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Web Development

WEDE5020

***Table of Contents***

1. ***Organisation Overview***
2. ***Website Goals and Objectives***
3. ***Current Website Analysis***
4. ***Designer and User Experience***
5. ***Technical Requirements***
6. ***TimeLine and Milestones***
7. ***Budgets***
8. ***Sitemap***

***Takealot***

*Takealot was launched in June 2011 after the acquisition of a company called Take2. Founded by Kim Reid and US-based investment firm Tiger Global Management, it grew to become a dominant force in South African e-commerce, merging with competitor Kalahari.com in 2015. Naspers became its majority owner.*

*Takealot's mission statement is "to be the most customer-centric online shopping destination in Africa." The company's vision, which aligns with this mission, is to become a leading, sustainable, and technology-driven e-commerce "African champion." This vision is about dominating the African e-commerce landscape by offering a broad range of products and services, expanding its geographical reach, and setting industry standards.*

***Website Goals and Objectives***

*Takealot's goals and objectives are deeply tied to its mission and vision statements. The overarching goal is to be the leading e-commerce player in Africa by providing a customer-centric and convenient shopping experience.*

*Key goals and objectives include:*

* ***Customer-centricity:*** *A primary goal is to continuously improve the customer experience, from the user interface and product selection to delivery and returns. This involves a focus on providing a seamless and easy shopping journey.*
* ***Market Dominance and Growth:*** *Takealot aims to maintain its position as the largest e-commerce retailer in South Africa and expand its influence across the African continent. This involves increasing its market share and driving overall growth in the e-commerce sector.*
* ***Operational Excellence:*** *The company focuses on optimizing its logistics and fulfilment network to ensure fast and reliable delivery. By owning its logistics arm (Mr D), Takealot seeks to gain a competitive advantage and control the end-to-end customer experience.*
* ***Ecosystem Development:*** *Takealot's strategy involves building a comprehensive e-commerce ecosystem. This includes not just its retail platform but also its delivery services (Mr D) and fashion arm (Superb list), creating a network that supports a variety of consumer needs and provides value to its sellers, suppliers, and partners.*
* ***Empowerment and Community Impact:*** *Takealot has initiatives aimed at supporting local businesses and communities. Programs like the "Takealot Township Initiative" focus on empowering entrepreneurs, creating jobs, and fostering economic growth in underserved areas.*

***Key Performance Indicators***

***Financial KPIs***

*These metrics gauge the company's financial health and profitability, which are crucial for a business that has historically operated at a loss.*

* ***Gross Merchandise Value (GMV):*** *This is the total value of all goods sold through the Takealot platform, including both first-party and third-party sales. It is a key indicator of the company's size and overall market activity.*
* ***Revenue Growth:*** *The percentage increase in revenue over a specific period (e.g., year-on-year). Consistent revenue growth is vital for a growing company, especially in a competitive market.*
* ***Trading Profit/Loss:*** *This measures the company's core operational profitability, excluding one-time items. Takealot's parent company, Naspers, has consistently reported on its efforts to reduce trading losses and move towards profitability, making this a critical KPI.*
* ***Average Order Value (AOV):*** *The average amount spent per order. A higher AOV indicates that customers are buying more expensive items or a greater quantity of products per transaction, which can boost overall revenue.*
* ***Customer Acquisition Cost (CAC):*** *The total cost of acquiring a new customer. By comparing CAC to Customer Lifetime Value (CLV), Takealot can determine the effectiveness of its marketing spend.*

***Operational KPIs***

*These indicators measure the efficiency of the company's core business processes, from logistics to inventory management.*

* ***Order Fulfilments Time:*** *The time it takes from when an order is placed to when it is delivered to the customer. Fast and reliable delivery is a major competitive advantage for Takealot, especially against international competitors like Amazon.*
* ***Inventory Turnover:*** *The rate at which inventory is sold and replaced. A high turnover rate indicates efficient sales and effective inventory management, reducing the risk of holding obsolete stock.*
* ***Third-Party Seller Growth:*** *The number of sellers on the Takealot Marketplace and the percentage of GMV that comes from these sellers. A growing and healthy marketplace ecosystem is a sign of a robust and scalable business model.*
* ***Mr D Performance:*** *As Takealot's in-house logistics arm, the performance of Mr D is a key operational KPI. This includes metrics like delivery efficiency, geographical reach, and profitability of the food and grocery delivery services.*

***Customer-Centric KPIs***

*These metrics focus on customer behaviour, satisfaction, and loyalty, which are fundamental to a company's long-term success.*

* ***Conversion Rate:*** *The percentage of website visitors who complete a desired action, such as making a purchase. This indicates the effectiveness of the website's design, product offerings, and user experience.*
* ***Customer Retention Rate:*** *The percentage of customers who return to make another purchase within a specific period. A high retention rate signals customer loyalty and the success of initiatives like the "Takealot More" subscription service.*
* ***Cart Abandonment Rate:*** *The percentage of customers who add items to their cart but leave before completing the purchase. A high rate suggests issues with the checkout process, shipping costs, or other friction points.*
* ***Customer Satisfaction Score (CSAT) and Net Promoter Score (NPS):*** *These are feedback-based metrics that measure how satisfied customers are with their experience and how likely they are to recommend Takealot to others. They are vital for gauging brand health and service quality.*

***Current Website Analysis***

***Strengths***

1. ***Extensive Product Range and Marketplace:*** *The website's most significant strength is its vast and diverse product catalogue. By operating as a marketplace for third-party sellers, Takealot offers a "shop anything" experience, from electronics and fashion to groceries and pet supplies. This wide selection is a major draw for customers and a significant barrier to entry for competitors.*
2. ***Strong Brand Recognition and Market Dominance:*** *As the leading e-commerce player in South Africa, Takealot has a powerful and trusted brand. This recognition translates to a large, loyal customer base and a default choice for many online shoppers. Its scale and brand value give it a significant competitive advantage.*
3. ***Efficient Logistics and Delivery Network:*** *Takealot has invested heavily in its own logistics infrastructure, including its extensive network of distribution centers and its delivery service, Mr D. This allows for relatively fast and reliable delivery across South Africa, which is a critical factor for customer satisfaction in the local market. The ability to track orders in real-time is also a key feature.*
4. ***User-Friendly Interface and Mobile App:*** *The website and its mobile app are generally praised for being intuitive and easy to navigate. The clean design, clear product listings, and streamlined checkout process contribute to a positive user experience. The app enhances convenience and encourages repeat purchases.*
5. ***Secure and Diverse Payment Options:*** *Takealot offers a variety of payment methods, including credit/debit cards, EFT, and gift vouchers. The security of these payment systems builds customer trust and accommodates a wide range of consumer preferences.*

***Weaknesses***

1. ***Inconsistent Customer Service:*** *This is one of the most frequently cited weaknesses in customer reviews. Issues include long resolution times for queries, difficulty in reaching a human representative, and a convoluted return and refund process. This can lead to significant customer frustration and a damaged reputation.*
2. ***Product Quality and Seller Vetting:*** *As a marketplace, Takealot has less control over the quality of products sold by third-party sellers. This can lead to customers receiving faulty, damaged, or misrepresented items. The review system is also sometimes criticized for being unreliable or manipulated, with some users alleging that negative reviews are removed.*
3. ***Logistical Challenges and Delivery Issues:*** *While the logistics network is a strength, it is not without its flaws. Users often report delayed deliveries, particularly during peak seasons, and inconsistent communication about these delays. The "free delivery" threshold is also a point of contention for many customers, who feel the cost is high or the terms are unfavourable.*
4. ***Profitability Struggles and Pricing:*** *Takealot has historically faced challenges with profitability, which can influence its business decisions. While it is known for aggressive pricing to compete, customers sometimes feel that prices are not as competitive as they could be, especially when compared to international players like Amazon. The removal of free delivery options for smaller orders has also been a major point of negative feedback.*
5. ***Technical Glitches:*** *The website and app, while generally good, can experience technical issues. User reviews mention problems with the shopping cart function, difficulty deleting items, and other minor bugs that can disrupt the shopping experience.*

***Areas of Improvement***

***1. Customer Service and Communication***

***This is arguably the most significant area of complaint. Customers frequently report a lack of direct contact options, such as a phone number or live chat for urgent issues. The reliance on a help centre and email forms can lead to:***

* ***Delayed Responses: Customers feel their queries are "stuck in a nowhere land" of emails, with little to no progress or updates.***
* ***Lack of Accountability: Users report that customer service agents often provide templated, unhelpful responses and are difficult to escalate issues to a manager.***
* ***Inefficient Problem Resolution: This leads to frustration, especially for critical issues like delayed deliveries, damaged goods, or incorrect items.***

***Improvement Areas:***

* ***Implement a more robust, accessible, and responsive customer support system with multiple channels (phone, live chat).***
* ***Empower customer service agents to resolve issues more effectively and provide clearer, non-templated communication.***
* ***Enhance the tracking system to provide more precise and real-time updates on a package's location and delivery time, moving beyond just "delivered before 5 PM."***

***2. Delivery and Logistics***

***Delivery-related issues are a common source of negative feedback. These problems often stem from a lack of coordination and transparency in the logistics chain.***

* ***Unreliable Delivery Times: Customers complain about paying for "next-day delivery" only to receive their order a week later, with no satisfactory explanation.***
* ***Inventory Discrepancies: Orders are placed for items listed as "in stock," but are later found to be unavailable, causing delays or cancellations. This suggests a potential issue with real-time inventory management, especially with third-party sellers.***
* ***Poor Handling of Packages: There are reports of packages being mishandled or left unattended, leading to security and damage concerns.***

***Improvement Areas:***

* ***Streamline the logistics process to ensure delivery promises are consistently met.***
* ***Improve the accuracy of inventory information, particularly for products from marketplace sellers, to avoid order cancellations and delays.***
* ***Provide more granular tracking information so customers know exactly where their package is and when they can expect it.***

***3. Product Authenticity and Quality Control***

***The "marketplace" model, which allows third-party sellers, has introduced concerns about product quality and authenticity.***

* ***Counterfeit and Subpar Products: Some customers have reported receiving counterfeit goods (e.g., fake electronics) or cheaply made, low-quality items from third-party vendors.***
* ***Damaged or Used Goods: There are instances of customers receiving products that are damaged or have been previously opened.***

***Improvement Areas:***

* ***Implement stricter vetting processes for third-party sellers to ensure the quality and authenticity of their products.***
* ***Create a more transparent system for customers to identify whether a product is sold by Takealot directly or by a third-party seller.***
* ***Establish and enforce clearer quality control standards for all items sold on the platform.***

***4. Website Usability and Transparency***

***While the website is generally functional, there are specific areas where transparency and user experience could be enhanced.***

* ***Review System Integrity: Users have reported that negative reviews are sometimes deleted or rejected for reasons that seem unfair (e.g., mentioning a delivery issue). This can lead to a misleading representation of a product's true quality and performance.***
* ***Complex Refund and Return Policies: Some users find the refund process to be difficult and convoluted, with policies that seem to protect the company more than the consumer.***
* ***Account Credit vs. Cash Refunds: Customers often receive account credit for canceled orders, which can be inconvenient and force them to make another purchase to use the funds.***

***Improvement Areas:***

* ***Ensure the review moderation process is transparent and fair, allowing for honest feedback about both products and service.***
* ***Simplify the returns and refund policy, making it easier for customers to understand and complete.***
* ***Offer cash refunds as the default option for cancellations or returns, rather than account credit.***

***By addressing these core issues, Takealot could significantly improve customer satisfaction, build greater trust, and enhance its overall reputation as South Africa's leading e-commerce platform.***

***Designer and User Experience***

***Colour Scheme***

* ***Primary Colours:*** *The dominant colours on the Takealot website are* ***blue*** *and* ***orange****. This is a classic e-commerce combination that is both visually appealing and strategically effective.*
  + ***Blue:*** *The primary colour, often a deep, professional blue, is used for the brand logo, navigation menus, and key information elements. In user experience design, blue is associated with* ***trust, reliability, and security****. This is particularly important for an online shopping platform where users need to feel confident that their transactions and personal data are safe.*
  + ***Orange:*** *The contrasting colour, a vibrant and energetic orange, is used for calls-to-action (CTAs) such as "Add to Cart," "Buy Now," and promotional banners. Orange is a high-visibility colour that grabs attention and creates a sense of* ***urgency and excitement****. It effectively guides the user's eye to the most important interactive elements, encouraging them to make a purchase.*
* ***Neutral Palette:*** *The background is predominantly* ***white****, with shades of* ***grey*** *used for product borders, text, and other non-critical elements. This neutral palette ensures that the products themselves stand out and that the key brand colours of blue and orange are impactful. A clean, uncluttered background reduces visual noise and makes the user's journey more focused.*

***Layout Design***

* ***Grid-Based and Structured:*** *The website's layout is highly structured and uses a consistent grid system. This ensures a predictable and organized presentation of products, categories, and information. The use of a grid is essential for a website with a vast product catalogue, as it prevents the page from feeling chaotic and overwhelming.*
* ***Homepage Design:*** *The homepage is a masterclass in e-commerce layout, designed to quickly funnel users to their desired destination.*
  + ***Above the Fold:*** *The top section features a prominent search bar, the main navigation menu, and a carousel for highlighting current promotions and best-sellers. This allows users to either search directly for an item or be enticed by a deal.*
  + ***Product Categorization:*** *The mid-section often uses large, eye-catching blocks to showcase popular categories or seasonal items, effectively acting as a visual directory.*
  + ***Discovery Sections:*** *Further down the page, there are sections for "Daily Deals," "Trending Items," and personalized recommendations ("Your Picks"). This serves to guide and inspire users, increasing the likelihood of an impulse purchase.*
* ***Product Page Layout:*** *Product pages are designed for a quick and informed decision. Key elements are strategically placed:*
  + ***Large Product Images:*** *Prominently featured on the left, with an option to zoom or view a gallery.*
  + ***Key Information:*** *Price, title, and "Add to Cart" button are placed on the right, ensuring they are always in view and easily accessible.*
  + ***Detailed Information:*** *Below the fold, sections are logically organized with tabs for product details, specifications, customer reviews, and Q&A. This makes it easy for users to find the information they need without a lot of scrolling.*

***Typography***

* ***Readability and Clarity:*** *Takealot's typography is chosen for maximum readability and a modern, clean aesthetic. They typically use a sans-serif font family (such as a variant of Arial, Helvetica, or a custom font) throughout the site. Sans-serif fonts are generally considered easier to read on digital screens, especially in large blocks of text and for product descriptions.*
* ***Hierarchical Structure:*** *The use of different font sizes, weights (bold, regular), and colours creates a clear visual hierarchy.*
  + ***Headlines and Product Names:*** *Use larger, bolder fonts to immediately grab the user's attention.*
  + ***Body Text:*** *A smaller, lighter font is used for product descriptions and other long-form content to ensure it is legible without dominating the page.*
  + ***Pricing:*** *The pricing is often displayed in a bold, prominent font, sometimes with a strike-through for the original price, making the discount immediately clear.*

***Overall User Experience (UX)***

*The combination of these design elements results in a user experience that is:*

* ***Efficient:*** *The intuitive layout and prominent CTAs make it easy for users to find, select, and purchase products with minimal clicks.*
* ***Trustworthy:*** *The professional blue colour, clear layout, and well-organized information build confidence in the brand.*
* ***Scalable:*** *The modular, grid-based layout is highly effective for a platform that constantly adds new products and categories. It ensures consistency and a predictable experience regardless of the page a user is on.*
* ***Optimized for Conversion:*** *Every design choice, from the placement of the "Add to Cart" button to the use of promotional banners, is geared towards moving the user through the sales funnel and converting them into a paying customer.*

***Technical Requirements***

*Identify hosting and domain name requirements and programming languages and frameworks (e.g., HTML, CSS, JavaScript).*

* *Hosting and Domain Name Requirements:*
  + *Domain Name: The domain name for Takealot is a core part of its brand identity: takealot.com. The domain name is simple, memorable, and directly relates to the company's offering ("take a lot" of products).*
  + *Hosting: A large e-commerce platform like Takealot requires robust and highly scalable hosting. It cannot be hosted on a basic shared hosting plan. The hosting solution would need to handle massive amounts of traffic, a large database of products and user data, and secure transactions. It would likely use a cloud-based infrastructure, such as Amazon Web Services (AWS) or Google Cloud, with load balancing, content delivery networks (CDNs), and multiple servers to ensure high availability and fast loading times, especially during peak sales periods like Black Friday. This type of hosting is essential for managing a high-volume, global-scale operation.*
* *Programming Languages and Frameworks:*
  + *Front-End (User Interface): The user-facing part of the website would be built using standard web technologies to ensure it's accessible across all browsers and devices. These include:*
    - *HTML: The foundational language for structuring the content of the website.*
    - *CSS: Used for styling the website's layout, colours, and typography to match the brand aesthetic. Modern frameworks like Sass or Less might be used to manage the vast amount of styling.*
    - *JavaScript: The core language for creating interactive elements, dynamic content (like search suggestions), and a smooth user experience. It would likely use a modern front-end framework or library such as React.js, Vue.js, or Angular, which are well-suited for building complex, single-page applications.*
  + *Back-End (Server-side Logic): This is the "engine" of the website that handles all the data, user accounts, and business logic. It's not publicly visible but is crucial for functionality.*
    - *Programming Languages: A large-scale e-commerce platform could use various languages depending on the specific services. Common choices for high-performance systems include Java, Python, C#, or Go. These languages are known for their scalability and performance, which are critical for handling transactions and database queries.*
    - *Database: A robust database system is needed to manage a massive catalogue of products, user profiles, orders, and payment information. This would likely be a combination of relational databases like PostgreSQL or MySQL for structured data and NoSQL databases like MongoDB for flexible data storage.*
    - *Frameworks: Back-end frameworks would be used to speed up development and provide a structured environment. Examples include Node.js with Express.js (if JavaScript is used on the back end), Django or Flask (Python), or Spring (Java).*

***7. Timeline and Milestones***

*Create a realistic project timeline with key milestones that follow the timeline during the subject's submission dates.*

*This is a conceptual timeline based on a realistic academic project, not a real-world multi-million rand development. It breaks down the work into manageable phases.*

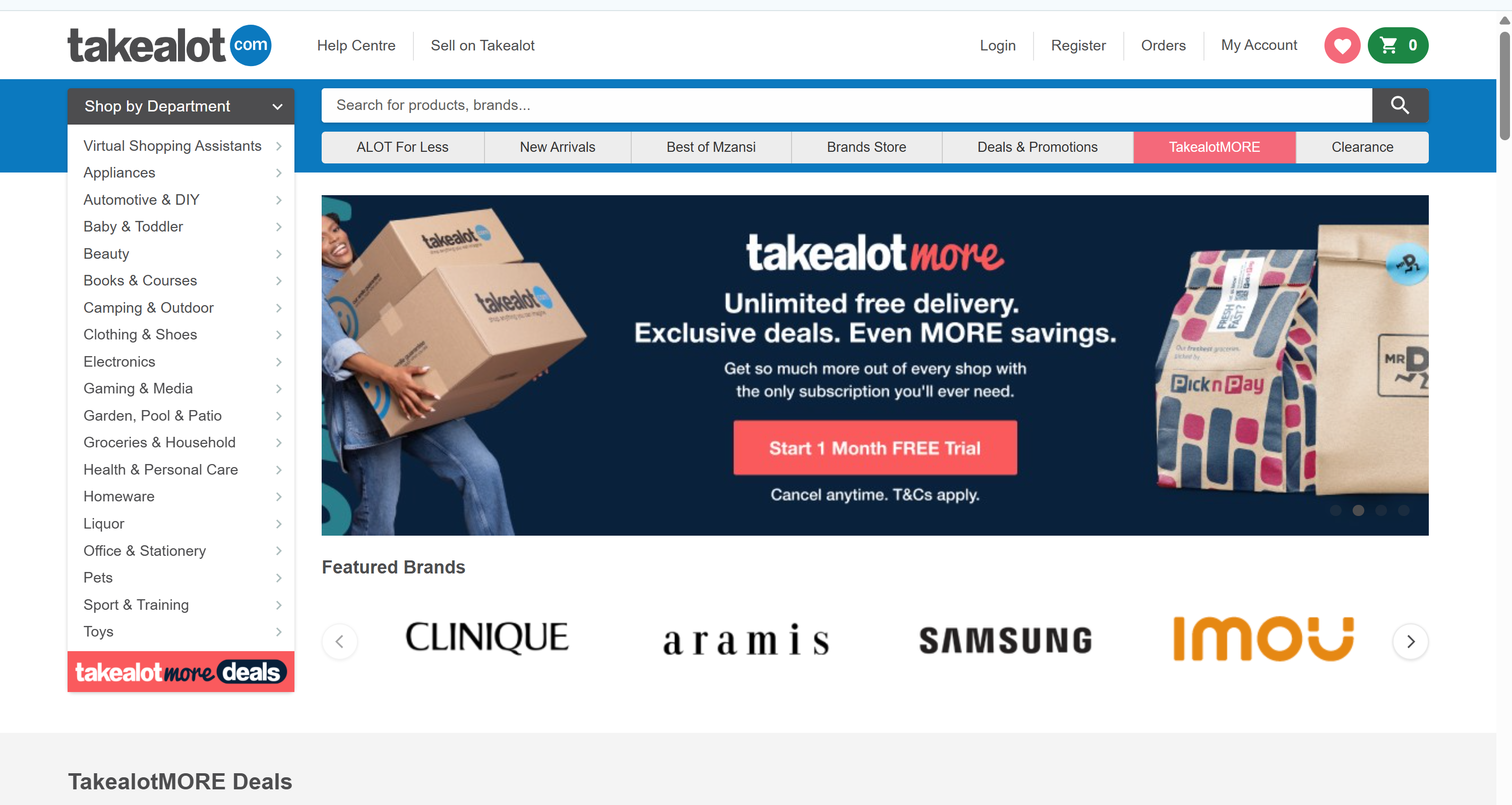
* *Phase 1: Research and Planning (2-3 weeks)*
  + *Week 1: Initial research on e-commerce platforms, competitor analysis (including Takealot). Define project scope.*
  + *Week 2: Create the design brief, including brand identity and user experience considerations.*
  + *Week 3: Finalise the high-level wireframes and information architecture.*
* *Phase 2: Design and Front-End Development (4-5 weeks)*
  + *Week 4: Develop detailed UI mockups and design assets based on the wireframes.*
  + *Week 5-6: Begin front-end development, building out the HTML and CSS for the key pages (homepage, product page, cart, checkout).*
  + *Week 7-8: Implement JavaScript for interactivity, dynamic content, and user interface animations. Integrate all front-end assets.*
* *Phase 3: Back-End Development (4-5 weeks)*
  + *Week 9: Set up the development environment, including the database and server. Plan the API and data models.*
  + *Week 10-12: Build the core back-end functionality: user authentication, product catalogue management, shopping cart logic, and order processing.*
  + *Week 13: Integrate the back end with the front-end, testing all API endpoints.*
* *Phase 4: Testing, Deployment, and Documentation (2-3 weeks)*
  + *Week 14: Comprehensive testing (unit, integration, and user acceptance testing) to find and fix bugs.*
  + *Week 15: Prepare the project for submission. This includes writing final documentation, creating the final project report, and preparing a presentation.*
  + *Submission Date: Final project submission****.***

***8. Budget***

*Estimate the budget for development, hosting, and maintenance (while this is a series of assignments, the budget should reflect realistic amounts based on your research).*

*The budget for a real-world e-commerce website like Takealot would be in the millions, but for a realistic project reflecting development costs in South Africa, we can create a breakdown.*

* *1. Development Costs (One-off): This is the largest expense, accounting for the work of developers, designers, and project managers.*
  + *Web Designer/UI/UX Specialist (50 hours @ R350/hour): R17,500*
  + *Front-End Developer (120 hours @ R400/hour): R48,000*
  + *Back-End Developer (150 hours @ R500/hour): R75,000*
  + *Project Management & QA (30 hours @ R350/hour): R10,500*
  + *Total Development Estimate: R151,000*
* *2. Hosting and Domain (Recurring):*
  + *Domain Name (.com or .co.za): R150 - R250 per year.*
  + *Hosting: This is a significant cost. For a professional e-commerce site, you'd need a dedicated or VPS hosting plan, or a cloud-based solution.*
    - *Initial Setup: R5,000 (one-off) for setting up the cloud infrastructure.*
    - *Monthly Hosting (Scalable Cloud Plan): R2,000 - R5,000 per month, depending on traffic and data usage.*
  + *SSL Certificate: R500 - R1,500 per year (basic SSL is often free with modern hosting).*
* *3. Maintenance and Support (Recurring): This is an ongoing cost for bug fixes, security updates, and adding new features.*
  + *Monthly Retainer: R5,000 - R10,000 per month, or an hourly rate for on-demand support.*
  + *Software Updates & Security Monitoring: R2,000 - R4,000 per month.*
* *4. Total Estimated Budget for the First Year:*
  + *Development: R151,000*
  + *Hosting: R24,000 - R60,000 (for 12 months)*
  + *Maintenance: R60,000 - R120,000 (for 12 months)*
  + *Other Costs (SSL, etc.): R2,000*
  + *Grand Total (First Year): R237,000 - R333,000*

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