gain in validity (Bush, 2002).

To ensure acceptable levels of reliability of the research, all interviews were conducted in person and only by the researcher himself. The researcher did attempt to maintain consistency by employing the same interview structure and interview questions, by working from the interview schedule. Therefore, the reliability of the research can be achieved, although only to a limited extent, through the consistent and systematic actions of the researcher. The researcher thus attempted to ensure that the data was as reliable as possible by operating in a methodical and unbiased manner.

5 PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

The presentation of results chapter and the discussion of results chapter have been combined into one in order to avoid repetition.

This chapter presents the results of the findings from the semi-structured interviews and furthermore provides a discussion of the results and the research questions. The main objective is to present and identify the roles of E-Learning in training sales employees and managers compared to literature outlined in Chapter 2. The section concludes with other information and interesting comments that emerged from the interview process.

5.2 The Interview Questionnaire

In order to answer the research questions, the interview questions originated from the literature review. First of all, background information was required in order to establish if the respondents met the criteria to partake in the research. This provided information such as employment time with Toyota and employment time within the automotive industry; it also provided additional information on the amount and type of training respondents were involved in or have been involved in. Furthermore, these background questions were used to put the respondents at ease, and help engage with the respondents to prevent simple answers and at the same time engage in conversation.

The seventeen primary questions were designed around information gathered on training, development, technology and E-Learning. The initial questions were used to determine respondent's perception on using technology and E-Learning whilst also gathering further thoughts on their own training. This led into the discussion surrounding E-Learning, its use in their role as sales employees, the benefits and challenges of E-Learning and finally their perceived role of E-Learning in their own training.

5.3 Demographic Profile of Respondents

From the research plan, a total of fifteen interviews were conducted across four dealerships in the Johannesburg region. A list of potential respondents being employed in different job roles and from different dealerships was provided by Toyota. From this list, all potential respondents from each chosen dealership were contacted for interviews. The dealerships selected were chosen not because of location but due to the response rate and availability of the employees for interviews. The respondents were then accepted based on the required number per job function for the research, and each of the respondents had the necessary industry and Toyota experience. Therefore the perception and opinions of E-Learning were relevant to this research.

The fifteen interviews were conducted according to the following interview schedule in Table 8. The names of the respondents have been kept confidential on their request and can be made available with their permission. Also, it is important to note that as this research depended on industry knowledge and E-Learning experience; age, race, gender and educational background were not taken into consideration.

Table 8: Schedule of interviews conducted

Number	Date	Dealership	Respondent Position
1	02-Jun-12	Halfway Toyota Honeydew	Sales Employee
2	02-Jun-12	Halfway Toyota Honeydew	Sales Employee
3	09-Jun-12	McCarthy Toyota Woodmead	Sales Employee
4	09-Jun-12	McCarthy Toyota Woodmead	Sales Manager
5	09-Jun-12	McCarthy Toyota Woodmead	Sales Employee
6	16-Jun-12	Halfway Toyota Fourways	Sales Employee
7	16-Jun-12	Halfway Toyota Fourways	Sales Employee
8	16-Jun-12	Halfway Toyota Fourways	Sales Employee
9	16-Jun-12	Halfway Toyota Fourways	Sales Employee
10	23-Jun-12	Rivonia Toyota	Sales Manager
11	06-Jul-12	Halfway Toyota Fourways	Senior Manager
12	06-Jul-12	Halfway Toyota Fourways	Sales Manager
13	06-Jul-12	Halfway Toyota Fourways	Sales Manager
14	11-Jul-12	Halfway Toyota Fourways	Senior Manager
15	3-Aug-12	Rivonia Toyota	Senior Manager

Potential respondents were initially contacted via email in order to ascertain their willingness to be interviewed (Refer Appendix B). On acceptance, a time applicable/convenient to them was determined and the interviews took place at respondents' offices at the various dealerships around Johannesburg with interviews being conducted against the research instrument. A sample of the actual research instrument is included in the appendix (Refer Appendix C).

Before each interview was conducted, respondents were asked to confirm their willingness for the interview to be recorded and for anonymity. All digital recordings, interview notes and partial transcripts have been kept in a secure location and can only be made available on request.

5.4 Background information of respondents

In order to confirm validity of the research, background information on each respondent was first gathered. Table 9 below shows each respondent's employment time in the automotive industry, time employed in Toyota and time in their current positions. All of the respondents met the criteria of the research in terms of time employed within industry.

Table 9: Background information of respondents

Number	Respondent position	Time in the automotive industry	Time employed at Toyota (years)	Time in current position (years)
1	Sales Employee	40	13	13
2	Sales Employee	7	7	4
3	Sales Employee	15	5	3
4	Sales Manager	14	14	9
5	Sales Employee	2	2	2
6	Sales Employee	8	3	3
7	Sales Employee	19	6 months	9
8	Sales Employee	7	10 months	10 months
9	Sales Employee	4	9 months	9 months
10	Sales Manager	11	11	5
11	Senior Manager	29	1	2 months
12	Sales Manager	24	12	12
13	Sales Manager	11	11	6 months
14	Senior Manager	43	43	10
15	Senior Manager	32	32	6 months

From this information, it was determined that the average time employees had been involved in the industry was 16.7 years, the time employed at Toyota 8.8 years and the time in their current position 4.85 years (Table 9). All the sales managers and senior managers had spent considerable time in the industry and within Toyota.

Also, it was established that all the respondents had been exposed to both E-Toyota and the Toyota Academy. However, some were still in the initial stages of training (Level 1) whilst others had completed all possible levels and were involved in other types of training, predominately training of staff through role playing and mentoring (Table 10).

Table 10: Training information of respondents

Number	Training status	Training given	Types of training
1	Level 4	None	Products, company information, market information
2	Level 3, extensive amount of training	None	Lectures, assignments, academy, tests
3	On-going	None	E-Toyota & Academy
4	Quite a bit	Role playing	E-Toyota & Academy
5	Almost completed Level 3	None	E-Toyota & Academy
6	12 courses last year	None	E-Toyota & Academy
7	Almost Level 3, 5 courses per year	None	E-Toyota & Academy
8	Level 1	None	E-Toyota & Academy
9	Level 1	None	E-Toyota & Academy
10	Completed all modules	Team building	Networking
11	5-10 days per year	Every day-permanent coaching	Seminars, conferences, nothing on E-Toyota
12	Master sales manager. 3 times per month	Questionnaire test on products	Personal, marketing, products
13	Completed all modules	None	Physical sales based training, internal mentorship
14	None	None	Reading,
15	New modules	None	Coaching

5.5 Results pertaining to the Background Information on E-Learning

Once the interviews were transcribed the data was analysed using the constant comparative method (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994) and the roles identified (Saunders et al. 2009; Burns, 2000). These roles were first identified by using coloured highlighters and pens to underline and highlight the themes as they arose in the transcripts. Once this initial analysis of the raw data was completed, the relevant themes were then transferred into a table format. Thus references to specific roles were plotted on that table so that the key themes could be mapped

out in relation to the interviews. This was indicated as a dot in the relevant cell of the interview summary tables. Some of the respondents did not agree with particular roles or ideas from the literature. Therefore, it was necessary to indicate these opposing views by using a red dot to indicate a negative response and a green dot for a positive response. An orange dot indicates a positive response from other questions in the interview.

The first summary table (Table 11) refers to the background questions of employees views on E-Learning. The second (Table 12) and third (Table 13) tables refers to the benefits and challenges perceived by Toyota employees and managers in using E-Learning. Tables 14 and 15 summarise the roles identified in the literature review (second column) as compared to sales employees and manager's perception. The last table, Table 16 shows other roles that were identified during the interviews.

Table 11: Toyota employee and manager views on E-Learning

Employee perception on E-Learning	Respondents															
Interview question	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**	**13**	**14**	**15**	**Total**
Do you know how E-Learning is used in training?	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	15
Can you state some of types of E-Learning?	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	3
How have you adapted to these?	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	15
How easy do you think E-Learning is to use and why?	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	15
How confident are you in using E-Learning?	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	15
How do you perceive the quality of the training that you have received through E-Learning?	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	15
Can you explain if this meets the requirements of skills required in the automotive industry?	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	15
How does E-Learning allow you to become more engaged in your work?	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	13
What have been your thoughts on seeing others using E-Learning to develop their skills?	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	14
How does E-Learning allow you to become more flexible in your current role?	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	11
In what areas has your E-Learning experience benefitted you	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	15
How would you describe the effectiveness of E-Learning in your current role?	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	15
Would you say that E-Learning is directly related to employee, customer, and owner/shareholder satisfaction?	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	15

Positive referral to question ● Positive referral answered in another question ● Negative referral to question ●

The table above summarises the respondent's views on E-Learning. For almost all questions employees and managers referred positively to the questions. Most notable negative responses were surrounding the different types of E-Learning where very few respondents could identify the mediums. Two employees indicated that E-Learning did not allow them to become more engaged in their work and another referred negatively to seeing others using this training method. With regards to flexibility 4 respondents were of the opinion that E-Learning does not allow them to become more flexible in their current role.

Table 12: Perceived benefits of E-Learning in training Toyota sales employees

Benefits of adopting E-Learning		Respondents															
Benefit	**Author**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**	**13**	**14**	**15**	**Total**
Allowed learners to proactively engage in learning tasks	Tse-Kian, 2003	🟡	🟢										🟡				3
It consistently works at the learner's pace	Owolabi, 2009								🟢								1
Content can be delivered across multiple locations irrespective of geographic restrictions	Welsh et al., 2003	🟢															1
E-Learning transfers more control to learners to make decisions about what and how to learn	Aguinis and Kraiger, 2009									🟡	🟢						2
Training can be delivered to many employees quickly	Welsh et al., 2003										🟢			🟡			2
It increases learner flexibility	Welsh et al., 2003	🔴	🟢	🔴	🔴	🔴	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	11
Manages growth in the amount of information employees need to learn	Welsh et al., 2003																
Leaner activity can be tracked and monitored	Welsh et al., 2003	🟢												🟢		🟢	3
Reduces travel, time off job and off-site training costs	Welsh et al., 2003			🟡							🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	7
Promotes greater understanding of other cultures especially through video-conferencing	Simmons and Markwell, 2001																
Whist it encourages diversity, it paradoxically creates programmes that are more specifically tailored to the market needs than traditionally validated programmes	Forman et al., 2002																
It is self-paced. Most E-Learning programs can be taken at a learner's convenience	Forman et al., 2002	🟡	🟡	🟡			🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢	🟢					🟡	9
It provides a consistent message. E-Learning eliminates the problems associated with different instructors teaching slightly different material on the same subject	Forman et al., 2002																
It can be updated easily and quickly	Forman et al., 2002			🟢						🟢		🟢					3
It can lead to increased retention and a stronger grasp on the subject as many elements in E-Learning can be combined to reinforce the message	Forman et al., 2002																
It can be easily managed for large groups of students	Authoring, 2002																

Positive referral to question 🟢 Positive referral answered in another question 🟡 Negative referral to question 🔴

The table above summarises the respondent's views on the benefits of E-Learning. Eleven respondents indicated the main benefit to be increased leaner flexibility, nine identified that it increased leaner convenience and seven thought that E-Learning reduced travel time and costs. Other noted benefits were allowing for proactive learning, E-Learning can be tracked and monitored and it can be updated easily. A few respondents mentioned the time it takes to deliver training and transfers control to the learner.

Table 13: Perceived challenges of E-Learning in training Toyota sales employees

Challenges of adopting E-Learning		Respondents															
Challenge	**Author**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**	**13**	**14**	**15**	**Total**
Basic literacy especially computer literacy	Oppenheimer, 1997				●												1
Time constraints increase pressure on employees to perform their daily activities	Kennedy, 2009	●			●	●		●			●			●		●	7
The negative social impact	Simmons and Markwell, 2001											●					1
Computers in particular only engage two senses	Oppenheimer, 1997																
Lack sufficient infrastructure to communicate E-Learning possibilities	Oppenheimer, 1997	●				●		●				●					4
High up-front investment costs	Welsh et al., 2003																
Significant effort and planning with applicable implementation	Welsh et al., 2003																
Required time to prepare users for training	Welsh et al., 2003																
The instructor has to make sure that the materials being used in the online course equals the quality of traditional methods and that this has been adapted to the online course	Álvarez-Trujillo, 2008											●					1
The student's equipment needs to meet the technological requirements of the training otherwise they will not be able to work efficiently	Álvarez-Trujillo, 2008	●					●	●		●	●					●	6
By not completing the courses time, money and effort are wasted.	Educause, 2003																
Many employers don't realistically allow enough time to learn and review E-Learning content	Educause, 2003							●			●			●		●	4
Some E-Learning modules provide cursory information and not the required in-depth information that one can gain from instructor led training	Educause, 2003								●			●					2
Lack of assistance before, during and after E-Learning training can provide a negative experience	Educause, 2003																
A lack of motivation and confidence to learn online content can negate the intended advantages	Educause, 2003		●	●													2
Distractions can cause the learner to find it very difficult to focus on learning	USPCpro, 2010										●	●		●			3

Positive referral to question ● Positive referral answered in another question ● Negative referral to question ●

The table above summarises the respondent's views on the challenges of E-Learning. Seven respondents agreed that E-Learning increased pressure to perform daily activities, six that equipment must meet the technological requirements, four had the view that employees don't allow for enough time and also a lack of sufficient infrastructure. Other views revolved around the lack of depth of material, a lack of motivation and confidence, and distractions.

Table 14: Perceived sales employee role of E-Learning in training Toyota sales employees

Sales employees perceived role of E-Learning in training sales employees		Respondents								
Role	**Author**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**Total**
To increase self-motivation and lessen dependency on formal environments	Welsh, Wanberg, Brown and Simmering, 2003									
Enable employees/ scholars to take control of their own learning	Mcgrath, 2012									
Reach out to otherwise untouched regions	Welsh et al., 2003	🟡								1
Deliver more accurate content via multiple mediums	Kulasekara, Jayatilleke and Coomaraswamy, 2011									
Constructive as opposed to passive knowledge acquisition	Nanjappa and Grant, 2003									
Provide a richer and more exciting (entertaining) learning environment	Nanjappa and Grant, 2003									
Provide a platform for shared space and focussed deliverables	Peter, 2008									
Helps to share the cognition in the community of learning	Doak, 2009									
Acts as a catalyst for education diversity	Forman, Nyatanga and Rich, 2002									
Encourages freedom to learn	Forman et al., 2002									
Provides equal learning opportunity	Forman et al., 2002	🟡								1
Participants can choose programs that are useful to their work and helpful for their career advancement.	Chang, 2003									
All E-learning related events at a particular online net-work become centralised, which integrates staff training, executive education, knowledge management and research together	Chang, 2003									
Improve the knowledge and skills of office-workers	Chang, 2003	🟢		🟡		🟢		🟢		4

Positive referral to question 🟢 Positive referral answered in another question 🟡 Negative referral to question 🔴

The table above summarises employee's perceived role of E-Learning. There were very few responses which could be linked to the literature; however the most commonly noted that E-Learning improved the knowledge and skills of employees. Two employees also made reference to E-Learning being able to reach untouched regions and it also provided an equal learning opportunity.

Table 15: Perceived manager role of E-Learning in training Toyota sales employees

Managers perceived role of E-Learning in training sales employees		Respondents							
Role	**Author**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**Total**
To increase self-motivation and lessen dependency on formal environments	Welsh, Wanberg, Brown and Simmering, 2003								
Enable employees/ scholars to take control of their own learning	Mcgrath, 2012						🟡		1
Reach out to otherwise untouched regions	Welsh et al., 2003							🟡	1
Deliver more accurate content via multiple mediums	Kulasekara, Jayatilleke and Coomaraswamy, 2011								
Constructive as opposed to passive knowledge acquisition	Nanjappa and Grant, 2003								
Provide a richer and more exciting (entertaining) learning environment	Nanjappa and Grant, 2003								
Provide a platform for shared space and focussed deliverables	Peter, 2008								
Helps to share the cognition in the community of learning	Doak, 2009								
Acts as a catalyst for education diversity	Forman, Nyatanga and Rich, 2002								
Encourages freedom to learn	Forman et al., 2002						🟡		1
Provides equal learning opportunity	Forman et al., 2002								
Participants can choose programs that are useful to their work and helpful for their career advancement.	Chang, 2003								
All E-learning related events at a particular online net-work become centralised, which integrates staff training, executive education, knowledge management and research together	Chang, 2003								
Improve the knowledge and skills of office-workers	Chang, 2003	🟡			🟢		🟡		3

Positive referral to question 🟢 Positive referral answered in another question 🟡 Negative referral to question 🔴

The table above summarises manager's perceived role of E-Learning. Again there were few responses which could be linked to literature. Three managers stated that the role was to increase the knowledge and skills of employees, whilst other identified roles were to enable employees to take control of their learning; it encouraged freedom to learn and E-Learning being able to reach untouched regions.

Table 16: Other identified roles of E-Learning in training Toyota sales employees

Other identified roles of E-Learning	Respondents															
Role	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**	**13**	**14**	**15**	**Total**
It keeps people informed	●	●														2
Provides guidance in the sales industry				●			●									2
It can empower staff (confidence)	●				●	●				●				●		5
Build trust								●			●					2
To have information available immediately												●				1
Save time and cost						●					●	●		●	●	5
Reach more people quicker															●	1
Stabilise the learning pathway							●		●							2
Convenience						●		●	●	●				●		5
Caters for different peoples needs	●														●	2
Equip sales staff to be sales professionals			●	●	●					●						4
To provide better training in combination with traditional methods	●								●		●			●		4

Positive referral to question ● Positive referral answered in another question ● Negative referral to question ●

The table above summarises the other identified role of E-Learning that was not identified in the literature. There were five positive views that E-Learning saves time and cost, empowered staff and increased leaner convenience. Four references were made to E-Learning equipping sales staff to be sales professionals and also to provide better training in combination with traditional methods. Other identified roles included keeping people informed, providing guidance in the sales industry, building trust, stabilising the learning pathway and catering for different people's needs.

5.6 Analysis of Results pertaining to the Perceived Role of E-Learning in training sales employees

This section covers an in-depth review of the results from the interviews. It begins with the back ground information and then continues onto the benefits and challenges that employee's face in using E-Learning and then the effectiveness of E-Learning for employees and managers. Finally, the identified roles are discussed.

5.6.1 *Employee opinions on E-Learning*

a. *E-Learning and training*

The first question asked during the interview process was to establish if respondents knew how E-Learning was used in training. All employees had a positive response to this which furthers the validity of the research. Also all employees pointed out that they had experience in using E-Toyota. However, in the second part of the question, only three were aware of the different types/mediums of E-Learning but when some were mentioned the respondents realised that they in fact knew many of the different mediums. Most did consider CD's, I-Pads, teleconferencing and on-line video as other forms of E-Learning and hence knew how these could be used in training.

b. *Ease of use and confidence*

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) attempts to identify the causal relationship between beliefs, attitudes, intentions to use a system and the final usage behaviour (Davis et al., 1989). The two beliefs of perceived usefulness and ease of use are the second step in further understanding employees final use of the E-Learning system. From the interviews it was determined that all the respondents thought that E-Learning was easy to use. The majority were of the opinion that the ease of use of the system made the task of learning easier. The clear layout of the learning pathway and the step-by-step instruction was most commonly noted. Also, the accessibility in terms of having the modules available

at ones desk made the learning easier. Having the ability to learn in one's own time gave the impression that this learner-centred method was easy to use. One respondent mentioned that they were "getting something out" of completing the learning i.e. the perceived usefulness of E-Toyota enhanced their job performance and can essentially be linked to the final usage.

All employees had the view that they were confident in using E-Learning as a training method. The one point mentioned which would change their confidence level was the content of the modules. If the content was incorrect or not all information fused into the modules, then this would negatively affect the user's confidence.

c. *Adapting to E-Learning mediums*

In order for E-Learning to generate positive results in training employees, employees must be able to adapt to using the technology, and then to the transfer of knowledge via an alternate medium. This is again covered in the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). All the respondents stated that they found it easy to adapt to E-Toyota, this was due to the ease of use of the system, and the conveniently provided detailed information.

However there were some constraints. Two of the respondents expressed the concern that technological issues did make E-Learning difficult to use at times but they easily adapted to the system. This was in reference to system downtime and unsuitable infrastructure. Another two employees emphasised that they required discipline in order to learn the system and to take control of their learning. A different employee mentioned that his adaption was depended on the quality of the material. Also, if the content was monotonous they found it difficult to complete the modules. Furthermore, a lack of computer literacy was referred to by an employee as a deterrent to adapting to the system.

d. *Use and value of training*

As explored in the literature review, training and development is at the heart of any organisation that pursues persistent growth and improvement. Respondents were asked in which areas they regarded training to be useful and valuable to their career development. There were three main areas which were identified.

Firstly, three employees thought that training helped them with product knowledge (declarative knowledge) in particular the knowledge with regard to vehicle models and modernisations to previous models. This gave them the necessary information in order for them to better present products to customers and have the ability to answer queries regarding vehicle models. Furthermore, training kept them up-to-date with industry trends, legislation, news and developments, and enabled them to brush up on the basics of product knowledge.

Secondly, three employees also felt that training was valuable in giving them the confidence in their ability to sell vehicles. This was primarily due to product knowledge but also because it taught them how to establish themselves as a sales person (procedural knowledge); how to relate to customers; and how to better negotiate customers and finalise transactions.

Thirdly, in line with Toyota's emphasis of lifetime learning, three respondents were in agreement that they were never too old to learn. This mentality allowed them to brush up on fundamentals and the basics and be more informed on the dealership floor

As mentioned in the case site, Toyota's training provides the opportunity for gaining qualifications through UNISA. One employee identified this as the value of training as it allowed him to gain another qualification that was not specific to Toyota and this would aid in a career change, if necessary.

Another interesting point that was raised was that E-Learning enabled employees to set goals, be more motivated and see oneself through a customer's eyes. This is a good example of self-awareness.

Finally, a manager acknowledged that training was important as it exposes employees to the body of knowledge in the industry. This was particularly important as this knowledge is neglected within the retail industry in South Africa (interview 11). Furthermore, the training that employees received gave them the flexibility to manage the front line in the dealerships and simultaneously enabled them to keep up customer contact.

In terms of measuring reaction according to the Kirkpatrick (1975) model, all employees identified that training was important in their career development and that they had a positive response to E-Learning. Also, in comparing responses to Knowles (1984) theory on andragogy, most employees have various degree of experience (number of years in the industry and having worked in a variety of roles). They integrate learning into their lives although this is generally influenced by Toyota, and motivated by internal drives. These maybe to succeed at their sales roles, increase declarative knowledge or advance their career path.

e. *Perceived quality of E-Learning*

In order for E-Learning to be successful, the course quality is the most important concern in the learning environment Sun et al (2008) and hence it was appropriate to gauge employees perception of quality in their own E-Learning experience.

All respondents expressed the same positive response to the quality of training that they encountered through E-Learning. Two employees mentioned that the quality was of a very high standard and measured up to some of the top standards in the industry. Six respondents indicated that the training was very informative and that they could not recommend many changes. An employee stated that the quality actually enabled them to be proactive in learning as they did not have an excuse not to use the system, whilst another found the video training better quality than static training. Also, one of the managers identified that through experimenting with the E-Learning systems over the years; the quality has evolved and is now at a stage that enables him to complete his learning. Prior systems had faults in terms of content, usability and technological issues which diminished his experience. Another manager found that the quality of the material

and the review questions really focussed on what was important and the instant feedback on results was crucial for them to understand their progress. In general he stated that E-Toyota was relevant, appropriate and clear in communicating the correct messages.

On the downside, one employee found that the some of the modules were longwinded and too repetitive whilst another one stated that video quality did not enhance the intention of E-Learning and he would prefer not to have to sit and watch them. It was also noted that some of the modules needed to be more in-depth in terms of content; this would improve the quality of the modules.

f. *E-Learning and skills requirements*

All respondents had positive responses as to whether E-Toyota meets the requirements of the skills desired in the automotive industry. As one employee stated, the system caters for all different employees' needs; this can be an experienced employee or a new start, a sales person or a manager. Furthermore, four candidates stated that the system makes sense; it is practical and meets not only their expectations but also the customer's expectations in terms of what they required from the sales staff. It enabled them to learn basic skills and most importantly, essential closing skills. A manger highlighted that the skills taught equips the sales team to be sales professionals which is critical in working in the automotive sales industry.

However, two employees expressed their concerns that it does not and will not be able to teach them all the required skills. This was particularly relevant to the soft skills of selling vehicles, customer engagement and negotiations. These would be better instructed via role play and seminars, yet E-Toyota did provide them with some of the knowledge in these areas. Also, a manager was of the opinion that E-Learning is making a contribution to employees training but it's not the exclusive medium. This was due to skills like passion and enthusiasm being an individual characteristic and these were more difficult to teach and were essentially "part of who a person is" (interview 11). He further stated that E-Learning is only part of the bouquet in learning but it still plays an important role. He felt that it still has a

long way to go but it has already made significant progress from the original systems. The one area of concern

g. *E-Learning and engagement*

Fourteen of the respondents found that E-Learning allowed them to be more engaged in their work. Romer (1986) stated in his research that the process of being engaged in an activity generates learning effects and this allows those who are engaged in those tasks to become more efficient at performing them. Therefore, by being engaged, these respondents are enabling themselves to be more proficient in their roles.

The sales employees emphasised that the system allowed them to do training at work and in their own time. This allowed them to brush up on skills and refresh knowledge. Also, it allowed them to plan better, monitor their own progress and strengthen their customer interaction. Two employees felt that the system was a good starting point in terms of their own learning, and gave them the direction required to progress their careers. Furthermore, an employee was of the opinion that by being engaged in the learning, they became more passionate in their daily activities and this could be sensed by customer reaction.

From a manager's perspective, engagement was crucial in order for work to be completed. By being engaged they acknowledged that the employees had more confidence through the use of gained knowledge, and by attending the refresher courses they identified that employees had renewed energy in the dealerships (interview 13). This also allowed employees to come to terms with the fundamentals of sales and deepen their understanding of product knowledge and customer interaction. An interesting point raised by a manager was that they became more engaged with employees as they could measure each individual's progress on the system and provide necessary support when required.

h. *E-Learning and fellow employees*

From the TAM theory, the value of the perception of seeing others use the E-Learning has an impact on their own usage (Davis et al., 1989). From the interviews, there were thirteen positive and two negative responses. A manger commented that seeing others use the system made him question why employees weren't phoning customers or spending time on the dealership floor. He felt that they could be better utilising that time to sell more vehicles but he did see the value in learning.

The other point which was raised (and was noted in multiple interviews) was people bypassing the system or gaining assistance from others to complete the modules. Many emphasized that it was too easy for an employee to start the training, leave his desk and then return to complete the review questions. One particular employee thought that this was a disadvantage as they followed protocol and completed the training in their own time, whilst others could essentially cheat the system. This unfortunate mentality casts a shadow on the attitude towards usage and could establish the incorrect learning methodology.

For the remainder of the respondents, seeing fellow employees use E-Learning served as a reminder to complete their own training and also embodied the "we are a team "Simaye" mentality by seeing others trying to improve their skills. Other comments revolved around employees all working to the same standard whereby everyone was given an equal opportunity to learn and develop themselves. In general, the value of seeing others learning made employees: feel proud, encouraged, realise time-saving benefits, and have a sense of accomplishment. From this is can be deduced that seeing others complete their E-Learning had a positive effect on attitude and behaviour.

i. *E-Learning and flexibility*

Flexibility is an important factor in E-Learning satisfaction. In this question, flexibility refers to employees having more time to concentrate on other aspects of their roles including financial management and general administration. By having

the modules available and not having to attend off-site training, it was envisaged by Toyota that employees would have more flexibility in their daily activities.

Four of the nine sales employees had the general view that E-Learning did not allow more flexibility in their work. This was due to the limited selling time they had during each month and hence less time available for learning during a normal working day. They felt that instead of having more time available, they had less but by having a more positive attitude and approach- they were better able to manage time. One employee identified flexibility as being completely dependent on the individual in terms of progression in the E-Learning modules (modules completed versus modules to be completed), the level of computer literacy, the product knowledge and attitude towards learning.

The remaining sales employees shared the same thoughts that flexibility enabled them to better manage their career path and enhanced their confidence in being able to learn. Most of all, the flexibility revolved around time management where employees could learn in their own time and not have customers perceive them as being out the office. One employee was of the opinion that E-Learning allowed instant feedback and hence self-correction, thus avoiding the need for a teacher.

The majority of the managers were in agreement that flexibility had other benefits including cost and time saving. Employees no longer had to be offsite for days at a time attending workshops or seminars, instead employees had the ability to learn at work and still be available to sell vehicles. An interesting point which was raised was that one particular manager found that E-Learning has changed his management style and responsibilities. He was now able to better track employees' development, provide more informative feedback and give support where necessary. This was established from a monitoring perspective.

Interestingly, one manager found the delivery of content/ knowledge to be more flexible. Employees were given the opportunity as when to initiate and when to terminate their own learning. He further expressed that E-Learning creates an opportunity to understand what is meaningful and receive instant feedback. Also,

another manager noted that E-Learning has given his employees the ability to balance instruction, formalised learning, and execution.

j. *E-Learning and the effects on instructor relationships*

This question was posed to gauge employee's thoughts on the value of on-line training and the relationship which has changed from a teacher- learner to a computer- learner.

The majority of the employees thought that face-to-face interaction with a teacher or mentor was still crucial in their training and this aligns with the role that extrinsic motivation plays in learning. This interaction enhanced their memory of the particular course due to the style of teaching provided on the various courses at the Academy. Also, face-to-face teaching further encouraged participation especially with regards to asking questions and learning from others. Employees thought that they would gain more information from live interaction as they could rely on the teacher's knowledge base. Further to this, most employees thought that there is a balance between E-Learning courses and normal courses, where E-Learning is self-teaching and where one does not have a teacher but a sales person has a manager to help.

Two interesting points were mentioned with regard to the changing role of the teacher. Two managers stated that the teacher's role has now changed to more of a mentorship role and this has also been transferred into the workplace where managers now support and control the learning of employees by giving them the time and ability to learn for themselves.

k. *E-Learning and employee benefit*

In order for employees to define the role of E-Learning, questions were posed to stimulate thoughts around their view of E-Learning benefits. All respondents answered with a positive reaction and there were several themes which emerged. Firstly, five employees had the view that E-Learning had enhanced their general sales skills and this was through increased product and general knowledge, confidence, drive and keeping them up to date with developments in the industry.

Secondly, following on from the theme of time management and flexibility, three employees were of the opinion that they had benefited from being able to do more with the little time they had during working hours as E-Learning modules were readily available. Also, the learning could be completed at their own pace which helped those who were slower at capturing the ideas presented in the tutorials. Only one employee mentioned that the major benefit would be furthering their career development, assuming that that the content was applicable.

In terms of the manager's thoughts, two respondents pointed out that the major benefit revolved around saving time for employees and then savings costs for the dealerships. One identified the major benefits realised as better staff interaction, mentoring and counselling as employees were able to support each other. Another stated that the benefit was being able to extract information, see changes and make adjustments in the company to keep up with changing boundaries.

Interestingly, none of the respondents expressed ideas around benefits of E-Learning outside the area of employment or career development.

l. *E-Learning and satisfaction*

Learner satisfaction has several critical factors which determine their final view on E-Learning. These included perceived usefulness and flexibility to name but two. In terms of satisfaction, E-Learning was related to the employee satisfaction. This was noted due to the tools available to help employees in their career path and the immediate access to knowledge. However, two employees did state that the satisfaction of employees is related to the sales person's knowledge, skills and ability to use the information to increase vehicle sales and not directly to E-Learning. Another one expressed the view that only the sales employees would be satisfied and another only the dealership.

Most employees further acknowledged that their satisfaction led to the satisfaction of the customers. Customers were satisfied by the level of service they received, the attention that was paid to their needs (due to the knowledge on the variety of vehicles that they were interested in) and after sales service.

This in turn led to the dealership being satisfied as in this environment a satisfied customer meant that sales increased as did after sales care. One employee made reference to satisfaction having a “snowball” effect through the different levels of the organisation.

In general these responses concur with Garcia’s (2005) study that training programs oriented toward human capital development were directly related to employee, customer, and owner/shareholder satisfaction.

m. *E-Learning and traditional learning comparison*

The aim of this question was to gain an understanding of employees and managers thoughts on their preferred training mediums. The general consensus was that E-Learning had its position in teaching product knowledge, but role plays and courses offered aided the development of soft skills and character development.

Employees felt that E-Learning enhanced their ability to work on-site and not lose any sales opportunities. In addition they could refresh their knowledge at any time. Interestingly, one employee mentioned that he experienced less pressure learning at his desk as compared to a classroom setting.

However, even though the product knowledge can be taught via E-Learning two employees emphasised that they still needed to physically see what they were learning about. This was particularly relevant to a product launch whereby employees were allowed to spend time examining the product. This further enabled them to have a point of view on the product when talking to a customer.

With regards to seminars, role playing and coaching, three employees were of the same opinion that these took too much time and were repetitive. Yet, the positives of face-to-face interaction with other people including senior staff enabled them to not only practice some of their skills but also learn about business relationships, body language and the physiological side of selling vehicles.

The conclusion from this was that the correct combination of E-Learning and teacher centred learning needs to be balanced in order to maximise an employee's learning potential.

5.6.2 *Benefits of E-Learning*

Through the literature there were several E-Learning benefits that were identified. Many of these were not specific to sales employees but to all learners, however several were mentioned by the respondents.

The most commonly identified benefit was that E-Learning allowed employees the flexibility of when to conduct their own training. Added to this benefit, most of the respondents were in agreement that E-Learning allowed them to engage in training at their own convenience and at their own pace. Nine employees felt that this was an advantage to them as it allowed them to concentrate on customers when necessary and not spend time away from the dealership. This leads onto the third most common response, time and cost. Six out of the seven managers pointed out that E-Learning saved costs by having employees at the dealerships instead of being involved at off-site training. This also helped ensure that the sales targets could be met by ensuring employees focussed on more customer interaction. Furthermore, the managers thought that E-Learning saved travel time and time away from the dealership which again allows for more sales opportunities.

Other common themes were:

1. **Allowing learners to proactively engage in their learning tasks**.
2. **Learner activity can be tracked and monitored.** Managers could trace employee progress and intervene when progress was slow or if support was required.
3. **The E-Learning content could be updated easily and quickly.** Should there be any developments in terms of content e.g. product upgrades, this information could be conveyed in a short time span by means of an adjustment to the system.

Some of the interesting points raised by respondents include the fact that they have unlimited access to E-Learning content; could conduct refresher courses/training when necessary; and that the content was available immediately. One employee, who had been with Toyota for a short period, stated that E-Learning allowed him the opportunity to adapt to the Toyota operating model and helped him become more engaged with other employees. Another had the view that with the different levels, E-Learning helped to distinguish between sales employees. This was in relation to the fact that there was only one level of sales employees and the only way to differentiate between employees currently was on vehicles sold on a monthly basis. Two employees found that E-Learning gave them more confidence in their ability to communicate with customers due to increased product knowledge. From a manger's perspective, E-Learning also provided the dealership with a tool to measure and motivate, and to stabilise the learning pathway. Not only could they keep up to date with who had completed training but it allowed them access to see where employees were struggling and then provide additional support and motivation.

5.6.3 *Challenges of E-Learning*

As with any training and technology there are challenges which users must overcome in order to gain the greatest benefit from the training (Kriemadis and Kourtesopoulou, 2008). E-Learning is no exception and employees found as many challenges as advantages in using this method of knowledge transfer.

The most common challenge that employees and managers identified in adopting this method of training was time constraints. In a normal working day, employees were required to complete other duties besides sales and added to that is the pressure of walk in customers. Many employees expressed concerns regarding being interrupted during learning or having to start work early or finish late in order to actively participate in their E-Learning. Employees also found that technology hampered their use of the system. This was stated by six employees who emphasised that the technological equipment didn't always meet the needs required by the system. Some examples noted were computers with no speakers

and substandard graphics cards. This created a deterrent for them to begin a module as they felt they didn't have the correct tools to benefit from E-Learning. Following on to this point was the lack of sufficient infrastructure to communicate training. Employees referred to system downtime, slow connectivity, power outages and in some cases storage space. Two managers and two employees felt that employers did not always allow for enough time for training during normal working hours. Employers were trying to maximise productivity and sales whilst at the same time push employees to complete training as required by Toyota.

Other common themes were:

1. **Lack of depth in the content provided.** Two employees who had sufficient time in the industry noted the content could be improved as their knowledge was greater that which was being taught. Also, E-Learning did not provide the benefit of enquiring about content or asking for clarification as one can do with traditional courses. An employee even stated that the courses became monotonous and that not everyone responds well to written word as they require interaction with an instructor.
2. **Lack of motivation and confidence**. Two employees stated that you had to be motivated to learn and if you did not have confidence then the combination of these two would negate the intended effects of E-Learning. This is in agreement with Alverez's (2004) statement linking the effectiveness of training and motivation.
3. **Distractions.** Numerous employees alluded to the fact that there were intermittent disruptions especially during peak periods and this did not allow them to concentrate or complete modules.

Another interesting point raised was that with a lack of interaction in E-Learning, users quickly forgot (short term retention) the content as they could not identify with material as easily as compared to a traditional methods. Also, speaking about content, again it was mentioned that not all information can be instilled by E-Learning; this employee was referring to the soft skills of customer engagement.

Throughout the interviews several employees mentioned that the system could be cheated. This theme again arose in the question regarding challenges as employees could easily conduct other tasks whilst completing modules or even have someone else complete the training for them. The major concern from a mangers point of view was that knowledge was not transferred to the employee correctly or at all. Also, employees completed modules too quickly thus not allowing for the absorption of information or the necessary time to apply what they had learnt on the selling floor.

Interestingly, two of the managers agreed that the content was not available for afterhours use. They stated that this could be more beneficial to them as they could learn in their own time and in an environment which is more comfortable (e.g. home) and which potentially has fewer distractions. Further to this, this afterhour access allows the employees the comfort of not necessarily sitting at their desks in order to complete modules.

5.6.4 *Effectiveness of E-Learning*

All the employees and managers were in agreement that the effectiveness of the E-Learning system was on a par with what is required. The comments rallied around the system being to the point and equipping employees to better deal with fellow employees and customers. A manger stated that by having to pass modules, E-Toyota is effective and this further enables the dealership to measure and motivate employees to move them onto the next module.

Even though the respondents were positive, some negative comments were noted. One employee thought that the system is too limited in terms of its content and scope whilst another thought that it is an individual's choice as to how and when to use the system. This would then influence the effectiveness if they were not proactive and willing to learn. Also, two employees acknowledged that by reanalysing content and the manner in which material was presented (video clips), the system could be more effective. One particular manger's perception was that it was too easy for employees to become disengaged during the learning and suggested that a training room be set up in which to complete E-Learning

modules. This would ‘force’ employees to correctly utilise the system and allow them to be free of distractions.

5.6.5 *Research question 1*

Research question 1: How do sales employees perceive the roles of E-Learning in their training within the automotive industry in South Africa?

The aim of the study was to identify how sales employees perceive the roles of E-Learning in their training within the automotive industry in South Africa? Throughout the interviews the employees outlined several key roles; however these were not always in line with the literature.

From the fourteen roles noted in the literature, employees only identified three roles. Firstly, four respondents made reference to E-Learning improving the knowledge and skills of office workers. Secondly, one employee mentioned that E-Learning provided an equal learning opportunity across the sales team and lastly, an employee made reference to E-Learning being able to reach out to untouched areas.

However, there were several other roles identified by the sales employees. Three identified the role as to empower employees through increased confidence and another three as to create convenience to learn. E-Learning also stabilised the learning pathway, kept employees informed and equipped them to be better sales professionals. Other roles identified on a once off basis were:

1. Provide guidance in the sales industry,
2. Build trust,
3. Save time and cost,
4. Cater for different employees requirements, and
5. To provide better training in combination with traditional methods.

5.6.6 *Research question 2*

Research question 2: How do managers perceive the roles of E-Learning in training sales employees within the automotive industry in South Africa?

Similarly, the aim of the study was to identify how sales employees perceive the roles of E-Learning in their training within the automotive industry in South Africa?

Managers' responses did not strongly correlate with the literature. As with employees, the managers identified E-Learning to improve the knowledge and skills of office workers as a primary role. Other noted results included that E-Learning enabled employees to take control of their own learning; encourages the freedom to learn and to reach untouched regions.

Nevertheless, managers did recognise the other roles of E-Learning. The most common was that E-Toyota realised time and cost savings for the dealerships and equipped sales employees to be better sales persons. Furthermore, managers perceived the role to E-Learning to be:

1. Provide guidance in the sales industry,
2. Build trust,
3. Have information available immediately,
4. Reach more people quicker,
5. Convenience,
6. Cater for different employees requirements, and
7. To provide better training in combination with traditional methods.

6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This research attempted to identify the different possible roles and effectiveness that E-Learning has on training sales employees in South African automotive companies.

Fifteen interviews were conducted amongst a representative sample of sales employees, sales managers and senior managers in order to gain insight into their perceived ideas on E-Learning. The data collected from the interviews formed the basis from which the final identified role was established.

6.2 Conclusions

This study attempted to identify the different possible roles, as acknowledged through the literature review, and the effectiveness that E-Learning has on training sales employees in South African automotive industry. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, focusing on Toyota SA and dealerships in the Johannesburg area. From the data analysed it was clear that many employees had similar points of views on the different fundamentals of training and specifically in relation to E-Learning. Furthermore, the views elicited from the respondents can be connected to the associated literature review.

The advancement of technology has allowed different forms of training to shape the future of adult learning. When one analyses the learner or the teacher centred approach, it is clear that there have been significant improvements in the delivery and transfer of knowledge and skills in the employment arena. However, for companies or employees, their growth and success still depends on adapting and embracing new learning techniques by pushing the technological boundaries. This is required to improve performance, productivity and overall company financial success. Through the interview process it was established that all employees and managers have adapted to the E-Learning technology.

Toyota's emphasis on continued improvement and lifelong learning can be linked to their current training methodology. Employees stated that training was valuable and useful in their career development with most highlighting an increase in confidence and product knowledge as their primary rationale. Toyota uses E-Learning to teach hard skills and knowledge, and the Toyota Academy is used to aid soft skill development, in utilising a combination of learning which is best suited to training their employees. These not only meet the expectations of the employees but also relate to increased customer and dealership satisfaction. Nevertheless, some employees were still of the opinion that teacher-centred learning was applicable to their development and hence the correct combination of E-Learning and traditional learning needs to be balanced in order to maximise an employee's learning potential.

Many of the employees had extensive experience in the automotive industry and other had less experience, this follows Knowles second assumption and further to this all the employees integrate learning into their everyday life. From an employee's perception, it was found that all employees were aware as to how E-Learning was applicable in their training however few realised the variety of the different training mediums. This did not have an effect on the results as respondents had experience with using and applying what was taught via the current system. Also, all employees and managers were of the opinion that E-Learning at Toyota was easy to use, useful and that they were confident in this technology as a training medium. This established that the employees had a positive attitude towards E-Learning; were engaged in their training; and their training has influenced their behaviour. This leads to the conclusion that they have the intention to continue to use E-Learning as it is perceived to be easy to use and is perceived to be useful in the training program. Essentially, their opinions follow the positive pathway in the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis et al., 1989).

The process of learning by acquiring knowledge and skills through E-Learning has enabled both employees and managers to become more effective and efficient in their roles. The quality of content and medium was established as important factors in the transfer of knowledge and the vast majority of respondents viewed

the quality of E-Toyota in a positive light. This was attributed to the high standard of information being presented. It was interesting to note that by observing others completing their modules served as a reminder for employees to attend to their own training and provided further motivation *as* "a lack of motivation and confidence to learn online content can negate the intended advantages" (Educause, 2003).

Employees found that the E-Learning was effective. This can be related to on-site job training and hence alignment that on-the-job training has the highest effectiveness (Shepherd and Ridnour, 1995). Similarly, employees also mentioned the effectiveness of role playing and seminars which further correlates with the literature. However, their responses did not agree with the ineffectiveness of self-study. Although not answered directly, many employees were of the opinion that the effectiveness of their training is linked to the combination of E-Learning and the Toyota academy. In comparing the Toyota's training methodology and employees comments to Alverez's (2004) set of four factors influencing motivation and hence effectiveness, it can be concluded that E-Toyota and the employees characteristics allow for effective training.

The overall opinion from the employees is that E-Learning has many benefits in developing them as sales professionals although there are some challenges, nevertheless the identified advantages way outweigh the negatives. Primarily, E-Learning allowed respondents to take control of their training, learn at their own pace and offer the flexibility as to when they completed modules during working hours. From a managerial perspective, the main advantages attributed to E-Learning were time and costs savings. This was related to having employees on-site. Contrary to allowing employees flexibility, the most commonly identified challenge to adapting to E-Learning was time constraints. Distractions such as from walk-in customers and fellow employees increased the pressure on training and respondents emphasised the lack of time to complete daily/ weekly activities. Technological issues were also identified as a possible challenge. Employees stated that in order to complete training the infrastructure and equipment had to

enhance their ability to learn. Reference was specifically made to system downtime and inadequate computer equipment.

In line with measuring results, it was also determined that through committing to E-Learning, employees reflected on their learning experience, learned from the different modules and then experimented with the knowledge they had gained. Essentially their self-directed learning engaged all four of Kolb's (1984) modes which is ideal in the learning process. Further to this, learners develop strengths towards some of the approaches and ultimately combined these to complete their learning activity. These approaches were not investigated as this fell outside of the scope of the research.

The literature surrounding the role of E-Learning predominately focuses on this medium of teaching and is not industry specific. From the interviews only one role could be correctly associated with prior research: that E-Learning improves the knowledge and skills of office workers. From an employee perspective, other roles included increasing confidence and convenience. Managers viewed time and costs savings as the predominant role. However, through the combination of employee and managers perspectives it was established that the role of E-Learning in training sales employees was to increase knowledge and skills of employees. From a South African perspective this is relevant to the vehicle industry in three aspects.

1. The content of training modules in the vehicle industry,
2. The delivery method of training in relation to the content, and
3. The required skills to be taught.

6.3 Recommendations

Learning forms a critical part in adult development and this impacts an employee's ability to perform their role. Through this research it was established that Toyota employees and managers view E-Learning to be useful in their career development. It provides them with the benefit of knowledge, confidence, motivation and flexibility which enables them to be productive and perform better

at their roles. Nevertheless, there were several areas of concerns for employees regarding the use of E-Learning. From this research into the perceived role and effectiveness of E-Learning at Toyota, five clear areas have been identified within which improvements can be made.

Dishonesty in terms of who completed the modules and if employees completed the modules as prescribed was recognised as a deterrent to E-Learning and also as a demotivating factor. The different shortcuts mentioned during the interview process go against the aims that Toyota has in terms of their training and also the transfer of knowledge. From this it can be recommended that Toyota forms an 'honour code' around training and links each individual's progress to their performance management and Key Performance Indicators (KPI's). The aim of this is twofold:

1. Primarily to give employees a sense that it is worth being genuine about learning, and to create further buy-in to E-Learning and thereby enhance the Toyota culture.
2. Secondly, by linking development to performance, it is envisaged that this should provide further motivation for employees to transfer knowledge into sales and hence performance.

From an operational point of view, there are several methods which should be implemented to prevent deceitful learning. Firstly the E-Learning system should be set up to recognise when an employee is completing a module but not at their workstation. This can be achieved by implementing random pop up questions or determining that the computer becomes inactive during the learning period. Any outliers that are flagged can then be enquired about in a performance review. Alternatively, short written questions should be included into modules and these verified against answers from other employees.

Although E-Learning was intended to provide flexibility, distractions during working hours were noted as a challenge for employees. It is recommended that Toyota looks at the possibility of training rooms at the dealerships. These would contain the best available technology to enhance the learning experience whilst at the

same time confront another mentioned challenge, namely technology issues. Dedicated learning workstations and computer infrastructure can be installed. Furthermore, by setting up allowable training sessions when dealerships are not demanding of time i.e. opening hours or a rotational learning timetable, employees will still be given the benefit of convenient and distraction free learning. Other advantages of this recommendation would be that managers could easily monitor training and they could provide additional individual support in a more comfortable environment and negate the possibility of dishonest learning.

It was established that E-Learning was effective; however, employees and managers were of the view that this medium of training is not exclusive. Teacher-centred learning was pointed out as having significant benefits for soft skill development, Toyota should further investigate the applicable combination of both learning mediums to maximise the overall learning benefits for employees. Included in this should be more individualised learning modules to cater for the different strengths and weaknesses of employees and address the difference in education levels and in employee industry experience. In terms of further support from the Academy, an employee did make reference to the fact that E-Learning has refresher courses. However, there is no follow up from trainers. A recommendation is made to include Academy content into E-Learning modules or even include dealership visits from the trainers.

Although employees identified some of the benefits of E-Learning as flexibility, convenience and taking control of their own learning, time constraints and disruptions featured as challenges. Therefore it is recommended that Toyota further investigates alternative methods of providing employees access to on-line training. This can be in the form of Kindles or iPads (tablet technology for portable learning) which would allow employees to further appreciate the benefits outside of normal working hours. It is understood that the material and modules are considered as intellectual property however providing employees with the necessary tools must still be considered. This would also further allow them to appreciate other forms of E-Learning and enable them to incorporate this into their daily lives and keep up with technological progress.

Lastly, it was noted that there was not a formal feedback method for employees to express concerns or provide suggestions regarding their E-Learning experience. Feedback is critical in determining the success of future content, systems upgrades and measuring the results of training. Toyota should therefore further investigate how to include comments and recommendations into the modules. This can be by means of a general employee survey or on-line assessment after the completion of modules.

6.4 Suggestions for further research

E-Learning within Toyota has influenced the manner in which employees view training and has generally been accepted by employees as a way to increase their product knowledge and hence improved sales capability. As this was an exploratory study, there are still many dimensions of E-Learning which can be further probed.

Perceptions of the usefulness and applicability of E-Learning should be further investigated as this would provide supplementary answers to the adoption of this technological system. Research into the Technological Adoption Model within the automotive industry in South Africa would provide more specific conclusions as to the adoption of E-Learning and hence the employees and managers actual usage. The main aim of this would be to identify any gaps in the constructs which prevent the transfer of knowledge.

From the conclusion of this report, employees noted that E-Learning was not the exclusive training medium and this opens up potential research into the correct percentage balance of teacher-centred learning and E-Learning. A study into this combination within the automotive industry and other industries could highlight areas of improvement in order for employees to maximise their learning effectiveness. Further to this, supplementary research should be conducted into the question of a quality, effectiveness and combination of learning medium triangle. This relates to employees responses regarding the combination of E-

Learning and training at the Toyota Academy, and their views on the effectiveness of E-Learning.

Although this research did not focus on adult learning, Research should be conducted as to the influence that E-Learning has on adult learning, particularly with reference to motivation and reflection. Included in this could be an attempt to identify which of Kolb's (1984) four preferences are more applicable in the automotive industry.

It is also noted that this study focused on the automotive industry. However, the study is applicable to many other sales environments including retail and wholesale markets. This creates the opportunity for the study to be expanded into other industries with which these results can be compared.

Finally, the scope of this project was limited to South Africa and to one company within the country. It is recommended that this research be expanded to include other automotive companies in the country so that a comparison between the results can be drawn. Furthermore, the research could be extended to include other areas within Africa. A comparative study conducted in other countries especially Japan and the U.S.A. would further add to the conclusions and recommendation as the different cultures and technologies available could provide different results.

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APPENDIX A

Request letter to company

Dear Mr./Ms._____,

I am an MBA student at Wits Business School and am currently completing my research report in order to fulfil all requirements for the Master's degree.

My research topic is entitled: "The perceived roles of E-Learning in training sales employees in the South African automotive industry." and I kindly ask for your assistance in affording me an opportunity to meet with you and your employees. It is my intention to relate literature to that I have found to a company within the automotive industry in South Africa.

I anticipate requiring less than forty five minutes of each employees time for an interview. The meeting will take the form of a semi-structured interview in which I will ask questions regarding their perceived thoughts on the roles of E-Learning in the training of sales employees.

I will gladly provide you with a copy of my findings upon completion of my research and upon request. Confidentiality will be observed throughout the entire process including the final report which will be for academic purpose only

I thank you in advance and look forward to meeting with you and the other employees

Yours faithfully,

Alasdair Kelly
Tel: XXX –XXX –XXX
E-mail: xxxxxxxx@gmail.com

APPENDIX B

Email to potential respondents

Afternoon XXXXXXX

XXXXXX was kind enough to pass your details onto me.

I am an MBA student at Wits Business School and am currently completing my research report in order to fulfil all requirements for the Master's degree.

My research topic is entitled: "The perceived roles of E-Learning in training sales employees in the South African automotive industry" and I kindly ask for your assistance in affording me an opportunity to meet with you. It is my intention to relate literature to that I have found to the automotive industry in South Africa.

I anticipate requiring less than forty minutes of your time for an interview. The meeting will take the form of a semi-structured interview in which I will ask questions regarding their perceived thoughts on the roles of E-Learning in the training of sales employees.

I will gladly provide you with a copy of my findings upon completion of my research and upon request. Confidentiality will be observed throughout the entire process including the final report which will be for academic purpose only.

Would it be possible for me to meet with you at XXXXX this Saturday at a time applicable to you?

Kind regards

Alasdair Kelly

Tel XXX XXX XXX

APPENDIX C

Interview outline for respondents

Details of the respondent:

Date:

Time:

Respondent name:

Title:

Opening remarks:

Thank the respondent for taking the time to meet and contribute to the research report.

Refer to both the e-mail and follow up telephone conversation requesting the interview and provide general information and background to the research – that this is an exploratory study into the perceived roles E-Learning in the training of sales employees.

Explain to the interviewee that the following will be read out to ensure consistency during the interview process:

Thank you for taking the time to assist me with this research. This interview process will take place in the form of a semi structured interview, which means the interview will be conducted with the researcher working from an interview schedule which will contain a list of questions. Please feel free to express your views on the topics elicited by the questions as it is this data that is of value to my research. I may ask further probing questions, where I wish to gain clarity or gain a deeper understanding of a certain perspective.

For the purposes of my analysis I wish to record the interview which will later be transcribed. The transcriptions will not be attached to the research report. These transcripts will be stored in a safe location and will be deleted six months after the

research report is submitted. Also all references to companies or persons will be kept anonymous. The interview is solely being conducted for the purpose of this current research report. May I have your permission to record the interview?

As this research is exploratory, no literature of further background information will be provided as to not taint your perception.

May we continue with the interview?

Background information:

Ask the respondent some factual data about themselves and their company:

1. For how long have you been employed with the company?
2. What is your current position?
3. For how long have you held your current position?
4. How much training do you receive per year? And how much training do you provide each year?
5. What types of training do you participate in?

Question one:

Do you know how E-Learning is used in training? Can you state some of the different types of E-Learning?

Question two:

How have you adapted to these?

Question three:

How easy do you think E-Learning is to use and why? How confident are you in using E-Learning?

_____

Question four:

In which areas do you regard training to be useful and valuable to your career development?

_____

Question five:

How do you perceive the quality of the training that you have received through E-Learning?

_____

Question six:

Can you explain if this meets the requirements of the skills required in the automotive industry?

_____

Question seven:

How does E-Learning allow you to become more engaged in your work?

_____

Question eight:

What have been your thoughts on seeing others using E-Learning to develop their skills?

_____

Question nine:

How does E-Learning allow you to become more flexible in your current role? And in colleagues current roles?

_____

Question ten:

What do you think the effects are of E-Learning on the relationship between learner and teacher?

_____

Question eleven

In what areas has your E-Learning experience benefitted you?

_____

Question twelve:

How would you describe the effectiveness of E-Learning in your current role?

_____

Question thirteen:

Would you say that E-Learning is directly related to employee, customer, and owner/shareholder satisfaction? Why?

_____

Question fourteen:

What would you describe as the benefits of adopting E-Learning in your current training?

_____

Question fifteen:

What would you describe as the challenges of adopting E-Learning in your current training?

_____

Question sixteen

What training would have preferred to be taught by other methods as compared to E-Learning? Why is that?

_____

Question Seventeen:

Do you have any final thoughts on the role that E-Learning has in training sales employees?

_____

Closing remarks:

Thank the respondent for taking the time to meet with you and offer him/her a copy of the report once it is completed.

_____