



Unlocking consumer behaviour: How satisfaction and/or delight, trust and perceived value drive behavioural intentions



Authors:

Mornay Roberts-Lombard¹ 
Olumide Jaiyeoba² 

Affiliations:

¹Department of Management and Entrepreneurship, University of the Western Cape, Bellville, South Africa

²Faculty of Business and Accounting, Botho University, Gaborone, Botswana

Corresponding author:

Mornay Roberts-Lombard,
mornayrobertslombard@gmail.com

Dates:

Received: 04 Mar. 2025

Accepted: 02 Sept. 2025

Published: 14 Oct. 2025

How to cite this article:

Roberts-Lombard, M. & Jaiyeoba, O., 2025, 'Unlocking consumer behaviour: How satisfaction and/or delight, trust and perceived value drive behavioural intentions', *South African Journal of Economic and Management Sciences* 28(1), a6160. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajems.v28i1.6160>

Copyright:

© 2025. The Authors.
Licensee: AOSIS. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Read online:



Scan this QR code with your smart phone or mobile device to read online.

Background: Understanding the role of customer satisfaction and/or delight and trust as central drivers of behavioural responses becomes increasingly important in a complex business environment. From a relationship marketing theory perspective, satisfaction and/or delight, trust and perceived value serve as critical differentiators that strengthen customers' future behavioural intentions in competitive service contexts.

Aim: Guided by the relationship marketing theory, this study explores how service quality and customer orientation influence satisfaction and/or delight, trust and behavioural intentions in the South African cellular industry while recognising the moderating role of perceived value.

Setting: This study examines South Africa's cellular industry, characterised by high mobile penetration, steep data costs, and intense competition. In this emerging market, customer satisfaction, delight, trust, and perceived value are theorised as central determinants of behavioural intentions and loyalty.

Method: An explanatory research design targeted cell phone network service provider customers in Gauteng, South Africa, using quota sampling and self-administered questionnaires. In total, 409 valid responses were analysed using SPSS 24.0 and SmartPLS 4 for measurement and structural modelling.

Results: Aligned with the relationship marketing theory, the results show that customer orientation significantly enhances satisfaction and/or delight, whereas service quality does not. Both customer orientation and trust foster satisfaction and/or delight, which drives behavioural intention, while perceived value strengthens the trust–intention link but not the satisfaction and/or delight–intention relationship.

Contribution: Grounded in the relationship marketing theory, this study addresses a key research gap by examining how customer delight and trust jointly shape behavioural responses in an emerging market context, an underexplored area in service literature. A central contribution highlights employee capability development, showing that equipping staff to respond proactively is a strategic requirement for fostering satisfaction, building trust and sustaining long-term relational outcomes.

Keywords: customer satisfaction; customer delight; trust; perceived value; behavioural intention; South African cellular industry.

Introduction

Understanding the role of customer satisfaction and/or delight and trust as central drivers of behavioural responses is crucial for competitive advantage in the service industry, especially in emerging markets. Furthermore, perceived value functions as a key moderator in shaping these behavioural outcomes, but its role remains underexplored (Blut et al. 2024). Scholars (Banahene, Mensah & Asamoah 2018; Haryono et al. 2015) highlight the fact that trust and customer satisfaction and/or trust and behavioural delight are vital for differentiation and influence customer loyalty and behavioural intentions. However, there are a growing group of scholars that are calling for more research on the antecedents and consequences of customer delight, particularly its direct impact on behavioural responses in services. For example, Hassan and Magdy (2025) further reveal the fact that while customer satisfaction, service experience, perceptions and perceived value have been studied extensively, little research examines how customer delight specifically interacts with determinants like customer orientation and service quality and how perceived value moderates these relationships.

These gaps are significant because most existing literature does not differentiate customer delight from satisfaction sufficiently, overlooking the stronger emotional and behavioural impact delight may have. Additionally, the moderating effect of perceived value in emerging markets, where consumer expectations and competition differ markedly, is seldom addressed. As such, scholars such as Shoukat and Ramkissoon (2022) argue that refining the nomological framework linking service quality, customer orientation, satisfaction and/or delight, trust and behavioural intentions is critical for advancing theory and practice. Furthermore, the focus on the South African cellular industry is grounded in its unique positioning compared to other markets, making it an ideal setting for this study. For example, in South Africa, mobile penetration exceeds 90%, yet stark inequalities persist, with rural communities often facing weaker connectivity and slower data speeds (ICASA 2024). Unlike developed markets, South African consumers are highly price sensitive because of relatively high data costs, which remain among the steepest in Africa (GSMA 2025). The market is also highly concentrated, dominated by Vodacom and MTN, but with strong competitive pressure from smaller players such as Cell C, Telkom and digital-only entrant Rain, which has disrupted the industry with aggressive data pricing strategies (PwC 2024). Furthermore, mobile services play a far broader role than in many developed economies, serving as gateways to financial inclusion, e-commerce and essential services such as education and healthcare (GSMA 2025). These conditions elevate customer expectations, making trust, satisfaction and delight critical determinants of future commitment and behavioural responses. Considering this, the aim of this study is to investigate how customer orientation, service quality, satisfaction and/or delight and trust influence behavioural intentions in the South African cellular market while examining perceived value as a moderator. Sivotwa et al. (2023) underscore the scarcity of research on these interactions in telecommunications within emerging markets, calling for a detailed analysis.

Against the background provided above, this study holds academic significance by extending the relationship marketing theory to clarify how customer satisfaction and/or delight and trust influence behavioural intentions while highlighting the moderating role of perceived value, an underexplored construct in emerging market literature. It addresses a critical gap by distinguishing delight from satisfaction and mapping its unique effects within the nomological framework of service quality, orientation and trust. Practically, the study offers cellular service providers actionable insights on fostering loyalty through delight and trust while demonstrating how perceived value strengthens these relationships. Such understanding supports customer-centric strategies that enhance retention, repeat purchases and sustainable competitive advantage in dynamic markets. To the authors' knowledge, no prior research examined the moderating role of perceived value on the satisfaction and/or delight-behavioural intention link in an emerging market cellular services context. Therefore, this research study

enhances the relationship marketing theory by mapping these complex relationships and supporting a customer-centric strategy for stimulating behavioural responses and repeat purchases. The study furthermore applies the relationship marketing theory to establish the nomological network and moderating influence of perceived value in business-to-customer relationships.

The subsequent sections provide an overview of the South African cellular industry, outline the theoretical foundations of the study and present the hypotheses formulated. Thereafter, the research methodology is discussed, followed by the findings and their implications for management practice.

Objectives of the study

Primary objective

The study aims to investigate the relationships between customer orientation, service quality, customer satisfaction and/or delight, trust and behavioural intention in the South African cellular service industry while examining the moderating role of perceived value.

Secondary objectives

The following were listed as the secondary objectives:

- To determine the influence of customer orientation on customer satisfaction and/or delight in the South African cellular service industry.
- To investigate the influence of service quality on customer satisfaction and/or delight in the South African cellular service industry.
- To examine the relationship between customer orientation, service quality and trust in the South African cellular service industry.
- To determine how customer satisfaction and/or delight and trust influence customers' behavioural intentions.
- To investigate the moderating influence of perceived value on the relationships between satisfaction and/or delight, trust and behavioural intention.
- To extend relationship marketing theory by exploring the proposed nomological framework linking customer orientation, service quality, satisfaction and/or delight, trust, perceived value and behavioural intention in an emerging market context.
- To provide managerial insights for cellular service providers on enhancing satisfaction and/or delight, building trust and leveraging perceived value to foster customer loyalty and repeat business.

Theoretical framework

The South African cellular industry

The cell phone market in South Africa has experienced rapid growth since its introduction in 1994, ranking among the world's fastest-growing markets. The extensive uptake of mobile technology has extended across

South Africa, effectively narrowing the digital divide between urban and rural regions (Lewis 2023). As of the beginning of 2023, South Africa had 43.48 million individuals using the Internet, representing a penetration rate of 72.3%. During the same period, the country had 25.80 million social media users, accounting for 42.9% of its population. Additionally, there were 112.7 million active cellular mobile connections in South Africa, surpassing the population figure by 187.4%. From 2022 to 2023, the number of mobile connections in South Africa grew by 4 million – an increase of 3.7% (Kemp 2023). Smartphone penetration in South Africa is forecasted to rise steadily, increasing by 10.7% by 2029. After 9 consecutive years of growth, smartphone penetration is projected to reach a new high of 37.96% in 2029. It is noteworthy that smartphone penetration has been consistently increasing in recent years (Taylor 2024).

Vodacom's customer base grew from approximately 44.67 million in December 2022 to 47.26 million by the end of September 2023. Consequently, Vodacom increased its market share among the top four operators from 40.5% to 42.8%. In addition, MTN added roughly 260 000 subscribers in the first 9 months of 2022, translating to a 0.7% increase, bringing its total subscriber count to about 36.8 million from 36.54 million in December 2022. MTN's market share saw a modest rise of 0.1%. In contrast, both Telkom and Cell C experienced subscriber declines between December 2022 and September 2023. After a period of robust growth in mobile subscribers in recent years, Telkom appears to have reached a plateau (Labuschagne 2023).

Theory grounding the study

The theoretical development of relationship marketing commenced over four decades ago, aiming to establish enduring relationships as a competitive advantage. Central to relationship marketing theory's foundation are the principles of satisfaction, delight and trust, underscoring its significance in effectively managing long-term customer relationships (Hidayat & Idrus 2023; Svtwa et al. 2023). Scholars such as Čavlin, Bulović and Šmitran (2024) argue that relationship marketing promotes a transformative approach to customer relationship management (CRM) by emphasising customer involvement in the process. Thus, it emphasises customers' role beyond transactional interactions, highlighting their value in relationship-building endeavours (Moliner-Tena, Monferrer-Tirado & Estrada-Guillén 2019). Consequently, the relationship marketing theory adopts a customer-centric perspective aimed at achieving long-term customer retention, increased loyalty, reduced marketing costs and enhanced profitability (Čavlin et al. 2024). This theory supports a proactive and interactive method for managing ongoing customer relationships to positively shape future behavioural intentions (de Freitas, Bilro & Marques 2023). Modern customers have increased expectations for service providers, seeking to have their value needs met, active engagement during service interactions, relevant information shared

and consistently high-quality service at every touchpoint. Given these factors, relationship marketing should be approached as a strategic framework tailored to the specific needs of both customers and service providers, promoting the establishment of long-lasting relationships (Mntande, Stiehler-Mulder & Roberts-Lombard 2023).

A perspective on the inclusion of the selected drivers of behavioural intention and the moderator included in the study

The integration of customer orientation, service quality, satisfaction and/or delight, trust, behavioural intention and perceived value into a single theoretical framework is both conceptually robust and contextually significant. The relationship marketing theory, rooted in the Commitment-Trust Model (Morgan & Hunt 1994), has long posited trust and satisfaction as cornerstones of enduring customer relationships. However, most of the existing literature treats satisfaction and delight interchangeably despite growing evidence that delight exerts a stronger affective and behavioural pull than satisfaction alone (Weinstein 2024). In emerging market contexts such as South Africa's cellular industry, this distinction is particularly salient, as customer switching is constrained by affordability, infrastructure and high perceived risk (Roberts-Lombard, Svtwa & Jaiyeoba 2020). Customer orientation and service quality are positioned as key antecedents in this study, reflecting the relational strategies businesses employ to shape customer experiences. While service quality has traditionally been considered the primary predictor of satisfaction (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry 1988), its variable effect in dynamic markets raises theoretical questions about the adequacy of traditional quality dimensions. By comparing service quality with customer orientation, an empathetic, problem-solving and customer-centric construct, the study advances the relational paradigm by recognising that functional excellence alone may not secure trust or delight without relational alignment (Leninkumar 2017). Thus, the inclusion of both antecedents allows the framework to test whether cognitive evaluations of quality and affective perceptions of orientation operate jointly or divergently in shaping relational outcomes.

The mediating roles of trust and satisfaction and/or delight, combined with the moderating role of perceived value, further reflect a theoretically innovative contribution. Trust, consistently validated as a relational asset, gains renewed significance when understood as contingent upon the transformation of satisfaction into delight, thereby engaging both rational and emotional dimensions of the customer experience (Hidayat & Idrus 2023). Behavioural intention is retained as the ultimate dependent construct, aligning the framework with established research that positions intention as a precursor to loyalty and retention (Morwitz & Munz 2021). Yet the

novelty of this study lies in its treatment of perceived value as a boundary condition, while traditionally conceptualised as a universal enhancer of satisfaction–loyalty links. Recent evidence suggests its role is less linear, especially in resource-constrained economies (Blut et al. 2024). By examining perceived value as a moderator, the study extends Service-Dominant Logic (SDL), positioning value as co-created, contextual and relational rather than static. This approach underscores the necessity of embedding market asymmetries, fairness perceptions and affordability concerns into relationship marketing models (Shoukat & Ramkissoon 2022). Collectively, the selected variables address a critical problem in the South African cellular market, namely how providers can build enduring customer relationships in a highly competitive yet structurally unequal environment. By differentiating delight from satisfaction, re-evaluating service quality's role and reframing perceived value as a contextual moderator, the study demonstrates scholarly innovation while offering practical insights for fostering retention, trust and advocacy in emerging markets.

Customer orientation

Customer orientation involves placing customers' needs and expectations at the forefront of the service delivery process. It entails a customer-centric approach when delivering a service to customers (Čavlin et al. 2024). Scholars such as Ibrahim and Rasheed (2024) have confirmed the importance of customer orientation in the relationship-building process. By demonstrating an honest commitment to understanding and meeting customer needs, service providers can strengthen satisfaction and ultimately trust in the relationship-building process. As such, customer-orientated service providers actively listen to customer feedback, adapt to changing preferences and consistently deliver value, thereby fostering strong and enduring relationships with customers (Leninkumar 2017). In this study, customer orientation was measured as a unidimensional construct with four items. It focused on employees' knowledgeability regarding customers' needs, employees' ability to solve problems fast and professionally, service providers' ability to have customers' best interests at heart, as well as service providers' aptitude to understand their customers' financial needs.

Service quality

Service quality can be defined as the extent to which a service meets or exceeds customer expectations in terms of its delivery, responsiveness, reliability, assurance, empathy and tangibles. It encompasses the overall experience a customer has with a service provider, including how well the service is performed, how the customer is treated and the atmosphere in which the service is delivered (Yesmin et al. 2023). The importance of service quality in the relationship-building process has been validated by multiple marketing scholars over decades. Therefore, it can

be argued that high levels of service quality secure overall customer satisfaction that also builds customer trust, thereby fostering positive relationships with the service provider. As such, customers are more likely to want to remain in a relationship with a service provider and advocate for such a provider that delivers superior service to them (Supriyanto, Wiyono & Burhanuddin 2021). In relation to this study, service quality was measured as an overarching, unidimensional construct with four items. Consequently, the measurement of service quality encompassed the overall level-of-quality service delivered, whether the level-of-service quality was of a high standard and whether the service can be perceived as being superior in every way.

Trust

In marketing literature, trust refers to the confidence one entity has in the reliability, integrity and honesty of another. It encompasses a readiness to be vulnerable, stemming from positive expectations regarding the intentions and actions of the party being trusted. Trust is an important element in the relationship-building process with customers, as it facilitates cooperation, reduces uncertainty and fosters mutual understanding and support between parties (Melnik 2024). As such, trust creates assurance in terms of the dependability of a party with which an intended exchange is to be secured. It echoes customers' beliefs that their cellular service provider will function in a manner that can be perceived as ethical, legal and responsible and will not overstep on their rights (Tjahjono & Dahlan 2023). Scholars like Hidayat and Idrus (2023) concurred, stating that customers who trust their service provider are more likely to remain in a relationship with such a provider in the future, thereby strengthening customer retention in the long term. In this study, trust was assessed as a unidimensional construct, considering aspects like the reliability of service providers in understanding customer needs, treating customers with honesty and addressing their requirements, as well as customers' readiness to rely on service providers for the services they need.

Behavioural intention

Behavioural intention is the willingness of an individual to engage in particular actions or behaviours toward a specific business or brand. It comprises a thoughtful decision-making process that impacts the manner in which customers engage with a business (Le & Wang 2020). As such, it can be inclusive of behaviours, such as purchasing a product or service or sharing positive word of mouth (Le & Wang 2020). Scholars (e.g. Morwitz & Munz 2021) concur, stating that the importance of behavioural intention is grounded in its ability to stimulate anticipated activities and outcomes. As such, by focusing on the enhancement of positive behavioural intentions, businesses can stimulate customer retention, thereby strengthening their future profitability. In this study,

behavioural intention was measured as a unidimensional construct by considering aspects including the intention to continue a relationship with a service provider, recommending the service brand to others, and maintaining support for the service brand moving forward.

Perceived value

Perceived value is the individual assessment of benefits versus costs made by customers when purchasing a business's products or services. It encompasses both tangible and intangible factors, such as quality, features, pricing and overall customer experience (Schönsleben 2019). In marketing literature, scholars such as Piątkowska (2023) have validated the importance of perceived value in the relationship-building process. It is argued that customers are more likely to develop strong relationships with businesses that offer them value, as it demonstrates that their needs and preferences are being met effectively. Furthermore, perceived value stimulates customers' future behavioural intentions. Consequently, companies that consistently provide high perceived value are more likely to keep their customers, encourage repeat purchases and draw in new customers through favourable word-of-mouth recommendations (Rane, Achari & Choudhary 2023). By focusing on enhancing perceived value, businesses can strengthen their relationships with customers and foster long-term success in a competitive business environment (Pramkaew, Limsuwan & Sony 2023). In this study, perceived value was measured using four items that focused on the economic value of a service provider and the level of service quality offered by the service provider.

Theoretical model development

The interrelationship between customer orientation and customer satisfaction and/or delight

Within the framework of the Relationship Marketing Theory, customer orientation reflects a firm's intent to create long-term value by aligning resources with customer needs and expectations. Prior research by Li et al. (2019) demonstrates that customer-oriented firms foster not only functional satisfaction but also emotional delight, highlighting the relational impact of this approach. Jiang (2020) adds that employee commitment enhances satisfaction when service encounters are consistently responsive and reliable. Similarly, Hidayat and Idrus (2023) stress that understanding customer needs enables service delivery that is both personalised and value driven. Gonu et al. (2023) further note that such orientation facilitates effective problem resolution, while Mistrean (2021) confirms its role in generating delight across service contexts. Synthesising these insights, customer orientation emerges as a catalyst in the proposed model, strengthening satisfaction and delight and reinforcing the trust-based relational bonds central to Relationship Marketing Theory. Considering the discussion in the preceding text, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Customer orientation influences the customer satisfaction and/or delight of cell phone network service provider customers.

The interrelationship between service quality and customer satisfaction and/or delight

Service quality goes beyond a mere functional assessment of performance by serving as a relational mechanism that fosters trust, satisfaction and delight, aligning closely with the principles of the Relationship Marketing Theory. Rather than viewing prior findings as isolated, the marketing literature collectively demonstrates that high-quality service delivery consistently strengthens customer perceptions, thereby shaping both cognitive and emotional outcomes (Alzoubi & Inairat 2020; Khan, Tareen & Jadoon 2018). When service encounters reliably meet expectations, customers experience satisfaction, and when providers go beyond expectations, this creates delight, a deeper emotional response with stronger behavioural consequences (Kim, Kim & Choi 2024). Through such an approach, service quality functions as a critical driver within the proposed model, directly influencing satisfaction and/or delight and activating relational pathways that enhance loyalty intentions (Alzoubi & Inairat 2020). Synthesising these insights, service quality can be understood as a cornerstone of the nomological network, reinforcing the central premise of the Relationship Marketing Theory that long-term relationships are built on consistent value creation. Considering the earlier discussion, the following hypothesis is put forward:

H2: Service quality influences the customer satisfaction and/or delight of cell phone network service provider customers.

The interrelationship between customer orientation and trust

Customer orientation serves as a foundational relational mechanism that fosters trust by signalling a firm's commitment to understanding and prioritising customer needs over time, a role emphasised within the framework of the Relationship Marketing Theory (Windarti et al. 2020). Rather than treating the findings as discrete, the marketing literature collectively reveals that when customers perceive high levels of customer orientation, demonstrated through knowledgeable, helpful and engaged employees, this perception strengthens trust. Trust, in turn, is essential for sustaining long-term relationships (Morales Mediano & Ruiz-Alba 2020). Furthermore, the marketing literature states that trust emerges not only from service delivery outcomes but also from the provider's demonstrated expertise and responsiveness during customer interactions (Park & Yi 2023). This well-informed engagement fosters confidence in the relationship, reinforcing trust as a central pathway within the proposed model that links customer orientation to behavioural intentions. Synthesising these insights, customer orientation operates as a critical antecedent to trust, reinforcing the relational bonds central to Relationship Marketing Theory and the study's nomological framework. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Customer orientation influences the trust of cell phone network service provider customers.

The interrelationship between service quality and trust

Service quality plays a critical relational role in shaping trust, positioning it as a cornerstone of the nomological network central to the Relationship Marketing Theory. Rather than treating individual studies in isolation, the literature collectively demonstrates that consistent and dependable service quality strengthens customers' confidence in the provider's reliability and fairness (Anggraini 2024). When customers perceive service delivery as reasonable and engaging, their trust in the provider deepens, reinforcing the willingness to maintain long-term relationships (Geebren & Jabbar 2021). In this way, service quality does more than satisfy customers but also signals the provider's relational intent, thereby legitimising trust as an outcome of positive experiences (Ricardianto et al. 2023). Within the proposed model, service quality thus operates not only as a driver of satisfaction and delight but also as a direct antecedent of trust, which is central to sustaining loyalty and behavioural intentions in line with Relationship Marketing Theory. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Service quality influences the trust of cell phone network service provider customers.

The interrelationship between customer satisfaction and/or delight and behavioural intention

Customer satisfaction and delight are central constructs within the Relationship Marketing Theory because they function as emotional and cognitive signals that shape future behavioural intentions. The marketing literature consistently highlights the fact that when customers' needs are met, satisfaction emerges, reinforcing their willingness to remain devoted to the service provider (Yuliantoro & Antonio 2022). However, when service delivery exceeds expectations and creates memorable experiences, delight arises, producing even stronger relational and behavioural outcomes (Oliver, Rust & Varki 1997; Rather & Hollebeek 2021). Synthesising these perspectives, satisfaction and delight operate not as isolated outcomes, but as sequential mechanisms within the proposed model. Satisfaction reflects the fulfilment of basic expectations, while delight represents an elevated emotional response that deepens relational commitment. Both act as antecedents to behavioural intentions, reinforcing the Relationship Marketing Theory premise that long-term loyalty is built on value creation and affective bonds, rather than solely transactional exchanges (Shoukat & Ramkissoon 2022). Based on these findings, the following hypothesis is formulated for the study:

H5: Customer satisfaction and/or delight influences the behavioural intentions of cell phone network service provider customers.

The interrelationship between trust and behavioural intention

Trust is widely recognised in marketing literature as a pivotal driver of customers' behavioural intentions, reinforcing the central tenet of the Relationship Marketing Theory that enduring relationships rely on mutual confidence and value creation (Peong, Peong & Tan 2021; Trung et al. 2021). Rather than treating findings in isolation, evidence collectively shows that when customers perceive service delivery as reliable, fair and rooted in integrity, their trust in the provider deepens (Anggraini 2024). This trust shapes relational bonds, influencing loyalty decisions and willingness to remain in the relationship (Adiputera 2023). Within the proposed model, trust functions as a key mediating mechanism that translates perceptions of service quality, customer orientation, and satisfaction and/or delight into behavioural intentions. In this way, trust not only reflects current evaluations but also activates pathways that secure future loyalty, aligning with the relational outcomes emphasised in the Relationship Marketing Theory. As such, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H6: Trust influences the behavioural intentions of cell phone network service provider customers.

The moderating effect of perceived value on the relationships between customer satisfaction and/or delight, trust and behavioural intention

Perceived value functions as a critical relational lens through which customers interpret service quality, satisfaction and trust, shaping their future behavioural intentions. Rather than treating previous findings as distinct, the literature collectively shows that when customers believe benefits outweigh costs, they perceive greater value, which strengthens trust and future commitment (Piątkowska 2023). This aligns with the Relationship Marketing Theory, as perceived value legitimises the relational exchange by reinforcing customers' belief that the provider is both reliable and mutually beneficial. Within the proposed model, perceived value therefore operates as a moderator that strengthens the influence of satisfaction and delight on trust, ultimately enhancing loyalty intentions (Abdul-Rahim et al. 2022). By shaping how customers interpret their experiences, perceived value determines whether satisfaction and delight translate into enduring trust, positioning it as a central mechanism for sustaining long-term relational bonds in business-to-consumer contexts. Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H7a-b: Perceived value moderates the relationships between customer satisfaction and/or delight and behavioural intention and trust and behavioural intention.

Figure 1 presents the suggested theoretical model for this study, showcasing the four constructs and the proposed relationships among them.

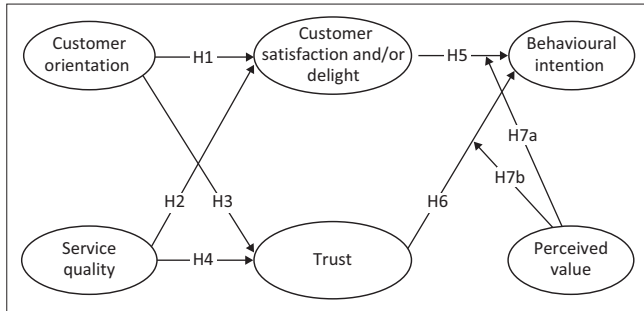


FIGURE 1: Proposed theoretical model.

Methodology

The research utilised an explanatory design, concentrating on individuals who use mobile network services in the Gauteng province of South Africa. Ethical clearance for the study was secured by the respective institution(s) aligned to the ethics principles of the Human Sciences Social Research and Ethics Committee (HSSREC) in South Africa under ethics number HS25/5/45. Participants were selected based on their ownership of a cell phone, ability to choose a network provider and self-identification as satisfied customers at the time of the survey. These customers constituted the sampling units and elements of the research and participated in the study only after formal consent was secured. The study centred on customers who indicated that they were satisfied with their selected cell phone network service provider, with the aim of evaluating the extent of their satisfaction. Screening questions and quotas were utilised to ensure the sample met predetermined criteria for participation in the study. Accordingly, the study comprised respondents across multiple cell phone network service providers throughout the province, who could choose their network, and considered themselves satisfied customers. The study focused exclusively on satisfied customers, as delight is conceptually regarded as a higher-order construct that emerges from satisfaction. Measuring delight presupposes baseline satisfaction, as dissatisfied or neutral customers cannot experience delight (Oliver et al. 1997). Thus, inclusion of dissatisfied customers would compromise construct validity and theoretical alignment. Furthermore, prior to the formal collection of data, the questionnaire was pilot tested among 20 respondents. The pilot study confirmed that respondents clearly understood the questionnaire items and their context. No revisions were required, indicating that the instrument was both reliable and valid for the intended study. Conducting a pilot study is a crucial step in survey-based research, as it ensures clarity and feasibility and minimises measurement error before large-scale data collection (Van Teijlingen & Hundley 2001). This process enhanced the credibility of the study by confirming the suitability of the instrument and its alignment with the research objectives.

Data were collected by 10 fieldworkers strategically located across the province, who were tasked with identifying suitable participants from their networks of acquaintances. These fieldworkers were also responsible for fulfilling age

and gender quotas to ensure adequate representation of the target population. Although fieldworkers relied on acquaintances, age and gender quotas were applied across the province, mitigating convenience sampling bias and enhancing representativeness despite acknowledged limitations (Etikan 2016). In addition, data protection protocols were upheld by ensuring respondent anonymity, as no personally identifiable information was collected. Demographic information was limited to age and gender to fulfil quota requirements and was handled in aggregate form. Fieldworkers were also trained to safeguard confidentiality and securely return completed questionnaires for centralised, protected analysis. In addition, the sampling approach utilised non-probability methods with deliberate quotas. By applying quotas across age and gender, the study safeguarded representativeness within the target population, reducing potential sampling bias and enhancing external validity despite non-probability sampling limitations. This approach is particularly useful in explanatory research where specific subgroups must be captured to address theoretical objectives (Etikan 2016). Thus, quota sampling ensured alignment between the research design and its conceptual focus on satisfaction-driven delight. Therefore, respondents completed self-administered paper-based questionnaires distributed by the fieldworkers over a 2-week period (June–August 2024). Subsequently, 409 completed and usable questionnaires were gathered for analysis.

The questionnaire design included a preamble and three screening questions to confirm eligibility. Sections of the questionnaire addressed demographic information and respondents' habits regarding cell phone network usage. Constructs, including customer orientation, service quality, trust, behavioural intention, perceived value and customer satisfaction and/or delight, were measured using seven-point unlabelled Likert-type scales. The customer satisfaction and/or delight construct used a semantic differential scale with seven response categories. The scales for the constructs were adapted from various published studies: customer orientation from Cheng, Chen and Chang (2008) and Wray, Palmer and Bejou (1994); service quality from Dagger, Sweeney and Johnson (2007); customer satisfaction and/or delight from Berman (2005); trust from Giovanis, Athanasopoulou and Tsoukatos (2015); behavioural intention from Dagger et al. (2007) and perceived value from Nyadzayo (2010). In addition, the research instrument demonstrated strong reliability and validity. All constructs reported Cronbach's alpha values above 0.95, surpassing the recommended threshold of 0.70, thereby confirming internal consistency (Nunnally & Bernstein 1994). Furthermore, item loadings ranged from 0.887 to 0.972, exceeding the 0.70 cut-off, ensuring convergent validity (Hair et al. 2019). These results affirm that the measurement model was both robust and statistically sound, providing confidence in the accuracy and consistency of the constructs under investigation (refer to Table 1). Table 2 details the specific items used to measure each construct.

TABLE 1: Results of the measurement model.

Constructs	Loadings	Cronbach's alpha	CR	AVE
Customer orientation	-	0.965	0.974	0.905
My cell phone network service provider is knowledgeable about customer needs.	0.956	-	-	-
My cell phone network service provider staff do their best to solve my problems.	0.940	-	-	-
My cell phone network service provider has my best interests as a customer in mind.	0.956	-	-	-
My cell phone network service provider tries to understand what my financial needs are.	0.953	-	-	-
Service quality	-	0.974	0.981	0.927
The overall quality of service provided by my cell phone network service provider is excellent.	0.967	-	-	-
The quality of service provided by my cell phone network service provider is impressive.	0.970	-	-	-
The service provided by my cell phone network service provider is of high standard.	0.972	-	-	-
I believe my cell phone network service provider offers a service that is superior in every way.	0.943	-	-	-
Customer satisfaction and/or delight	-	0.970	0.975	0.868
The service of my cell phone network service provider meets or slightly exceeds my expectations.	0.946	-	-	-
I believe that I received reasonable value from the services offered by my cell phone network service provider.	0.950	-	-	-
The staff of my cell phone network service provider are competent.	0.952	-	-	-
The services offered by my cell phone network service provider are memorable.	0.936	-	-	-
The services offered by my cell phone network provider are reliably unique.	0.941	-	-	-
My cell phone network service provider provides basic post-purchase customer support.	0.930	-	-	-
Trust	-	0.951	0.965	0.872
My cell phone network service provider is trustworthy because it is concerned about its customers' interests.	0.946	-	-	-
My cell phone network service provider treats customers with honesty.	0.950	-	-	-
My cell phone network service provider has the ability to fulfil my needs.	0.952	-	-	-
I am willing to depend on my cell phone network service provider.	0.887	-	-	-
Perceived value	-	0.972	0.980	0.923
My cell phone network service provider offers me value for money.	0.961	-	-	-
Doing business with my cell phone network service provider is the right decision when price and other costs are considered.	0.958	-	-	-
Doing business with my network service provider is the right decision when the overall quality of service delivery is considered.	0.967	-	-	-
Compared to the quality of cell phone network service provider service that I get, I pay a reasonable price.	0.956	-	-	-
Behavioural intention	-	0.964	0.977	0.933
If I had to choose a cell phone network service provider all over again, I would choose my current cell phone network service provider.	0.969	-	-	-
I would highly recommend my cell phone network service provider to other people.	0.962	-	-	-
I intend to continue using my cell phone network service provider in the future.	0.968	-	-	-

CR, composite reliability; AVE, average variance extracted.

Following the editing and cleaning of the data, it was entered into SPSS 24.0, where frequencies and descriptive statistics were computed to analyse the demographic characteristics of participants, their habits related to cell phone network service provider usage and the 25 items used to measure the six constructs of interest. The measurement and structural models were evaluated using SmartPLS 4.

Empirical findings

Profile of respondents

In terms of the demographic profile of respondents, 51.3% of the respondents were men, 48.4% were women and 0.3% preferred not to disclose their gender. Furthermore, the majority of respondents participating in the study were black (77.8%), 8.6% were white, 8.1% were South African coloured people, 5.1% were Indian and 0.4% indicated that they preferred not to respond to the question. In terms of educational background, 41.6% of respondents had completed their grade 12 qualification, 36.9% had a post-matric qualification, 18.6% had a postgraduate qualification, 2.7% had a primary education and 0.2% indicated that they preferred not to respond to the question. Regarding employment status, 39.6% of respondents were full-time employed, 21.8% were self-employed, 12% were part-time employed, 9% were retired, 7.1% categorised themselves as a

household wife or husband, 4.2% were full-time students and 6.3% preferred not to respond to the question. Additionally, 61.6% of the respondents were married or living with a partner, 23.7% were single, 10% were living with parents, 3.4% were divorced or separated and 2.3% indicated that they preferred not to respond. Conclusively, in terms of the cellular service provider used, 37.9% used Vodacom, 29.3% subscribed to MTN, 22.7% subscribed to Cell C, 5.1% used 8ta, 3.4% patronised Virgin Mobile and 2.6% indicated that they preferred not to respond to the question.

Measurement model assessment

In total, 409 completed questionnaires were analysed using partial least squares structural equation modelling premised on the application of SmartPLS 4. A significant level of $p < 0.05$ was used to assess the hypotheses (H1–H7a-b), with H7a-b discerning the extent to which perceived value moderates the relationships customer satisfaction and/or delight and trust have with behavioural intention. The measurement model took a telescopic insight into the model's convergent validity and reliability. The multicollinearity diagnostics was conducted, and the variance inflation factor (VIF) for compendium of relationship is greater than 1 but less than 3.33, which explicates no concern with respect to

multicollinearity as contended by Cunningham (2023). To assess common method bias, we applied the full collinearity test as suggested by Cunningham (2023). All VIF values were found to be below 3.3, indicating that common method variance is unlikely to affect the model estimates for this empirical study. The inclusion of theoretically unrelated construct did not significantly alter the path coefficients, supporting the robustness of the results in terms of common method variance. Factor loadings, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) were used in the analysis of the scale items for the myriad constructs. The measurement model metrics met the minimum threshold, as indicated in extant literature (Peterson & Kim 2013; Sarstedt, Ringle & Hair 2017). When determining discriminant validity, the Fornell and Larcker criterion was used as postulated in existing literature (Farrell 2010). The square root of AVE compared to AVE of other constructs is higher, as shown in Table 3 (Sarstedt et al. 2017). Discriminant validity was established using the Fornell–Larcker criterion. The cross loadings for each indicator loaded higher on its own construct than on other constructs. In addition, the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations was conducted to validate the Fornell–Larcker criterion with HTMT values below 0.85, which indicate that the compendium constructs are empirically distinct. Based on the aforementioned, the data were deemed to meet the psychometric efficacy and subsequently assessed as the model fits data adequately. The standardised root mean square residual value of 0.029, the normed fit index value of 0.923 and the root mean square error of approximation value of 0.05 also motivated the fitness of the model to the data in this empirical study (Hu & Bentler 1998).

Structural model assessment

Based on the goodness of fit discerned in the measurement model assessment, the structural model could be assessed. The structural paths were inspected in this empirical study to assess the hypothetical relationship, compendium of path analysis, beta coefficient metrics, *t*-statistics, *p*-values, outcome of the myriad construct relationships, root mean square (R^2) and the predictive relevance of the outcome or endogenous variables discerned (Q^2), whose value should not be less than 0, as established in extant literature (Cunningham 2023). The extent to which perceived value moderated the relationship between customer satisfaction and/or delight and behavioural intention was also clearly discerned in the study.

As shown in Table 4, customer orientation is significantly and positively related to customer satisfaction and/or delight and H1 is supported in this empirical study. Service quality was not significantly and positively related to customer satisfaction and/or delight. Hence, H2 was rejected in this study. Customer orientation and trust were significantly and

TABLE 2: Questionnaire constructs and items.

Construct	Item	Response
Customer orientation	X1	My cell phone network service provider is knowledgeable about customer needs.
	X2	My cell phone network service provider staff do their best to solve my problems.
	X3	My cell phone network service provider has my best interests as a customer in mind.
	X4	My cell phone network service provider tries to understand what my financial needs are.
Service quality	X5	The overall quality of service provided by my cell phone network service provider is excellent.
	X6	The quality of service provided by my cell phone network service provider is impressive.
	X7	The service provided by my cell phone network service provider is of high standard.
	X8	I believe my cell phone network service provider offers a service that is superior in every way
Customer satisfaction and/or delight	X9	The service of my cell phone network service provider meets or slightly exceeds my expectations.
	X10	I believe that I received reasonable value from the services offered by my cell phone network service provider.
	X11	The staff of my cell phone network service provider are competent
	X12	The services offered by my cell phone network service provider are memorable.
	X13	The services offered by my cell phone network service provider are reliably unique.
	X14	My cell phone network service provider provides basic post-purchase customer support.
Trust	X15	My cell phone network service provider is trustworthy because it is concerned about its customers' interests.
	X16	My cell phone network service provider treats customers with honesty.
	X17	Doing business with my cell phone network service provider is the right decision when the overall quality of service delivery is considered.
	X18	I am willing to depend on my cell phone network service provider.
Perceived value	X19	My cell phone network service provider offers me value for money.
	X20	Doing business with my cell phone network service provider is the right decision when price and other costs are considered.
	X21	Doing business with my cell phone network service provider is the right decision when the overall quality of service delivery is considered
	X22	Compared to the quality of cell phone network service provider service that I get, I pay a reasonable price.
Behavioural intention	X23	If I had to choose a cell phone network service provider all over again, I would choose my current cell phone network service provider.
	X24	I would highly recommend my cell phone network service provider to other people.
	X25	I intend to continue using my cell phone network service provider in the future.

TABLE 3: Discriminant validity of the measurement model.

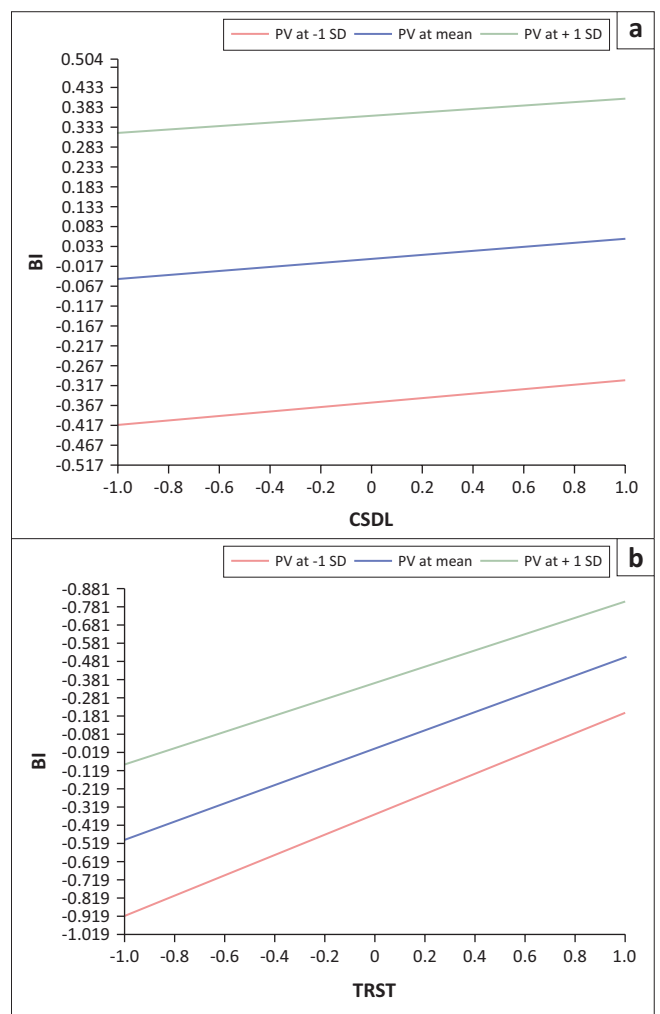
Constructs	Behavioural intention	Customer orientation	Customer satisfaction and/or delight	Perceived value	Service quality	Trust
Behavioural intention	0.966	-	-	-	-	-
Customer orientation	0.902	0.951	-	-	-	-
Customer satisfaction and/or delight	0.236	0.254	0.923	-	-	-
Perceived value	0.878	0.893	0.228	0.961	-	-
Service quality	0.860	0.885	0.205	0.877	0.963	-
Trust	0.889	0.926	0.226	0.904	0.932	0.934

positively related; thus H3 was supported in the study. Furthermore, service quality and trust were significantly and positively related; thus H4 was supported in this study. In addition, customer satisfaction and/or delight were significantly and positively related to behavioural intention. Therefore, H5 was supported. The nexus of the relationship between trust and behavioural intention also indicates that H6 was supported in this empirical study. Perceived value as a moderator in the relationship between customer satisfaction and/or delight and behavioural intention is not supported, as indicated in Table 4, which means H7a is not supported in this study. Contrastingly, perceived value as a moderator in the relationship between trust and behavioural intention was clearly supported in this study, and H7b was supported. The effect size measures (f^2) and visual interpretation of moderation effects were also incorporated in the study as shown in Figure 2. When evaluating the constructs' coefficient of determination, the results showed that customer satisfaction and/or delight and trust each accounted for 82.5% variation in behavioural intention ($R^2 = 0.825$); customer orientation and service quality each accounted for 6.7% variation in customer satisfaction and/or delight ($R^2 = 0.067$) and customer orientation and service quality each accounted for 91.6% variation in trust ($R^2 = 0.916$). The Q^2 , which explicates the predictive relevance of the endogenous variable or outcome as indicated in Table 4, also confirms the fitness of the model to the data in this empirical study, with the values of 0.058, 0.914 and 0.829 discerned for customer satisfaction and/or delight, trust and behavioural intention, respectively, in this study. The Q^2 , which is a measure of predictive relevance, was calculated using cross-validated redundancy approach in SmartPLS 4, with Q^2 greater than 0 indicating that the model has predictive relevance power for the endogenous construct, while Q^2 less than and equal to zero indicates a lack of predictive relevance as postulated by Cunningham (2023).

Discussion

The results illustrate the intricate interplay between various constructs influencing customer behaviour. This discussion explores the implications of these results, drawing upon recent academic research to provide context and support for the interpretations. As such, the results established that customer orientation (H1), (H1) ($\beta = 0.336, p = 0.00$) positively relates to customer satisfaction and/or delight. This aligns with Hashem, Ruiz-Mafé and Curras-Perez (2024), who found that when employees are knowledgeable about customer needs and act in customers' best interests, overall

satisfaction and/or delight is positively impacted. Within the Relationship Marketing theory framework, this confirms that customer orientation is foundational to building relational trust and commitment, as customer-focused practices foster stronger psychological bonds and enhance long-term customer engagement. Contrastingly, service quality (H2) ($\beta = 0.093, p = 0.36$) does not influence satisfaction and/or delight, suggesting that conventional service delivery standards may no longer be sufficient. This outcome aligns with previous findings highlighting the changing nature of customer expectations, which indicates that businesses need to transcend traditional service quality



BI, Behavioural intention; CSDL, customer satisfaction and/or delight; TRST, trust; PV, perceived value; SD, satisfaction and/or delight.

FIGURE 2: Visual moderation effects: (a) PV \times CSDL and (b) PV \times TRST.

TABLE 4: Path coefficients, t -statistics and significance levels.

Hypotheses	Path analysis	β	t -statistics	p -value	Outcome	R^2	Q^2
H1	Customer orientation \rightarrow customer satisfaction and/or delight	0.336	3.503	0.00	Supported	0.067	0.058
H2	Service quality \rightarrow customer satisfaction and/or delight	0.093	0.924	0.36	Rejected	0.067	0.058
H3	Customer orientation \rightarrow trust	0.466	10.350	0.00	Supported	0.916	0.914
H4	Service quality \rightarrow trust	0.520	11.527	0.00	Supported	0.916	0.914
H5	Customer satisfaction and/or delight \rightarrow behavioural intention	0.050	2.135	0.03	Supported	0.825	0.829
H6	Trust \rightarrow behavioural intention	0.504	7.901	0.00	Supported	0.825	0.829
H7a	Perceived value \times customer satisfaction and/or delight \rightarrow behavioural intention	-0.007	0.245	0.81	Rejected	-	-
H7b	Perceived value \times trust \rightarrow behavioural intention	0.054	2.907	0.00	Supported	-	-

concepts (Field et al. 2021). In the current competitive landscape, customers increasingly seek personalised experiences and emotional connections with brands, which may not rely solely on conventional service quality metrics. Thus, H2 is rejected because traditional measures of service quality, such as reliability and responsiveness, no longer fully capture customer value creation. Instead, digitalisation, price sensitivity and the demand for tailored engagement redefine satisfaction drivers, diminishing the direct role of service quality in predicting customer satisfaction and/or delight. As such, this challenges traditional assumptions in the Relationship Marketing theory that service quality alone anchors trust and commitment, instead refining the theory by emphasising customer orientation as a more potent driver of relational outcomes in dynamic, competitive markets.

The results further show that customer orientation (H3) and service quality (H4) positively influence trust. Customer orientation ($\beta = 0.466, p = 0.00$) and service quality ($\beta = 0.520, p = 0.00$) are both significantly linked to trust. This aligns with a study by Windarti et al. (2020), confirming that customer orientation and service quality strengthen customers' perceptions of reliability. From a Relationship Marketing theory perspective, this finding reinforces the centrality of trust as a mediating construct that links firm behaviour to customer commitment and loyalty, extending the theory by showing that trust can be developed even when satisfaction and/or delight is not significantly influenced by service quality.

Additionally, the study found that customer satisfaction and/or delight (H5) and trust (H6) positively influence behavioural intention. Customer satisfaction and/or delight ($\beta = 0.050, p = 0.03$) and trust ($\beta = 0.504, p = 0.00$) are directly related to behavioural intention. These findings align with prior studies conducted in both established and emergent market contexts (Acharya, Sassenberg & Soar 2023; Roberts-Lombard & Petzer 2021). Theoretically, this confirms the Relationship Marketing theory proposition that trust and satisfaction drive customer engagement and commitment, which translate into repeat purchasing and positive word of mouth. Importantly, this study refines the Relationship Marketing theory by highlighting the fact that trust exerts a stronger effect than satisfaction and/or delight, underscoring its central role in securing customer behavioural intention in emerging market cellular contexts. Interestingly, perceived value produced mixed moderating results. It was not found to significantly influence the relationship between satisfaction and/or delight and behavioural intention (H7a) ($\beta = -0.007, p = 0.81$) but significantly moderated the trust-behavioural intention relationship (H7b) ($\beta = 0.054, p = 0.00$). The lack of moderator influence on the relationship between satisfaction and/or delight and behavioural intention could be because of contextual irrelevance, as customers in highly price-sensitive and competitive cellular markets (such as South Africa) may prioritise affordability and reliability over perceived

value when forming satisfaction-driven intentions. This expands the Relationship Marketing theory by demonstrating that perceived value strengthens the relational bond created by trust rather than satisfaction, suggesting that trust-driven relational commitment is more contingent on value perceptions than delight-driven outcomes (Tumaku et al. 2023).

Alternative explanations must also be considered. Firstly, the weak role of service quality may reflect shifting customer expectations, where digitalisation and price sensitivity override traditional service quality indicators. Secondly, cultural dynamics in emerging markets may influence how trust is prioritised over delight, as collectivist value systems place a greater emphasis on relational reliability than hedonic experience. Thirdly, the insignificant moderating role of perceived value in the delight-intention relationship could stem from measurement limitations, as value perceptions may vary significantly across customer segments. These factors highlight the need for contextual refinement of the Relationship Marketing theory when applied in emerging markets.

In conclusion, these findings enrich the Relationship Marketing theory by clarifying how customer orientation, trust and perceived value function as interrelated drivers of behavioural intention. The study extends the theory by demonstrating that trust, rather than satisfaction and/or delight, is the more decisive construct linking customer orientation to behavioural intention in emerging market service settings. It also challenges existing Relationship Marketing theory assumptions by showing that service quality does not directly foster satisfaction and/or delight, requiring theoretical models to account for evolving customer expectations and relational contexts. Practically, firms should invest in strengthening trust and perceived value as pathways to sustained customer loyalty.

Theoretical and managerial implications

Theoretical implications

Deeper understanding of the antecedents of customer satisfaction and/or delight and trust in a services context

The findings confirm interrelationships between customer orientation, satisfaction and/or delight and trust (H1, H3, H4) but challenge the existing theory by positioning customer orientation as the central driver rather than service quality. While prior studies emphasised technical service quality as the dominant determinant of trust (Nazeri et al. 2022), this study extends the Relationship Marketing theory by showing that professional engagement, empathy and problem-solving behaviours have a stronger influence on satisfaction and/or delight. Customers derive trust not merely from service performance but from perceiving providers as attentive and supportive of their needs. Thus, customer orientation shapes both satisfaction and/or delight and trust, offering a relationally grounded extension of theory. Furthermore, the

results confirm and extend Relationship Marketing theory by identifying customer orientation as a key driver of satisfaction and/or delight and trust, consistent with recent evidence that empathetic, solution-driven engagement fosters stronger relational bonds. This confirms customer orientation's centrality in theory, as customers' perceptions of attentiveness and support shaped both delight and trust. However, findings contradict traditional assumptions by showing that service quality influenced trust but not satisfaction and/or delight, challenging models that positioned quality as the universal antecedent (Weinstein 2024). This further highlights the relational, rather than purely technical, foundation of satisfaction and/or delight in emerging markets. Conclusively, the dimensionality of constructs remained robust in the South African context, supporting the cross-cultural validity of established scales. However, satisfaction and/or delight reflected a nuanced structure, where memorability and post-purchase support carried greater weight, highlighting the role of service recovery in markets facing infrastructural challenges (such as South Africa) (Masoma and Maduku 2025). This indicates that delight in emerging markets stems less from abstract expectation-exceedance and more from reliability, fairness and unique support. The study confirms the satisfaction-trust-behavioural intention pathway while extending theory by showing how constructs adapt under price sensitivity, inconsistent infrastructure and consumer scepticism, where customer orientation and value-for-money rival traditional service quality (Lim, Saha & Das 2025).

Enhanced understanding of the role of customer satisfaction and/or delight and trust in fostering behavioural intention

The study's findings validate the interrelationships between customer satisfaction and/or delight, trust and behavioural intention in an emerging market service setting (H5 and H6). It confirms that the behavioural intentions of customers are shaped by their levels of satisfaction and/or delight and trust, reaffirming their centrality in marketing theory. When service delivery meets or exceeds expectations, offers reasonable value, includes post-purchase support and is anchored in honesty and transparency, customers' willingness to remain loyal is strengthened. Satisfaction and/or delight and trust therefore emerge as important precursors to behavioural intention (Petzer & Roberts-Lombard 2021; Svtwa et al. 2023). Notably, the findings extend existing theory by highlighting the fact that in emerging markets, customer delight is less about extraordinary experiences and more about reliability, fairness and effective service recovery. This contrasts with Western-centric models of delight, aligning with Masoma and Maduku (2025) who emphasise the contextual weight of infrastructural challenges and service interruptions. The study further confirms the work of Kumra and Sharma (2022) who underscored the joint role of customer orientation and trust in driving behavioural intentions, thereby reinforcing the relational dimension of marketing. Importantly, the results contradict

traditional assumptions that service quality directly influences delight, instead showing that quality plays a stronger role in shaping trust, consistent with the findings of Sumariani (2025). This shift underscores the fact that in markets characterised by price sensitivity and inconsistent service infrastructure, trust emerges as the more dominant mediator between service quality and future intentions. As such, the findings of the study extend existing relationship marketing theory perspectives by showing that in emerging markets, customer delight stems from reliability, fairness and service recovery rather than extraordinary experiences, challenging Western-centric models. They also contradict assumptions that service quality drives delight, instead confirming its stronger role in shaping trust as a driver of behavioural intention.

Furthermore, the study extends the Relationship Marketing theory by confirming that satisfaction and/or delight and trust are critical relational constructs driving behavioural intention, consistent with core relationship marketing principles. It contradicts traditional assumptions that service quality directly enhances delight, instead showing its stronger effect on trust as the relational mediator (Desiyanti, Sudja & Martini 2018; Khan et al. 2018). Furthermore, the findings extend the Relationship Marketing theory by demonstrating that in emerging markets, delight is shaped less by extraordinary experiences and more by reliability, fairness and service recovery, aligning with contextual realities of infrastructural challenges and price sensitivity. Thus, the study advances relationship marketing by contextualising how relational constructs adapt in emerging market service environments. Conclusively, the study's findings highlight the fact that customer satisfaction and/or delight hinges more on reliability, perceived value, competent staff, memorable yet consistent services and effective post-purchase support. Trust, fostered by honesty, concern for customer interests and confidence in service quality, strongly predicts behavioural intention, including loyalty and recommendation. This confirms and extends the Relationship Marketing theory by showing that in emerging markets, trust acts as the key relational mediator between service quality and future behavioural intentions, challenging traditional models that link quality directly to delight (Desiyanti et al. 2018; Khan et al. 2018).

A perspective on perceived value on the relationship between trust and behavioural intention

The study's findings underscore the significant moderating role of perceived value on the relationship between trust and behavioural intention, particularly in emerging African markets (see Table 4). This aligns with recent research highlighting the fact that perceived value, comprising both financial and service benefits, enhances customers' overall experience and strengthens the trust-behavioural intention link (Elshaer et al. 2025). Consistent with the findings from studies conducted by Huddin et al. (2024), the results confirm that stronger customer trust significantly increases willingness to maintain business relationships.

These findings extend existing theory by emphasising the contextual importance of perceived value in emerging markets, where economic and service-related factors critically influence loyalty. However, as Blut et al. (2024) suggest, the moderating effect of perceived value may differ across sectors, indicating a need for further industry-specific investigation. This nuanced understanding challenges one-size-fits-all assumptions and calls for tailored marketing strategies that prioritise both trust-building and value creation to optimise behavioural intentions.

The study further directly addresses the findings by Kodua et al. (2025) confirming that perceived value significantly functions as a moderator to stimulate future relational intention founded on trust, particularly within emerging African markets where financial and service-related benefits are decisive. This finding not only aligns with Islam, Zahin and Rahim (2024) but also reinforces evidence from Husne Jahan et al. (2024) and Palanisamy, Vincent and Hossain (2025) that stronger trust enhances customers' willingness to maintain long-term business relationships. Conclusively, the study also established the fact that perceived value's dimensionality held strongly in the South African context, reflecting both financial and service-related benefits. Items assessing value for money, price fairness and quality relative to cost coherently captured how customers evaluate their cell phone network provider. This supports findings by Huddin et al. (2024), who emphasise perceived value's role in strengthening trust and behavioural intention in emerging markets. Consistent with the findings of Mkhwanazi (2023), the study confirms that stronger trust increases relational intentions. However, Blut et al. (2024) argue that the influence of perceived value as a moderator is not uniform across industries, suggesting that a one-size-fits-all approach is insufficient. Instead, businesses must account for sectoral differences and design marketing strategies that are sensitive to the unique dynamics of their specific industry contexts.

Managerial implications

From a managerial perspective, it is evident that cellular service companies should enhance customers' satisfaction and/or delight and trust by more actively focusing on improving their customer orientation and service quality approach towards customers. Furthermore, these companies are required to positively impact customers' future behavioural intentions by employing strategies that will reinforce satisfaction and/or delight and trust.

In the South African cellular industry, which is both highly competitive and price sensitive, customer orientation must go beyond generic 'good service'. Operators such as MTN, Vodacom, Cell C and Telkom face an environment where customers switch providers easily because of pricing pressures, infrastructure limitations (such as load-shedding and uneven network coverage) and service reliability concerns. Against this backdrop, cellular service providers need to secure continuous research among their customer

segments to better understand the evolving needs of their customers. Such an approach should be supportive of the implementation of CRM systems that can secure insights on customer behaviour and feedback.

In practice, CRM systems should be integrated with data analytics to track real-time usage patterns, churn indicators and preferences. For example, providers can use prepaid airtime and data purchase histories to design bundles that reflect individual user behaviour, such as low-income users who rely on 'daily' data bundles versus corporate clients needing stable business packages. This kind of data-driven personalisation ensures that pricing plans are relevant to customers' financial realities and strengthens perceived value. Moreover, training frontline staff to be empathetic and responsive to customer concerns will increase customer satisfaction and trust. Given the fact that many South African customers rely on physical retail outlets and call centres for problem resolution, staff must be trained to handle both urban and rural customer challenges, such as connectivity drop-outs in remote areas or affordability issues in townships. Investing in multilingual support and culturally sensitive communication will further strengthen engagement and inclusivity.

Furthermore, considering that service quality was not found to be a stimulant of customer satisfaction and/or delight, it becomes progressively important for cellular service providers to secure a focus on strategies to enhance customer engagement through personalised service delivery. By investing in digital innovations, such as artificial intelligence-driven customer support and interactive platforms, cellular service providers will be enabled to stimulate customers' overall experiences. For instance, AI-powered WhatsApp chatbots could offer 24/7 assistance for quick airtime top-ups, SIM swaps or troubleshooting without requiring customers to wait in long call-centre queues. Similarly, mobile apps could include features where customers track their data usage in real time, receive personalised recommendations on the most cost-effective bundles and flag network issues directly from the app, creating a feedback loop between the customer and the operator. This will positively impact customers' overall experiences by offering tailored solutions and fostering a deeper emotional connection with brands.

Additionally, to stimulate trust, cellular service providers should focus more on securing transparency in their communication to customers as well as their daily business operations. Providing clear and simple explanations to customers on service terms and pricing structures, as well as addressing customer complaints in a fast, efficient and professional manner can assist cellular service providers to reinforce trust. In practice, this means simplifying contracts and bundle pricing so that customers are not confused by hidden fees, out-of-bundle charges or rollover limitations. Publishing network performance reports, such as coverage maps and downtime statistics, could also improve

transparency. Additionally, offering automatic compensation (e.g. free data or airtime credits) during network outages caused by load-shedding or fibre cuts would demonstrate accountability and fairness, further reinforcing trust.

Consistency in service delivery across all channels and securing proactive issue resolution will also contribute to building credibility among customers. As such, service providers should develop effective systems for managing customer feedback and complaints, ensuring that issues are addressed professionally, fast and in a transparent manner. For example, feedback systems could be gamified, customers who share feedback through surveys on apps or USSD codes might be rewarded with loyalty points or small data bundles, encouraging participation and strengthening engagement. Consequently, nurturing trust through reliability and openness will enhance customers' future behavioural intentions.

Conclusively, cellular service providers should increase the perceived value of their offerings among customers through strategies such as flexible pricing plans, loyalty rewards and additional benefits. In the South African context, prepaid customers remain the majority, and flexibility in 'pay-as-you-go' bundles, daily, hourly or 'midnight data' deals, is critical. Loyalty programmes, similar to Discovery Vitality or retail rewards cards, could be integrated with partners (e.g. grocery stores, transport services or online platforms) to reward data usage or airtime purchases with redeemable points. Exclusive partnerships with streaming services like Showmax or music platforms could also drive perceived value by bundling connectivity with entertainment.

By modifying these aspects to align with customer preferences and highlighting the added value offered, cellular service providers can strengthen the relationship between trust and desired behaviours. Exclusive deals, personalised discounts and enhanced features could be effective in increasing perceived value and driving repeat purchases as well as positive referrals. By implementing these strategies, cellular service providers can improve customer satisfaction and/or delight, foster a positive behavioural intention and secure a competitive edge in a rapidly changing market environment.

Conclusions, limitations and areas for future research

This study reinforces and extends the relationship marketing theory by arguing that satisfaction and/or delight and trust are not merely sequential drivers of behavioural intention but interdependent outcomes shaped by customer orientation. Within the Commitment-Trust Theory (Morgan & Hunt 1994), trust is reaffirmed as a central asset. However, the findings of the study suggest that trust is not developed in isolation but nurtured when satisfaction is elevated to delight, engaging both cognitive and affective dimensions

of the customer experience. This points to a refinement of existing theory, namely that in emerging markets, customer intent to remain loyal may be cultivated more effectively when providers simultaneously secure delight and trust. In addition, drawing on the SDL (Vargo & Lusch 2014), the study highlights the relational and contextual nature of value creation. Customers in emerging markets, often navigating affordability constraints and service inequities, do not perceive value as universal. Instead, value emerges when providers demonstrate empathy, fairness and problem-solving ability, which are operant resources that SDL identifies as critical to co-creation. This finding extends SDL by suggesting that value is not static, but contingent on the relational climate created by service providers, thereby challenging the universality of value-based models. Furthermore, the results also reveal a conceptual shift in how perceived value operates as a moderator. While traditional perspectives propose that perceived value consistently strengthens the satisfaction-loyalty relationship, this study indicates otherwise. In South Africa's cellular market, trust and delight often outweigh perceived value as decisive predictors of behavioural intention. This underscores the need for contingency-based theorising that accounts for market asymmetries. Theoretically, these insights invite a reorientation of the Relationship Marketing Theory to incorporate contextual moderators such as fairness perceptions and service equity. Practically, they signal that network providers cannot rely on globalised CRM strategies. Instead, they must embed transparency, fairness and emotional engagement into their service strategies, treating customers as co-producers of trust, delight and long-term relational equity.

While this study provides valuable insights, several limitations warrant deeper reflection and open important avenues for theoretical and empirical advancement. Firstly, the non-significant effect of service quality on satisfaction and/or delight suggests that conventional quality dimensions may not fully capture what customers in emerging markets value most. In contexts such as South Africa, service reliability and fairness may matter more than traditional service quality measures such as tangibility or responsiveness. This points to a need for scholars to redefine and contextualise quality constructs, potentially incorporating elements such as affordability, accessibility or technological inclusivity that resonate more strongly with consumers in resource-constrained environments. Secondly, the lack of moderation by perceived value on the satisfaction and/or delight-behavioural intention link challenges the established assumption that higher perceived value universally amplifies loyalty outcomes. Instead, this outcome indicates that alternative moderators, such as service fairness, customer empowerment or brand authenticity, may provide stronger explanatory power in emerging markets. This invites a reconsideration of whether perceived value should remain the primary moderating construct in relational models or whether it

should be studied in combination with more context-sensitive variables. Thirdly, the study's scope is limited to two antecedents (customer orientation and service quality), two mediators (satisfaction and/or delight and trust) and one moderator (perceived value) within a single service setting. While this yields focused insights, it constrains the model's explanatory depth. Future research could enrich the relational framework by incorporating additional antecedents such as corporate image, shared values or digital service capabilities. Similarly, mediators such as customer engagement or customer experience could be tested to explore how they translate firm efforts into loyalty outcomes. Finally, cross-industry and cross-market comparisons in other emerging economies could reveal whether the observed dynamics are context-specific or generalisable. Expanding the relational framework in this way would help refine relationship marketing theory and strengthen its applicability across diverse markets.

Acknowledgements

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

Authors' contributions

R.L. contributed to the conceptualisation, writing of the original draft and project management, writing-review and editing. O.J. contributed to conceptualisation, writing, software and data curation.

Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance to conduct this study was obtained from the University of the Western Cape and Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee (HS25/5/45).

Funding information

This research project received no specific grants from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

Data availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author, M.R.-L.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and are the product of professional research. They do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated institution, funder, agency or that of the publisher. The authors are responsible for this article's results, findings and content.

References

- Abdul-Rahim, R., Bohari, S.A., Aman, A. & Awang, S., 2022, 'Benefit-risk perceptions of fintech adoption for sustainability from bank consumers' perspective: The moderating role of fear of COVID-19', *Sustainability* 14(14), 8357. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14148357>
- Acharya, N., Sassenberg, A.-M. & Soar, J., 2023, 'Consumers' behavioural intentions to reuse recommender systems: Assessing the effects of trust propensity, trusting beliefs and perceived usefulness', *Journal of Theoretical and Applied Electronic Commerce Research* 18(1), 55–78. <https://doi.org/10.3390/jtaer18010004>
- Adiputera, W., 2023, 'Analysing trust, satisfaction, and loyalty dynamics: A study of BNI Bank's savings customer relationships in the banking sector', *Journal on Economics, Management and Business Technology* 2(1), 30–36. <https://doi.org/10.35335/jembut.v2i1.186>
- Alzoubi, H.M. & Inairat, M., 2020, 'Do perceived service value, quality, price fairness and service recovery shape customer satisfaction and delight? A practical study in the service telecommunication context', *Uncertain supply chain management* 8(3), 579–588.
- Anggraini, R.A., 2024, 'Predicting the significance of trust, service quality, and values for customer satisfaction', *Research of Business and Management* 2(1), 41–52. <https://doi.org/10.58777/rbm.v2i1.186>
- Banahene, S., Mensah, A.A. & Asamoah, A., 2018, 'The impact of customer satisfaction on loyalty in the Ghana banking sector: The effect of trust mediation', *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal* 5(12), 193–202. <https://doi.org/10.14738/assrj.512.5545>
- Berman, B., 2005, 'How to delight your customers', *California Management Review* 48(1), 129–151. <https://doi.org/10.2307/41166331>
- Blut, M., Chaney, D., Lunardo, R., Mencarelli, R. & Grewal, D., 2024, 'Customer perceived value: A comprehensive meta-analysis', *Journal of Service Research* 27(4), 501–524. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10946705231222295>
- Čavlin, M., Bulović, V. & Šmitran, B., 2024, 'Strategic benefits of a customer-centric approach in customer relationship management system', *Journal of Agronomy, Technology and Engineering Management* 7(3), 1114–1123. <https://doi.org/10.55817/BLVS9823>
- Cheng, J.-H., Chen, F.-Y. & Chang, Y.-H., 2008, 'Airline relationship quality: An examination of Taiwanese passengers', *Tourism Management* 29(3), 487–499. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2007.05.015>
- Cunningham, N., 2023, 'The role of social group influences when intending to purchase premium alcohol', *Cogent Business and Management* 10(1), 2174093. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975-2023-2174093>
- Dagger, T.S., Sweeney, J.C. & Johnson, L.W., 2007, 'A hierarchical model of health service quality: Scale development and investigation of an integrated model', *Journal of Service Research* 10(2), 123–142. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1094670507309594>
- de Freitas, C.C., Bilro, R.G. & Marques, S.H., 2023, 'The influence of customer engagement on destination loyalty from a destination marketing organisation perspective', in *Handbook of Customer Engagement in Tourism Marketing*, pp. 115–128, Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham.
- Desiyanti, N.L., Sudja, I.N. & Martini, L.K.B., 2018, 'Effect of service quality on customer satisfaction, customer delight and customer loyalty (study on LPD Desa Adat Sembung and LPD Desa Adat Seseh)', *International Journal of Contemporary Research and Review* 9(3), 20660–20668. <https://doi.org/10.15520/ijcrr/2018/9/03/483>
- Elishaer, I.A., Azazz, A.M., Fayyad, S., Aljoghaiman, A., Fathy, E.A. & Fouad, A.M., 2025, 'From asymmetry to satisfaction: The dynamic role of perceived value and trust to boost customer satisfaction in the tourism industry', *Tourism and Hospitality* 6(2), 1–38. <https://doi.org/10.3390/tourhosp6020068>
- Etikan, I., 2016, 'Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling', *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics* 5(1), 1–4. <https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ajtas.20160501.11>
- Farrell, A.M., 2010, 'Insufficient discriminant validity: A comment on Bove, Pervan, Beatty, and Shiu (2009)', *Journal of Business Research* 63(3), 324–327. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2009.05.003>
- Field, J.M., Fotheringham, D., Subramony, M., Gustafsson, A., Ostrom, A.L., Lemon, K.N. et al., 2021, 'Service research priorities: Designing sustainable service ecosystems', *Journal of Service Research* 24(4), 462–479. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10946705211031302>
- Geebren, A. & Jabbar, A., 2021, 'Factors that influence customer trust and satisfaction in mobile banking: A problematization approach', *International Journal of E-Business Research (IJEER)* 17(3), 66–82. <https://doi.org/10.4018/IJEER.2021.070105>
- Giovanis, A., Athanasopoulou, P. & Tsoukatos, E., 2015, 'The role of service fairness in the service quality – Relationship quality – Customer loyalty chain: An empirical study', *Journal of Service Theory and Practice* 25(6), 744–776. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JSTP-11-2013-0263>
- Gonu, E., Agyei, P.M., Richard, O.K. & Asare-Larbi, M., 2023, 'Customer orientation, service quality and customer satisfaction interplay in the banking sector: An emerging market perspective', *Cogent Business & Management* 10(1), 2163797. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2022.2163797>
- GSMA, 2025, *The mobile economy: Sub-Saharan Africa 2025*, GSMA, viewed 10 February 2025, from <https://www.gsma.com>.
- Hair, J.F., Black, W.C., Babin, B.J. & Anderson, R.E., 2019, *Multivariate data analysis*, 8th edn., Cengage Learning, Andover, MA.

- Haryono, S., Suharyono, A.F.D. & Suyadi, I., 2015, 'The effects of service quality on customer satisfaction, customer delight, trust, repurchase intention, and word of mouth', *European Journal of Business and Management* 7(12), 36–48.
- Hashem, M.K., Ruiz-Mafé, C. & Curras-Perez, R., 2024, 'Do customer orientation strategies drive an excellent customer experience?: The case of Abu Khader Automotive', in B. Barbosa (ed.), *Marketing innovation strategies and consumer behavior*, pp. 175–198, IGI Global, Hershey, PA.
- Hassan, H. & Magdy, A., 2025, 'From redundancy to delight: Towards optimized organizational outcomes', *Tourism and Hospitality Management* 31(2), I–XIII. <https://doi.org/10.20867/thm.31.2.1>
- Hidayat, K. & Idrus, M.I., 2023, 'The effect of relationship marketing towards switching barrier, customer satisfaction, and customer trust on bank customers', *Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship* 12(1), 29. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13731-023-00270-7>
- Hu, L.T. & Bentler, P.M., 1998, 'Fit indices in covariance structure modeling: Sensitivity to underparameterized model misspecification', *Psychological Methods* 3(4), 424–453. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1082-989X.3.4.424>
- Huddin, M.N., Kurnia, D., Deviyantoro, D. & Nafudin, N., 2024, 'The relationship between customer experience, customer satisfaction, customer trust, and customer loyalty in tourism destination', *Diponegoro International Journal of Business* 6(2), 142–154. <https://doi.org/10.14710/dijb.6.2.2023.142-154>
- Husne Jahan, C., Azmal Ali, G.M.Q., Nazifa Anbar, S. & Md Abidur, R., 2024, 'The mediating role of trust in shaping customer loyalty of bank: Insights from a developing country perspective', *Financial Markets, Institutions and Risks* 8(4), 111–125. [https://doi.org/10.61093/fmir.8\(4\).111-125.2024](https://doi.org/10.61093/fmir.8(4).111-125.2024)
- Ibrahim, M. & Rasheed, A., 2024, 'Exploring the link between customer relationship management and hotel performance', *Journal of Policy Options* 7(1), 1–10.
- Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA), 2024, *State of the ICT sector report 2024*, Independent Communications Authority of South Africa, viewed 12 March 2025, from <https://www.icasa.org.za>.
- Islam, S., Zahin, M. and Rahim, S.B., 2024, 'Investigating how consumer-perceived value and store image influence brand loyalty in emerging markets', *South Asian Journal of Business Studies* 13(4), 505–526.
- Jiang, Y., 2020, 'A cognitive appraisal process of customer delight: The moderating effect of place identity', *Journal of Travel Research* 59(6), 1029–1043. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287519872827>
- Kemp, S., 2023, *Digital 2023: Local country headlines report*, viewed 22 November 2024, from https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2023-local-country-headlines?utm_source=DataReportal&utm_medium=Country_Article_Hyperlink&utm_campaign=Digital_2023&utm_term=South_Africa&utm_content=Yearbook_Promo.
- Khan, A.A., Tareen, N.A.K. & Jadoon, S., 2018, 'Impact of SERVQUAL and interaction quality on customer satisfaction and delight in transportation services', *Journal of Scientific Research and Reports* 20(6), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.9734/JSRR/2018/25280>
- Kim, S., Kim, M. & Choi, L., 2024, '"Going the extra mile": An integrative model of customer delight', *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management* 36(4), 1193–1212. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-09-2022-1083>
- Kodua, P., Blankson, C., Panda, S., Nguyen, T., Hinson, R.E. & Narteh, B., 2022, 'The relationship between CSR and CBBE in Sub-Saharan Africa: The moderating role of customer perceived value', *Journal of African Business* 23(4), 1088–1108. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15228916.2021.2015835>
- Kumra, R. & Sharma, P.K., 2022, 'Mediating role of trust in the impact of perceived empathy and customer orientation on intention to continue relationship in Indian banks', *Journal of Financial Services Marketing* 27(4), 372–386.
- Labuschagne, H., 2023, 'Winners and losers of South Africa's mobile subscriber battle', *MyBroadband*, viewed 21 November 2024, from <https://mybroadband.co.za/news/cellular/519235-winners-and-losers-of-south-africas-mobile-subscriber-battle.html>.
- Le, C.X. & Wang, H., 2020, 'Integrative perceived values influencing consumers' attitude and behavioral responses toward mobile location-based advertising: An empirical study in Vietnam', *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics* 33(1), 275–295. <https://doi.org/10.1108/APJML-08-2019-0475>
- Leninkumar, V., 2017, 'The relationship between customer satisfaction and customer trust on customer loyalty', *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 7(4), 450–465. <https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v7-i4/2821>
- Lewis, C., 2023, *A step closer to achieving a connected South Africa where no one is left behind*, viewed 21 November 2024, from <https://www.icasa.org.za/news/2023/a-step-closer-to-achieving-a-connected-south-africa-where-no-one-is-left-behind>.
- Li, W., Pomegbe, W.W.K., Dogbe, C.S.K. & Novioxo, J.D., 2019, 'Employees' customer orientation and customer satisfaction in the public utility sector: The mediating role of service quality', *African Journal of Economic and Management Studies* 10(4), 408–423. <https://doi.org/10.1108/AJEMS-10-2018-0314>
- Lim, W.M., Saha, V. & Das, M., 2025, 'From service failure to brand loyalty: Evidence of service recovery paradox', *Journal of Brand Management*, 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41262-025-00380-5>
- Masoma, R.P. & Maduku, D.K., 2025, 'Promoting customer loyalty in the mobile service industry in South Africa: The roles of satisfaction and delight', *Journal of General Management*, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/03063070251335386>
- Melnik, V., 2024, 'Transforming the nature of trust between banks and young clients: From traditional to digital banking', *Qualitative Research in Financial Markets* 16(4), 618–635. <https://doi.org/10.1108/QRFM-08-2022-0129>
- Mistrear, L., 2021, 'Customer orientation as a basic principle in the contemporary activity of the bank', *Journal of Public Administration, Finance and Law* 10(21), 39–51. <https://doi.org/10.47743/jopaf-2021-21-05>
- Mkhwanazi, A., 2023, 'The effect of relationship marketing on consumer behaviour in South Africa', Master's thesis, University of the Witwatersrand.
- Moliner-Tena, M.A., Monferrer-Tirado, D. & Estrada-Guillén, M., 2019, 'Customer engagement, non-transactional behaviors and experience in services: A study in the bank sector', *International Journal of Bank Marketing* 37(3), 730–754. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJBM-04-2018-0107>
- Morales Mediano, J. & Ruiz-Alba, J.L., 2020, 'Customer orientation in highly relational services', *Marketing Intelligence & Planning* 38(2), 209–223. <https://doi.org/10.1108/MIP-02-2019-0127>
- Morgan, R.M. & Hunt, S.D., 1994, 'The commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing', *Journal of Marketing* 58(3), 20–38. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002224299405800302>
- Morwitz, V.G. & Munz, K.P., 2021, 'Intentions', *Consumer Psychology Review* 4(1), 26–41. <https://doi.org/10.1002/arcp.1061>
- Nazeri, A., Kazemi, S.M.M., Shahriyari, R., Jalali, M., Roshani, S. & Motakiani, A., 2022, 'Service quality and customer delight: Considering the mediating role of satisfaction and loyalty', *International Journal of Management Development* 2(2), 151–165. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJMD.2022.122866>
- Nunnally, J.C. & Bernstein, I.H., 1994, *Psychometric theory*, 3rd edn., McGraw-Hill, New York, NY.
- Nyadzaio, M., 2010, 'The mediating role of customer relationship management on customer retention at selected motor vehicle dealership in the Buffalo City Municipality', unpublished MCom dissertation, University of Fort Hare.
- Oliver, R.L., Rust, R.T. & Varki, S., 1997, 'Customer delight: Foundations, findings, and managerial insight', *Journal of Retailing* 73(3), 311–336. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0022-4359\(97\)90021-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0022-4359(97)90021-X)
- Palanisamy, M., Paul Vincent, M.T. & Hossain, M.B., 2025, 'Financial literacy and behavioral intention to use central banks' digital currency: Moderating role of trust', *Journal of Risk and Financial Management* 18(3), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.3390/jrfm18030165>
- Parasuraman, A.B.L.L., Zeithaml, V.A. & Berry, L., 1988, 'SERVQUAL: A multiple-item scale for measuring consumer perceptions of service quality', 64(1), 12–40.
- Park, J. & Yi, Y., 2023, 'The influence of frontline employee self-disclosure about products in a retail store on customer trust in the retailer in the context of service encounters', *Psychology & Marketing* 40(7), 1417–1430. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.21817>
- Peong, K.K., Peong, K.P. & Tan, K.Y., 2021, 'Behavioural intention of commercial banks' customers towards financial technology services', *Journal of Finance & Banking Review (JFBR)* 5(4), 10–27. [https://doi.org/10.35609/jfbr.2021.5.4\(2\)](https://doi.org/10.35609/jfbr.2021.5.4(2))
- Petzer, D.J. & Roberts-Lombard, M., 2021, 'Delight and commitment – Revisiting the satisfaction-loyalty link', *Journal of Relationship Marketing* 20(4), 282–318. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15332667.2020.1855068>
- Piątkowska, M., 2023, 'Do perceived value and satisfaction affect customers' behavioural intentions? A case study of Polish squash clubs', *Journal of Marketing and Consumer Behaviour in Emerging Markets* 2023(2), 17–31. <https://doi.org/10.7172/2449-6634.jmcem.2023.2.2>
- Pramkaew, W., Limsuwan, P. & Sony, A., 2023, 'The impact of customers' perceived values on repurchase intention of Shabu Gunadi buffet restaurant service: Untangling the influence of perceived emotional, social, price, and quality values', *Journal of Family Business & Management Studies* 15(2), 41.
- PwC, 2024, *South Africa entertainment and media outlook 2024–2028*, PricewaterhouseCoopers, viewed 12 February 2025, from <https://www.pwc.co.za>.
- Rane, N.L., Achari, A. & Choudhary, S.P., 2023, 'Enhancing customer loyalty through quality of service: Effective strategies to improve customer satisfaction, experience, relationship, and engagement', *International Research Journal of Modernization in Engineering Technology and Science* 5(5), 427–452. <https://doi.org/10.56726/IRJMET538104>
- Rather, R.A. & Hollebeek, L.D., 2021, 'Customers' service-related engagement, experience, and behavioural intent: Moderating role of age', *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services* 60, 102453. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2021.102453>
- Ricardianto, P., Yanto, T.A., Wardhono, D.T., Fachrial, P., Sari, M., Suryobuwono, A.A. et al., 2023, 'The impact of service quality, ticket price policy and passenger trust on airport train passenger loyalty', *Uncertain Supply Chain Management* 11(1), 307–318. <https://doi.org/10.5267/j.uscm.2022.9.012>
- Roberts-Lombard, M. & Petzer, D.J., 2021, 'Relationship marketing: An S-O-R perspective emphasising the importance of trust in retail banking', *International Journal of Bank Marketing* 39(5), 725–750. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJBM-08-2020-0417>
- Sarstedt, M., Ringle, C.M. & Hair, J.F., 2017, 'Partial least squares structural equation modelling', in C. Homburg, M. Klarmann & A. Vomberg (eds.), *Handbook of market research*, pp. 1–40, Springer, Cham.
- Schönsleben, P., 2019, 'Tangible services and intangible products in industrial product service systems', *Procedia CIRP* 83, 28–31. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.procir.2019.02.144>
- Shoukat, M.H. & Ramkissoon, H., 2022, 'Customer delight, engagement, experience, value co-creation, place identity, and revisit intention: A new conceptual framework', *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management* 31(6), 757–775. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19368623.2022.2062692>
- Sumariani, N.P.A., 2025, 'Factors influencing customer trust in financial institutions: A systematic literature review', *JUSTBEST Journal of Sustainable Business and Management* 5(1), 47–56. <https://doi.org/10.52432/justbest.5.1.47-56>

- Supriyanto, A., Wiyono, B.B. & Burhanuddin, B., 2021, 'Effects of service quality and customer satisfaction on loyalty of bank customers', *Cogent Business & Management* 8(1), 1937847. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2021.1937847>
- Svotwa, T.D., Makanyeza, C., Roberts-Lombard, M. & Jaiyeoba, O.O., 2023, 'A relationship marketing perspective on delight, its antecedents and outcomes in a banking context', *European Business Review* 35(3), 306–336. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EBR-09-2022-0170>
- Taylor, P., 2024, *Smartphone penetration as share of population in South Africa 2020–2029*, viewed 21 November 2024, from <https://www.statista.com/statistics/625448/smartphone-user-penetration-in-south-africa/#:~:text=The%20smartphone%20penetration%20in%20South,a%20new%20peak%20in%202029>
- Tjahjono, S.P.B. & Dahlan, K.S.S., 2023, 'Increased customer loyalty: The role of service quality, trust, satisfaction, and business process improvement as mediation', *Journal of Social Science* 2(10), 912–926. <https://doi.org/10.57185/joss.v2i10.141>
- Trung, N.V.H., Ashekin, S., Hong, V.O.T.T. & El-Aidie, S., 2021, 'Influencing factors of customers' behavioural intention within Malaysian restaurants', *City University eJournal of Academic Research (CUEJAR)* 3(1), 48–67.
- Tumaku, J., Ren, J., Boakye, K.G., Ofori, K.S. & Abubakari, A., 2023, 'Interplay between perceived value, trust and continuance intention: Evidence in the sharing economy', *International Journal of Quality and Service Sciences* 15(1), 74–96.
- Van Teijlingen, E. & Hundley, V., 2001, 'The importance of pilot studies', *Social Research Update* 35, 1–4.
- Vargo, S.L. & Lusch, R.F., 2014, 'Evolving to a new dominant logic for marketing', in *The service-dominant logic of marketing*, pp. 3–28, Routledge, Oxfordshire.
- Weinstein, A., 2024, 'In search of customer delight: Integrating customer satisfaction and NPS metrics', *Applied Marketing Analytics* 9(4), 320–329. <https://doi.org/10.69554/QNUB2426>
- Windarti, G.A.O., Alhadi, E., Zahara, E. & Andriani, T., 2020, Impact of customer orientation and quality of service on trust and customer loyalty. In *3rd Forum in Research, Science, and Technology (FIRST 2019)*, pp. 35–39, Atlantis Press, Palembang.
- Wray, B., Palmer, A. & Bejou, D., 1994, 'Using neural network analysis to evaluate buyer-seller relationships', *European Journal of Marketing* 28(10), 32–48. <https://doi.org/10.1108/03090569410075777>
- Yesmin, M.N., Hoque, S., Hossain, M.A., Jahan, N., Fang, Y., Wu, R. et al., 2023, 'SERVQUAL to determine relationship quality and behavioural intentions: An SEM approach in retail banking service', *Sustainability* 15(8), 6536. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15086536>
- Yuliantoro, N. & Antonio, F., 2022, 'Antecedents customer delight and consequences it (study on Padang restaurants and Sundanese restaurants in Jakarta)', *International Journal of Economics, Business and Accounting Research (IUEBAR)* 6(2), 1450–1459.