A mediated model for positive word of mouth intention in the electronic banking environment

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BEDANKINGS

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Spreuke 6:6-8: "*Gaan kyk na die mier, luiaard, kyk hoe hy werk, en leer by hom. Hy het nie 'n leier nie, nie 'n opsigter of 'n regeerder nie, tog maak hy sy kosvoorraad reg in die somer, versamel hy sy voedsel in die oestyd*"*.*

Jeremia: 29:11-13 "*Ek weet wat Ek vir julle beplan, sê die Here: voorspoed en nie teenspoed nie; Ek wil vir julle 'n toekoms gee, 'n verwagting! Dan sal julle My aanroep, tot My kom bid, en Ek sal julle gebede verhoor. Julle sal vra na my wil en julle sal dan my wil ken as julle met julle hele hart daarna vra*".

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ABSTRACT

It is generally acknowledged that positive word of mouth concerns consumers' communication of favourable information about an organisation's products and services to others. Accordingly, positive word of mouth is highly beneficial for organisations since current customers can persuade potential customers to accept and use the organisation's products or services. Among the range of predictors of positive word of mouth previously identified, it was further noted that key relationship quality dimensions (trust and commitment) as well as perceived value (perceived usefulness) may positively and significantly impact on positive word of mouth. It further seems that these dimensions do not operate in isolation, but in fact are interconnected. According to extant literature customers may first become committed towards the organisation, owing to the development of trusting perceptions, before engaging in positive word of mouth behaviour. Similarly, it has been found that perceived value may impact on views of relationship quality. The perceived value of a purchase serves as a building block of perceived relationship quality. Therefore, customers perceiving a service as useful and per se having value may become committed towards the organisation, which then serves as an indicator of relationship quality.

Considering these relationships, it is consequently possible that commitment (a relationship quality factor) may serve a mediating role on the relationship between perceived usefulness (a perceived value factor) and positive word of mouth. Similarly, the relationship between trust (another relationship quality dimension) and commitment, as well as between commitment and positive word-of-mouth, also point towards the possibility of commitment to serve a mediating role on the impact of trust on positive word-of-mouth. Little, however, is known about these matters since they appear to have been overlooked in academic research. The researcher could not find any evidence of a mediating model of perceived usefulness, trust, commitment and positive word of mouth, as described above. Confirmation of the proposed relationships though could further knowledge of relationship marketing practices and the contributions of the selected perceived value and relationship quality factors in enhancing positive word of mouth.

Accordingly, in response to the stated research gap, and to contribute to theory and practice, it was then the aim of this study to examine the interrelationships between trust, commitment and perceived usefulness, as proposed above, and to assess their ultimate effect on positive word of mouth. The research context was electronic banking services in South Africa that may benefit from a mediated model for positive word of mouth to assist in advancing the adoption and use of electronic banking services among their customers. Given the research setting, the study was specifically interested in electronic banking customers' perceptions of the perceived usefulness of electronic banking services in enhancing their productivity, the extent to which electronic banking customers have competence trust and thus belief in the reliability of electronic banking services, whether customers are prepared to make a continued investment in the sphere of electronic banking services and therefore have continuance commitment and if they have the intention to engage in positive word of mouth behaviour and recommend the benefits of electronic banking services to other potential customers.

The research design was quantitative and explanatory in nature and involved the distribution of self-administered questionnaires to 500 current customers of electronic banking services. The target population was defined as males and females, eighteen years and older, residing in selected cities and towns in urban and semi-urban areas in South Africa and who are making use of at least one form of electronic banking service. Non-probability sampling was used which included purposive (judgement) sampling to select the sampling units (regions), while convenience sampling and quota sampling was used to select the sampling elements (respondents) within each region. The gender quotas was filled by approaching an equal number of male and female respondents in each region. A structured self-administered questionnaire was used to collect information from the respondents. Previously validated measurement scales were used to measure the research constructs. The respondents were requested to indicate their level of agreement with each statement, using a Likert-type scale that ranged from 1 being “strongly disagree”, to 5 representing “strongly agree”. In the end, a total of 511 useable questionnaires were obtained that was included in the analysis. The data analysis involved frequencies, descriptive statistics, an assessment of the reliability and validity of the measurement scales used as well as structural equation modelling (SEM) analysis to test the proposed theoretical model. The findings showed that the measurement scales implemented to measure the constructs of the study are all valid and reliable. Content validity, convergent validity, discriminant validity and ultimately construct validity of the measurement model was obtained. The structural model also presented acceptable model fit. Furthermore, continuance commitment was found to mediate the relationships between perceived usefulness and competence trust with positive word-of-mouth intention, respectively.

From a theoretical perspective, the research findings are strategically significant for relationship marketing researchers interested in the impact of relationship marketing practices on positive word of mouth behaviour. It appears that customers’ perceptions of service attributes and the value received must be considered when furthering knowledge on trust and commitment and developing strategic recommendations for enhancing word of mouth communication. Second, there has been little published research on the impact of customer perceived value on relationship quality. Although marketing research recognises this relationship, only a scarce amount of studies could be found that empirically support this relationship. Hence, the current findings provide further evidence that customer perceptions of perceived value may contribute to relationship quality, such as continuance commitment. It seems that within the electronic banking environment, customers who perceive the service as useful and improving their productivity may also view the cost connected with leaving the relationship to be too high, and therefore want to keep on being continuously committed. Third, this study's research findings confirm the formerly recognised relationship amongst trust and commitment. In the context of this study then direct relationships have been determined amongst competence trust and continuance commitment. It appears that customers who believe the service is reliable may feel that the cost of terminating the service would be too high, and therefore would rather remain committed to the current service. Lastly, the significant and positive relationship amongst competence trust and positive word of mouth intention, which remains significant after the mediating effect of continuance commitment, points to the vital importance of a trusting relationship within the electronic banking environment and customers' inclination to recommend a service they perceive as reliable to other possible customers.

From a managerial perspective, the research findings also have strategic importance to the banking industry that is struggling with customers who are reluctant to convert to electronic banking services. It seems that banking institutions should approach existing users of electronic banking services for assistance to convince fellow customers of the benefits of the service. Customers may believe the advice obtained from friends and family over that of a sales consultant who may be perceived as not having their best interest at heart. However, current electronic banking users' inclination to engage in positive word of mouth, may depend on the extent to which they are convinced of the service's usefulness, whether they believe the service can be trusted, and the extent to which they are committed to the service. All these elements need to be present, as their interrelationship may contribute to greater positive word of mouth intention.

Finally, while the current study makes a valuable contribution in advancing knowledge on relationship marketing and positive word of mouth intention, more research can be conducted to further enhance the impact of the identified model. For example, the current model only concentrates on perceived usefulness as a belief factor that may contribute to commitment. Future research studies may consider including other belief factors that may also be relevant within the self-service technology environment and that may have a positive and significant impact on continuance commitment. More dimensions of relationship quality can be added to the model which could contribute to positive word of mouth intention. Moreover, it is recommended that the study be repeated in other service sectors to confirm the relevance of the proposed model in other research contexts.

LIST OF KEYWORDS

This section provides a brief explanation of the key terms used in this study.

- **Perceived usefulness**
  Davis (1989:320) regards perceived usefulness as the extent to which a customer who uses a specific system believes that that system improves his or her performance. In other words, perceived usefulness refers to a situation where a customer believes that a system improves his or her effectiveness, increases his or her productivity and progress as well as his or her overall performance (Hsiao *et al.*, 2016b:346; Yee-Loong *et al.*, 2010:271).

- **Relationship quality**
  Relationship quality is regarded as a complete evaluation of the strength of a relationship, and is theorised as a complex or multidimensional concept that includes the different but connected aspects of a relationship (Palmatier *et al.*, 2006:183). Relationship quality is comprised of several dimensions where trust and commitment are regarded as its core elements (Hennig-Thurau *et al*., 2002:234; Morgan & Hunt, 1994:22; Mukherjee & Nath, 2007:1192; Ulaga & Eggert, 2006:314).

- **Competence trust**
  Mayer *et al*. (1995:717) conceptualised competence trust as a "group of skills, competencies, and characteristics that enables a party to have influence within a specific domain". In other words, competence trust is the expectation that an organisation will accomplish tasks at an established level (Dowell *et al*., 2013:439). Cullen *et al*. (2000:225) suggested that competence trust is the practical element of trust, since it comprises the extent to which people believe that an organisation can fulfil its promises.

- **Continuance commitment**
  According to Roxenhall and Andrésen (2012:88), continuance commitment occurs when customers feel obliged to remain in a relationship and feel reliant on the service or product's benefits (also see Allen & Meyer, 1990:4). In other words, continuance commitment means that customers may feel indebted to remain in a relationship with an organisation, since there is a perception of high switching costs (Fullerton, 2003; Jones *et al.,* 2000).

- **Positive word of mouth intention**
  Positive word of mouth intention refers to customers' inclination to share information regarding a product or service that they have noted and which they regard to be of interest to peers and family (Mikalef *et al.*, 2013:25).

- **The South African banking industry**

  The South African Reserve Bank oversees the South African banking system, and continually evaluates the proficiency and solidity of key elements in the country's financial system (South African Reserve Bank, 2017). The Banking Association of South Africa (2017) identifies 17 banks that are registered in South Africa, complemented by 14 international bank branches and 43 offices representing banks in South Africa. The retail banking landscape in the country is dominated by five retail banks: Standard Bank, ABSA (which is foreign-controlled), Nedbank, Capitec and FNB – with Standard Bank serving the largest number of customers followed by the other four banks (BusinessTech, 2015; BusinessTech, 2016; Buzz South Africa, 2017).

- **Self-service technologies**

  Self-services technologies refer to technological interfaces that allow customers to make independent use of services without the involvement of direct-services employees (Meuter *et al.,* 2000:50).

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXTUALISATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study sets out to develop a mediated model for customers' positive word of mouth intention in the electronic banking environment. There appears to be limited knowledge regarding the interrelationships between perceived value and relationship quality that may ultimately affect positive word of mouth intention as a form of behavioural intention of loyalty. It has been noted that perceived value and relationship quality, with the latter comprising trust and commitment, may impact on a customer's positive disposition towards word of mouth communication (Hartline & Jones, 1996:207; Hutchinson *et al.*, 2011:473; Lien & Cao, 2014:108; Rauyruen & Miller, 2005:27). Literature has also pointed to the potential of perceived value and trust to impact on customer commitment (Moliner *et al.*, 2007; Moreira & Silva, 2015; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Shukla *et al*., 2016). The interrelationships between perceived value, trust and commitment and their ultimate impact on positive word of mouth intention, however, has received little attention and requires further investigation.

Insight into these matters is important, since the South African retail banking sector, in its endeavour to create value, is following international banking trends and is also concentrating on digital and electronic banking channels as opposed to the traditional in-branch banking services (Kumar, 2016; Singh, 2004:190; PwC, 2016:37). The successful implementation of these initiatives, however, depends on the extent to which customers would be willing to adopt the new technologies and make use of electronic banking services to conduct their banking transactions. This issue may further be problematic within the South African retail banking environment where customers are reluctant to trust the electronic banking service provided (Ramavhona & Mokwena, 2016:1). In order to be more successful, retail banks should focus on existing users (who are the potential customer's friends and family) to assist them in advocating the benefits of the electronic banking services to, for example, friends and family. Service customers seem to favour personal independent sources over impersonal sources of information and tend to demonstrate greater confidence in personal sources when considering a service purchase (Bansal & Voyer, 2000:167; Murray, 1991:19). The proposed model of this study may provide greater insight regarding the extent to which retail banks may need to build quality relationships with their customers to ensure that they are aware of the value received, in order to allow for the facilitation of positive word of mouth communication.

Consequently, in order to contribute towards theory and practice in the field, the present study explores the interrelationship between perceived value and relationship quality factors (trust and commitment) and their ultimate effect on customers' positive disposition towards word of mouth communication. From a theoretical perspective, the research findings may expand the developing literature on the perceived value theory, the relationship quality theory and behavioural intention. Specifically, insights may be gained into the interrelationships between the perceived value and relationship quality constructs that may ultimately affect word of mouth intention as a form of behavioural intention of loyalty. Whereas, from a practical perspective, the research findings may offer guidance to retail banks for adapting their marketing strategies to facilitate more positive word of mouth communication that may ultimately lead to greater willingness to make use of electronic banking services.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY AND RESEARCH PROBLEM

Word of mouth communication can influence the behaviours and attitudes of consumers, and therefore offers organisations a means for obtaining a competitive advantage (Brown & Reingen, 1987:350; Mazzarol *et al*., 2007:1475). Word of mouth communication is viewed as person-to-person communication about brands, products or services. This communication occurs between a communicator (a consumer) and a receiver (another consumer) (Arndt, 1967:3; Libai *et al*., 2010:269). Word of mouth communication has also been identified as an exchange of thoughts, ideas, and comments amongst two or more individuals where not one of the individuals are corresponded to a marketing source (Bone, 1992:579). In a similar vein word of mouth communication has been also been conceptualised as informal communication amongst two or more individuals (Anderson, 1998:6; Arndt, 1967:71; Stern, 1994:7) about a brand's services or products in a non-commercial manner (Arndt, 1967:3; Bone, 1992:579; Stern, 1994:7). Word of mouth communication can therefore be regarded as casual conversations between customers about a product offering. It excludes formal communication such as customer complaints to organisations (Mazzarol *et al*., 2007:1477) or the marketing conversations that organisations may have with their customers (Arndt, 1967:3; Mazzarol *et al*., 2007:1477).

Marketing literature distinguishes between traditional word of mouth communication in an *offline environment* and electronic word of mouth communication in an *online environment* (Pokrywka & Gfrerer, 2012:16). Informal person-to-person communication (comments, thoughts, and ideas) about brands, products or services is better known as traditional word of mouth communication (Anderson, 1998:5; Arndt, 1967:3; Libai *et al*., 2010:269). On the other hand, Hennig-Thurau *et al.* (2004:39) describe electronic word of mouth communication as either optimistic or negative comments by previous, current, or possible customers about an organisation or its products.

These comments are freely accessible to a multitude of individuals and organisations once they have been posted on the Internet. From the definitions provided above, it appears that both traditional and electronic word of mouth communication essentially entails the sharing of information between customers regarding an experience with services, brands or products. Furthermore, these conversations have no commercial motivations (Pokrywka & Gfrerer, 2012:16). However, the traditional form of word of mouth communication allows for the provision and acceptance of information offline through a social network of family, friends, peers, and co-workers. Conversely, conversations using the electronic word of mouth communication channel occur online, over social media or the internet, and includes web-based option platforms, conversation forums, boycott websites, news groups, personal emails, chat rooms, instant messages and YouTube (Hennig-Thurau *et al*., 2004:40; Pokrywka & Gfrerer, 2012:16; Tang, 2010:34). Therefore, traditional word of mouth communication is viewed as a synchronous dialogue that happens on a person-to-person basis, whereas electronic word of mouth communication is regarded as an asynchronous process where time, location and distance are not limiting factors (Pokrywka & Gfrerer, 2012:16; Yee *et al.*, 2009:11).

Essentially, both forms of word of mouth communication are important. A vast number of studies have been conducted over the years to obtain more insight into the word of mouth concept from both an online as well as an offline perspective (Shamhuyenhanzva *et al.*, 2016:439). Broadly speaking, these studies can be grouped into three streams of research. The first stream focuses on the ‘whys’ and ‘wherefores’ of customers who are actively sharing the word regarding the services and products experienced. The second stream examines information-seeking behaviour, specifically the circumstances under which customers wholly depend on word of mouth communication, above any other sources of information. Lastly, the third stream explore the reasons why some personal sources of information have a more significant effect on the decision-making process than other sources of information (De Bruyn & Lilien, 2008:152).

For the purpose of this study, the literature investigation focuses on the first research stream that appears to be an important focus area within marketing research. A vast number of studies have been conducted with a view to obtain a better understanding of the antecedents of positive word of mouth communication specifically (for example, Abubakar & Mavondo, 2014:855; Das, 2013:95; De Matos & Rossi, 2008:588; Hennig-Thurau *et al*., 2002:240; Lang & Hyde, 2013:2; Lien & Cao, 2014:109; Morgan & Hunt, 1994:31; Soltani & Khavari, 2015:1033; Sweeney *et al*., 2014:350; Teo & Soutar, 2012:678).

In contrast to negative word of mouth communication that entails interpersonal communication amongst customers regarding a marketing organisation or a product where these objects of the communication is degraded (Richins, 1984:697), positive word of mouth communication occurs when favourable sentiments about the organisation is communicated or brands are recommended (De Matos & Rossi, 2008:580; Gruen *et al.*, 2006:451; Lindberg-Repo & Grönroos, 1999:115). Positive word of mouth communication may contribute to benefits such as customers persuading other customers to use a product or service, or to develop favourable perceptions about the organisation's offering (Buttle, 1998:242; Gruen *et al.*, 2006:451; Parsa, 2015:1250).

Among the range of predictors of positive word of mouth communication, two types of relationships were noted that are especially worth mentioning in this section. The first type concerns the widely-acknowledged view that relationship quality factors may impact on positive word of mouth intention (Brown *et al*., 2005:133; Lien & Cao, 2014; Molinari *et al*., 2008:369; Ng *et al*., 2011:133). For example, Casaló *et al.* (2008:408) found that greater customer loyalty resulted directly in greater levels of positive electronic word of mouth communication. The reason for this behaviour is that by providing quality services and by fulfilling its promises to customers, an organisation is perceived as showing respect to the customer that enhances customers' confidence in the organisation. These actions may then result to customers becoming more disposed to engage in positive word of mouth communication and to be inclined to tell other potential customers about the benefits received (Hartline & Jones, 1996:213; Shirsavar *et al.*, 2012:459).

The second salient relationship is that customers' perceived value may contribute to positive word of mouth intentions. Empirical evidence of this relationship can be found in the findings of a number of scholars, including Durvasula *et al.* (2004:314) and Hartline and Jones (1996:207). The marketing literature therefore suggest that perceived service value serves as an incentive for customers to display loyalty behaviour for instance positive word of mouth communication (McKee *et al.*, 2006:212).

Fundamentally, knowledge of the two relationships pointed out above is important because positive associations have also been found between perceived value perceptions of customers and their view on relationship quality. Gummesson (1987), for instance, has postulated that relationship quality could reflect the accumulated value of exchanges with the customer. Ravald and Grönroos (1996:24) propound that value-adding attributes are important in the first stage of the relationship, while the quality of the relationship carries more weight when the relationship is more established. The perceived value of a purchase subsequently serves as a building block of perceived relationship quality. The same connection has been pointed out in other studies (Moliner, 2009:81; Moliner *et al.*, 2007:1399). The implications of these findings are that it is likely that, along with the dimensions of perceived value and relationship quality contributing to positive word of mouth intention, a connection may also exist between the two concepts that may create another path for securing positive word of mouth intention. Ultimately, a connection between a perceived value factor and a relationship quality factor *per se* could affect positive word of mouth intention to a larger degree than the sum of the direct effects if measured individually. A relationship quality factor may mediate the relationship between the customer's perceived value and his/her disposition towards word of mouth communication.

Another interesting observation is that within the relationship quality domain, it is also likely that the dimensions of relationship quality may be interconnected to further strengthen the impact of these on consumer behaviour. Specifically, research has indicated that the key dimensions of relationship quality, namely trust and commitment (apart from their direct individual relationships with word of mouth communication) may also relate to each other. Owing to the development of perceptions of trust, customers may become committed towards the organisation before becoming positively disposed to engaging in word of mouth communication behaviour (Radomir *et al*., 2015:83). Therefore, it is also likely that the two key relationship quality dimensions may, apart from having a direct effect on positive word of mouth intention, also strengthen their impact on it as a form of customer citizenship behaviour through their relationship with each other.

However, not much is known about these matters since they appear to have been overlooked in academic research. The researcher could not find any mediated model that indicates a connection between perceived value and relationship quality, or a connection between the quality factors of trust and commitment that could strengthen their impact on positive word of mouth intention. Confirmation of these proposed relationships could further the knowledge of relationship marketing practices by clarifying the extent to which the provision of value, strengthened by a relationship quality factor, may contribute towards greater positive word of mouth intention. Insight can also be gained into the extent to which the proposed connection between the two relationship quality factors may strengthen their impact on the customer's disposition towards positive word of mouth behaviour. Therefore, the findings of this study may add to the knowledge on perceived value, relationship quality and their impact on behavioural intention as part of the first stream of research on positive word of mouth communication, by exploring the reasons why customers actively share the word about services and products experienced.

From a practical perspective, a study of this nature may be of value to the financial services industry and may specifically assist retail banks in the promotion of their electronic banking services.

Within the retail banking environment, the shift towards online and mobile banking has been progressive and enables retail banks to minimise their branch footprint – and reduces costs (PwC, 2016:38). Leveraging on these opportunities, South African retail banks are following international banking trends and are also concentrating on digital and electronic channels as an alternative banking platform as opposed to the traditional in-branch banking services (Kumar, 2016; Singh, 2004:190; PwC, 2016:37). It is believed that these electronic channels will assist retail banks to expand their market share by offering greater convenience, and to reach and service the unbanked consumer (Cheng *et al.*, 2006:1559; PwC, 2016:38). The word unbanked is used in this context to describe diverse groups of individuals who do not use retail banks for their banking transactions (Beard, 2010). Up until the current mass acceptance of mobile telecommunications, traditional branch networks were the preferred medium for retail banks to reach unbanked areas. With the arrival of mobile phones, populations in rural areas became easily accessible (PwC, 2016:38). As a result, customers can benefit from online banking channels because of the convenience it offers, including speed, 24/7 service availability, cost effectiveness, and information availability (Cheng *et al.*, 2006:1559; Jaruwachirathanakul & Fink, 2005:307). Retail banks also benefit from online banking channels because of lower operating costs, which means fewer personnel and physical branches (PwC, 2016:38).

The successful implementation of these initiatives, however, depends on the extent to which customers would be willing to adopt new technologies and make use of electronic banking services to conduct their banking transactions. This may be problematic within the South African retail banking environment. Specifically, research (Singh, 2004:189-193; PwC, 2016:58) confirms that consumers in South Africa tend to prefer the traditional in-branch banking services. Many customers do not make use of online banking due to reasons such as feeling unsafe in terms of the safekeeping of their personal data, the risk of fraudulent transactions, not having the know-how to use online banking, and the perception that the electronic process is time-consuming and expensive. Especially in the rural areas of South Africa, consumers are often being reluctant to use Internet banking services despite its availability (Masocha *et al.*, 2011:1858; Ramavhona & Mokwena, 2016:1). The majority of rural respondents in a study conducted by Ramavhona and Mokwena (2016:7) indicated that they perceived Internet banking to be unsafe and difficult to use, and they do not believe that sufficient security measurements are provided by the banks. The security of Internet banking refers to the threats and risks of identity fraud to which consumers are exposed and their perception of insufficient measures in place to safeguard the Internet banking experience (Kalakota & Whinston, 1997).

To address this problem, it is necessary for retail banks to educate South African consumers about the benefits and trustworthiness of their electronic banking services. Reaching all potential banking customers, however, is an impossible task. Banks may also be more successful if they focus on existing users (who are the potential customer's friends and family) to assist them in this task, because service consumers seem to favour personal independent sources over impersonal sources of information and tend to show more confidence in personal sources when considering a service purchase (Bansal & Voyer, 2000:167; Murray, 1991:19). Consequently, customers who influence potential customers about electronic banking by means positive word of mouth communication may present a viable strategy for retail banks to facilitate greater adoption and use of electronic banking services and to grow their market share.

The successful execution of this strategy, however, requires a model of factors that may contribute towards greater positive word of mouth intention by existing banking customers regarding electronic banking services in the South African banking environment, and that may offer strategic guidance to retail banks in South Africa to adapt their marketing strategies accordingly. This matter, however, has not been formally addressed in academic research and subsequently requires further investigation. Ultimately, an understanding of the proposed model, the inter-relationship between perceived value and relationship quality, as well as the inter-relationship between the key factors of relationship quality – and their impact on positive word of mouth intention – may assist retail banks in this regard. This matter is accordingly addressed in the current study.

The next section provides more insight into the South African retail banking industry to explain the context of this study. Following this discussion, a literature review is provided to further explore the interrelationships between perceived value, relationship quality and positive word of mouth intention.

1.3 RETAIL BANKING IN SOUTH AFRICA

The banking sector in South Africa is considered as one of the most mature banking sectors on the African continent (PwC, 2016:10) and is ranked 11th in the financial market development out of 138 countries worldwide (World Economic Forum, 2016:324). This sector is also rated 11th in the world in the Global Competitiveness Index in terms of the development of a country’s financial market. The banking sector in South Africa is regulated by the South African Reserve Bank (SARB), whose prime purpose is to ensure price stability in order to enable sustainable economic growth, in addition to promoting the domestic banking system (South African Reserve Bank, 2017). The bank entities registered in South Africa are classified either as mutual banks, banks in liquidation, international bank branches, international bank representatives, or foreign and locally controlled banks (South African Reserve Bank, 2015). Table 1-1 provides a summary of the banks that are registered in South Africa.

Table 1-1: Bank entities registered in South Africa

Category	Banks
Foreign (controlled) registered banks	ABSA Bank Limited Albaraka Bank Limited Habib Overseas Bank Limited HBZ Bank Limited Mercantile Bank Limited The South African Bank of Athens Limited
Locally (controlled) registered banks	African Bank Limited Bidvest Bank Limited Capitec Bank Limited FirstRand Bank Limited (FNB) Grindrod Bank Limited Investec Bank Limited Nedbank Limited Sasfin Bank Limited The Standard Bank of South Africa Limited UBANK Limited (formerly known as Teba Bank Limited)

Source: Adapted from South African Reserve Bank (2015).

The major portion of the South African retail banking market section is shared by the five largest retails banks, known as Standard Bank, ABSA, Nedbank, FirstRand and Capitec Bank. Table 1-2 provides the tier 1 capital and market share of the top five retail banks in South Africa (tier 1 capital refers to the main measurement of the bank's financial strength, involving primarily common stock and disclosed reserves) (BusinessTech, 2015).

Table 1-2: Top five retail banks in South Africa's tier 1 capital client base

Bank	Tier 1 capital*	Client base
Standard Bank	R126 273 264,11 million	11.6 million
ABSA	R75 488 777,70 million	9.4 million
Nedbank	R59 002 722,80 million	7.4 million
Capitec	R11 604 560,70 million	7.3 million
FirstRand	R98 953 515,99 million	7.2 million
*In the original source, tier 1 capital was calculated in Dollar ($) but has been converted to Rand million (R million) with the current exchange rate of R12.40 on the 8th of January 2018.		

Source: Adapted from BusinessTech (2015) and BusinessTech (2016).

From Table 1-2, it is evident that Standard Bank continues to be the largest bank in South Africa with a client base of 11.6 million customers and a tier 1 capital base of R 126 273 264,11 million. ABSA, is not far behind with 9.4 million customers and a tier 1 capital base of R 75 488 777.70 million. Next is Nedbank with a tier 1 capital base of R 59 002 722.80 million and a market share of 7.4 million customers. Capitec, which is not a full-service bank, has increased its market share by adding a further one million new customers in 2015/2016 to obtain a market share that is only 100 000 customers less than Nedbank's portion. The tier 1 capital base for Capitec Bank is R 11 604 560.70 million. Lastly, First Rand bank holds a regional ranking at second place in the country with a tier 1 capital base of R 98 953 515,99 million but has the lowest client base of 7.2 million clients.

In addition to the in-branch banking services, the banking sector in South Africa also presents a wide range of self-service technology platforms that offer customers greater flexibility and convenience.

Self-services technologies refer to technological interfaces that allow customers to make independent use of services without the involvement by the banks' direct-services employees (Meuter *et al.,* 2000:50). Self-service technologies have also been conceptualised as the distribution of a service that eliminates the provider's employees from the transaction and requires further responsibilities from customers to conduct the services (Curran *et al.,* 2005:104). Banks implement self-service technologies to improve customer satisfaction, services quality standards, and operational efficiencies (Kaushik & Rahman, 2015:98). These digital banking trends are emerging in the South African Internet banking industry and have a bearing on the way in which customers conduct their banking and business (Kumar, 2016; Singh, 2004:190; PwC, 2016:38). A few basic types of self-services technologies that are commonly used in the South African retail banking industry comprise of telephone banking, Internet-based self-services, and cell phone banking. These are outlined below.

1.3.1 Telephone banking

Telephone banking is an alternative channel to banking services through branch networks (Ahmad & Buttle, 2002:7). This type of banking is further explained as a banking service that is continuously available seven days of the week at a place that is private and convenient to customers; for instance, at their homes, offices, and cars (Ahmad & Buttle, 2002:7; Nedbank, 2017e; Standard Bank, 2014h). Telephone banking can be applied through several channels, including 24/7 automated services with voice assistants, telephone keypad transactions or speaking to the retail banks' consultants during specific consultation hours. The banking options can be communicated with speech-enabled or automated voice telephone banking, which means that the customer's voice is key during the banking service. It follows that, using voice recognition, there is no need to press the telephone's keypad when doing transactions. The consumer only has to say the number of the desired transaction. The types of banking services that can be conducted with telephone banking at the main retail banks in South Africa is outlined in Table 1-3.

Table 1-3: Telephone banking services

Service	ABSA	Standard Bank	Nedbank	FNB
Statement/balance enquiries	X	X	X	X
Payment (and history)		X	X	X
Payment enquiries		X	X	X
Payment notification		X	X	X
Update particulars (e.g. address detail)		X	X	
Transfers		X	X	X
Profile maintenance			X	
PIN change	X		X	
Cheque book orders			X	X
Stop cheque payments				X
Email statement			X	
Faxed confirmation of financial transaction/statements		X	X	X
Email confirmation of transaction			X	
Faxed list of linked account			X	
Faxed list of beneficiaries			X	
Profile enquiries			X	
Faxed profile enquiries			X	
Limit enquiries			X	
Limit decrease			X	
Stop order (create and charge)			X	X
Stop payment			X	
Add/delete/amend beneficiaries		X	X	
Investment information and other products	X	X	X	X
Overdraft applications		X	X	
Prepaid airtime		X		
Tax certificates	X			

Table 1-3: Telephone banking services (cont.)

Service	ABSA	Standard Bank	Nedbank	FNB
Rewards balance	X			
Cash redemption	X			
Welcome pack	X			
Retailer redemption	X			
Calculate bank charges and potential savings, bond costs and the like		X		

Source: Adapted from ABSA (2016f), FNB (2017c), Nedbank (2017f), Standard Bank (2013) and Standard Bank (2014g).

1.3.2 Internet based self-services

The technologies of Internet based self-services require a higher level of technological ability from the bank customers, but Internet based self-services are nevertheless considered to be a more attractive and beneficial self-service option to customers (Yen, 2005:642). Generally, two types of Internet banking platforms are offered within the South African banking sector, namely Internet banking using a computer and Internet banking using a mobile banking app.

1.3.2.1 Internet banking, using a computer

Internet banking transactions can be completed by means of gaining access to the service on the bank's website, using a computer (Tan & Teo, 2000:4). Internet banking via the World Wide Web (WWW) is the Internet banking technology currently supported by South Africa's retail banks (Nel, 2012:41). Key transactions that can be performed using internet banking by means of a computer, include paying accounts, transferring funds, opening a savings account, applying for a personal loan, investing in unit trusts, and buying prepaid airtime (ABSA, 2016d; ABSA, 2016e). The types of banking services that can be conducted on internet banking using a computer at the top five retail banks in South Africa are summarised in Table 1-4.

Table 1-4: Internet banking services, using a computer

Service	ABSA	Standard Bank	Nedbank	Capitec	FNB
Money transfers between accounts	X	X	X	X	X
Make payments (to people or accounts)	X	X	X	X	X
Buy airtime, data and SMS bundles	X	X	X	X	X
Buy electricity			X	X	X

Table 1-5: Internet banking services, using a computer (cont.)

Service	ABSA	Standard Bank	Nedbank	Capitec	FNB
View last electricity tokens purchased				X	
Add beneficiaries	X	X	X	X	X
Add recurring stop orders or future-dated payments	X		X	X	
Add recurring stop orders or future-dated transfers	X			X	
Do credit facility transfers				X	X
Stop lost or stolen cards immediately				X	X
Update daily card limits				X	X
Save and verify email address for added security		X		X	X
View or download statements	X	X		X	X
View or download tax interest certificates				X	
View your transaction and payment history				X	
Register and maintain SMS Update settings	X			X	
Set up future and repeat payments	X	X			X
Simple international payments	X	X			X
Open savings & investment accounts	X	X			X

Source: Adapted from ABSA (2016e), Capitec (2017d), FNB (2017b), Nedbank (2017b), Standard Bank (2013), Standard Bank (2014d), and Standard Bank (2014e).

1.3.2.2 Internet banking, using a mobile banking app

Mobile banking applications allow customers to conduct basic banking needs from anywhere at any given point in time using a tablet or smartphone (Standard Bank, 2014a). The FNB banking App has been identified as the best mobile bank for both mobile phone and tablets, followed by Capitec, with ABSA and Standard Bank tied in third place and lastly Nedbank (Columinate, 2016). TYI (2017), indicated that Nedbank's mobile banking app has received negative ratings because of its frequent crashing and freezing. These apps fulfil an exclusive need in an e-banking customer's repertoire (Columinate, 2016). South African banking apps can be downloaded from the following app stores: Playstore for Android devices, App Store for iOS devices, and Windows Store (ABSA, 2016c; Standard Bank, 2014b). To download a Capitec App it is, however, necessary for a Capitec customer to visit a branch and receive a link via SMS (Capitec, 2017c).

The basic banking functions that are provided on the banking apps include conducting transfers, making payments, buying prepaid airtime and finding ATM's, branches, and access points near to the customer's present location (ABSA, 2016c; Standard Bank, 2014b). The types of banking services that can be conducted on Internet banking, using a mobile banking app at the top five retail banks in South Africa are summarised in Table 1-6.

Table 1-6: Internet banking services, using a mobile banking app

Service	ABSA	Standard Bank	Nedbank	Capitec	FNB
Buy electricity		X	X	X	X
Share account details directly from the app	X				
Payments	X	X	X	X	X
Buy prepaid airtime, data and SMS bundles	X	X	X	X	X
Send money	X	X			X
Transfer money between accounts	X	X	X	X	X
View accounts	X		X	X	X
Create and manage beneficiaries	X	X	X	X	X
Manage card limits	X				X
Find ATMs, branches and access points		X	X		X
Draw money without a card		X			X
Calculate repayments and forex			X		X
Trade shares			X		
Add recurring (stop orders) and future-dated payments				X	
Buy iTunes codes					X

Source: Adapted from ABSA (2016a), Capitec (2017a), FNB (2017a), Nedbank (2017d) and Standard Bank (2014a).

1.3.3 Cell phone banking

Cell phone banking refers to day-to-day banking that enables customers to conduct their banking transactions by means of their handsets or their cell phones (Birch, 1999:21; Brown *et al.*, 2003:382; Standard Bank, 2014f). The types of banking services that can be conducted with a cell phone at the top five retail banks in South Africa are summarised in Table 1-7.

Table 1-7: Cell phone banking services

Service	ABSA	Standard Bank	Nedbank	Capitec	FNB
Prepaid airtime	X	X	X	X	X
Secure access to a Personal Loans	X				X
Payments	X	X	X	X	X
Buy electricity				X	X
Transfers	X	X	X	X	X
Add beneficiaries	X	X	X	X	X
Payment notifications	X			X	
Account statements	X	X			
Pay traffic fines	X				X
Send and receive funds internationally	X				
Balance enquires	X	X	X	X	X
Credit facility transfers				X	

Source: Adapted from ABSA (2016b), Capitec (2017b), FNB (2017b), Nedbank (2017c) and Standard Bank (2014c).

South African retail banks use several technologies to provide different kinds of cell phone banking services, namely wireless application protocol (WAP), wireless internet gateway (WIG) (Brown *et al.*, 2003:382), and unstructured supplementary service data (USSD) (BusinessTech, 2012). WAP is an international standard for wireless network communication amongst mobile devices (Nah, 2011:103). A WAP-enabled cell phone has a 'micro browser' that allows consumers to conduct most of their mobile banking instantly (Nedbank, 2017a; Standard Bank, 2003a). WIG is a short message service-based (SMS-based) type of banking, here a banking customer initially downloads a menu of selectable banking functions to the subscriber identity module (SIM) card in his/her cell phone. When conducting banking transactions, the customer sees the banking functions via the cell phone's menu, similar to using an ATM (Brown *et al.*, 2003:382; Nedbank, 2017a; Standard Bank, 2003b). USSD is a global system for mobile (GSM) communication technology that transmits text messages between cell phones and an application programme. USSD transactions can only be processed during a current session. USSD differs from SMS 's because SMS messages are sent to a cell phone and can be kept alive for numerous days if the cell phone is not active or within range (Rouse, 2017). USSD works on any handset, and no data is needed to conduct USSD banking and no downloads or apps are required (ABSA, 2016d).

1.4 LITERATURE REVIEW

This section provides more insight into relationship marketing, perceived value, and relationship quality. It also discusses the model constructs that may ultimately contribute towards positive word of mouth intention.

1.4.1 Relationship marketing

The development of long-term relationships between customers and organisation with the aim of creating customer loyalty provide organisations with the ability to increase their profitability (Shajahan, 2004:49). Relationships do not develop over night, but rather over a series of episodes (Boshoff, 2014:345; Egan, 2011:155). Episodes are regarded as the interactions between an employee of the organisation and a customer that can be initiated by either party. Such interactions result in a string of incidents, each of which has a bearing on the future relationship between the customer and the organisation (Kruger, 2010:17; Egan, 2011:155). A long-term relationship can provide better results for both parties, especially if the relationship has been built over a long time (Gummesson, 2008:22). Relationship marketing focuses on retaining customers and the continuation of customer contact (Egan, 2011:39). In review thereof, the basis of relationship marketing is constructed upon the notion that building and maintaining relationships with customers lead to long-term commitment, which results in an increase in profitability for an organisation (Morgan *et al.*, 2015:123). The outcome of marketing activities is known as the perceived value, which is a first-order element in relationship marketing (Moliner, 2009:78; Oh, 2003; Ravald Christian, 1996:19). Another concept related to relationship marketing is relationship quality (Crosby *et al.*, 1990). These two concepts are discussed in greater detail.

1.4.2 Perceived value

A lack of consensus exists amongst marketing scholars on a formal definition of perceived value. Generally, the concept of 'value' can be described as the outcome of an evaluative judgment, which is different from the concept of 'values' referring to the rules, standards, norms, criteria, goals or items that provide the foundation of such an evaluative judgment (Holbrook, 1999:8). Scholars tend to describe perceived value as a single overall concept or as a multi-dimensional concept that comprises a number of interconnected attributes (Parente *et al.*, 2015:494; Sánchez-Fernández & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007:430).

The present study focuses on the multi-dimensional perspective as advocated by Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) and Babin *et al.* (1994). According to these authors, perceived value consists of a utilitarian and hedonic value component. Utilitarian value is the gratification experienced from something that assists the customer to solve problems or to accomplish a specific task (Babin & Harris, 2018:31). Hedonic value, on the other hand, entails the entertainment and emotional worth of the experience as well as the value derived from the immediate gratification derived from the experience of some activity (Babin & Harris, 2018:31; Sánchez-Fernández & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007:436). Furthermore, the multi-dimensional perspective as advocated by Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) and Babin *et al.* (1994) was chosen as it appears to be popular among studies that measure perceived value within the information technology environment. These studies tend to focus on the perceived usefulness construct when measuring utilitarian aspects of information technology usage (Al-Maghrabi *et al.*, 2011:56; Childers *et al.*, 2001:514; Chiu *et al.*, 2009:763; Hsiao *et al.*, 2016:345; Pihlström, 2008:234; Yang *et al.*, 2012:513). Similarly, the perceived enjoyment construct is used when assessing the hedonic aspects of information technology usage (Al-Maghrabi *et al.*, 2011:56; Childers *et al.*, 2001:514; Chiu *et al.*, 2009:763; Hsiao *et al.*, 2016:346; Yang *et al.*, 2012:513). For the purpose of this study, however, the focus is on the perceived usefulness construct. This construct has been widely acknowledged as salient when investigating behavioural intentions towards new technologies (Al-Suqri, 2014:287).

1.4.2.1 Perceived usefulness

Perceived usefulness can be described as an individual's belief that utilisation of an individual system may improve their job performance to a certain extent (Davis, 1989:320; Karahanna & Straub, 1998:238). Perceived usefulness has also been described as degree to which an individual's performance is improved by means of technology (Kansal, 2016:53). The definition of perceived usefulness draws attention to an external benefit, exterior to the system-user contact. Consequently, the construct is concerned with the extrinsic motivation of an individual (Chiu *et al.*, 2009:763), which entails motivation that originates outside of the individual, and which pushes the individual to perform an activity with the purpose of achieving a desired outcome (Chiu *et al.*, 2014:91). Perceived usefulness is further regarded as a primary construct of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989:319; Kansal, 2016:53; Wu *et al.*, 2010:102). The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) was originally developed to forecast and explain the adoption or use of new information technology in organisations (Chiu *et al.*, 2009:765).

1.4.3 Relationship quality

Customers tend to begin relationships with organisations when they assume that an advantage will be received from the interactions that occur as a consequence of this relation, the abovementioned is suggested by relationship marketing theory (Hunt *et al.*, 2006:83). All marketing activities focused to establish, develop and uphold effective relationship interactions is considered to form part of relationship marketing (Morgan & Hunt, 1994:22). Relationship quality is grounded in the relationship marketing theory and is regarded as a higher-order construct. It involves numerous salient elements that reflect the general nature of the relationships between organisations and customers (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2002:234). The term relationship quality is used to denote the strength of a relationship (Palmatier *et al*., 2006:138). Of central importance in relationship quality is the progress of an individualised, one-to-one relationship between a customer and organisation that develops progressively more pertinent and attentive as the organisation learns about the customer's needs and requirements over a period of time (Tehubijuluw, 2015:381). Numerous dimensions or factors of relationship quality have been acknowledged, and trust and commitment are regarded as core elements in this regard (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2002:234; Morgan & Hunt, 1994:22; Mukherjee & Nath, 2007:1192; Ulaga & Eggert, 2006:314). Therefore, for the purpose of this study, trust and commitment are further explored.

1.4.3.1 Trust

Trust develops when a party believes that an exchange partner or organisation is honest and dependable (Morgan & Hunt, 1994:23). Singh and Jain (2015:971) further note that trust refers to emotional security arising from the belief that transactions with the organisation will be dependable, safe and consistent. Thus, an individual who trusts another has confidence in that individual and is comfortable to have the individual as an exchange partner (Lindgreen, 2003:31).

Trust entails three sub-dimensions, namely ability, benevolence and integrity (Chiu *et al.*, 2009:766; Mayer *et al.*, 1995:717). Ability trust (or competence trust) refers to the collection of characteristics, skills or expertise that allows a party to have an effect in a certain area. Benevolence trust entails the degree of belief in the trustee's desire to do good to the trustor; it is devoid of an egocentric revenue motive. Lastly, integrity trust is described as the trustor's perception that the trustee follows values that he/she approves of (Barki *et al.*, 2015:483; Mayer *et al.*, 1995:717-719) and acts in an honest manner.

This study focuses on the ability/competence dimension of trust as it is concerned with the reliability of the performance of the electronic banking service. It is also stresses the functional performance of the technology which also underlies the notion of perceived usefulness.

1.4.3.2 Customer commitment

Morgan and Hunt (1994:23) describe commitment as the belief of a party that the constant relationship with the exchange partner is so significant that he/she puts in maximum effort to maintain it. Saleh and Akhavanfar (2015:690) further describe commitment as a continuing desire to remain in a relationship that proves to be valuable.

Commitment also comprises three sub-dimensions (Allen & Meyer, 1990:3), namely the affective, continuance and normative dimensions. Firstly, affective commitment is regarded to, among others, a person's emotional attachment to an organisation, his/her identification with it, and his/her degree of involvement in the organisation (Meyer & Smith, 2000:320; Pohjanen, 2011:3). The individual's emotional attachment and actions grow progressively due to continuing interpersonal interactions. Affective commitment further includes a desire to establish an ongoing relationship with an organisation because of feelings of familiarity, friendship and personal confidence (Sharma *et al.*, 2015:46). Secondly, continuance commitment is predicated on the perceived costs associated with ending a relationship with an organisation (Meyer & Smith, 2000:320; Pohjanen, 2011:3). Lastly, normative commitment is viewed as a sense of obligation by the committed individual to maintain a relationship with an organisation (Meyer & Smith, 2000:320). Therefore, it is evident that these dimensions contribute towards the willingness shown by an individual or organisation to make short term sacrifices to ensure that long-term advantages are obtained (Pohjanen, 2011:3; Roxenhall & Andrésen, 2012:87).

This study focuses on continuance commitment. This concept can provide insight into whether customers are prepared to make a continued investment in a relationship within the sphere of electronic banking services to gain benefits and to avoid the cost of defection. Furthermore, similar to perceived usefulness and competence trust, an assessment of the perceived cost of ending or continuing the relationship could also involve an evaluation of the functional performance of the technology.

1.4.4 Behavioural intention

Behavioural intention is regarded as an important construct of technology models for instance the Theory of Reason Action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977:888), the Theory of Planned Action (Ajzen, 1991:181; Hagger *et al.*, 2016), as well as the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989). These theoretical models are based on the proposition that a customers' actual behaviour can be determined by bearing in mind their behavioural intention (Albarracin *et al.*, 2001:1826; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975:301; Hagger *et al.*, 2016; Lorenzo-Blanco *et al.*, 2016; Maruping *et al.*, 2016). Essentially, behavioural intention has two dimensions, namely favourable and unfavourable intentions (Zeithaml *et al.*, 1996:36). Where favourable behavioural intentions are seen as behaviours that indicate that a customer is developing a relationship with an organisation by praising the company or expressing the company as a preference over others (Cassandra *et al.*, 2014:20). Positive word of mouth communication is identified as an expression of favourable behavioural intention (De Matos, 2008:580; Gruen *et al*., 2006:451; Lee *et al*., 2010:905; Zeithaml *et al*., 1996:33). Unfavourable behavioural intentions are evidenced by customers' complaining and switching behaviours (Lobo *et al.*, 2007:494).

An examination of favourable behavioural intention that involves the intention of banking customers to engage in positive word of mouth communications with other customers is presented below.

1.4.4.1 Positive word of mouth intention

While a customer can be positively or negatively disposed to word of mouth communication, organisations are naturally interested in promoting positive word of mouth, for instance recommendations to individuals (Brown *et al*., 2005:125). Word of mouth intention is also depicted as the customer's desire to have a conversation about an incident with at least one individual who is not directly related to the service provider (Swanson & Charlene Davis, 2003:207). Mikalef *et al.* (2013:25) add that word of mouth intention takes place when customers share information with friends and family about a product that they have seen and which they find to be of interest. Thus, positive word of mouth intention is described as the probability of sharing positive information or recommendations in a conversation about a product with friends and family.

Word of mouth intention is regarded as a component of loyalty (De Matos & Rossi, 2008:580). Customer loyalty is emphasised as the intention of customers to continue a relationship with an organisation that entails various sets of behaviours, including favourable word of mouth communication (Sirdeshmukh *et al.*, 2002:20). Thus, positive word of mouth intention is regarded as a behavioural intention of loyalty.

1.5 PROPOSED THEORETICAL MODEL AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

1.5.1 Relationships between constructs

The proposed relationships are discussed in this section together with a number of research hypotheses that are further assessed in the empirical part of the study.

1.5.1.1 The effect of perceived usefulness on positive word of mouth intention

Scholars concur that a customer's perceived value may contribute towards his/her intention to take part in positive word of mouth communication behaviour (Hartline & Jones, 1996:207), or to doing it (Li & Green, 2011:5; Mazzarol *et al*., 2007). Marketing literature suggest that perceived service value serves as an incentive for customers to display loyalty behaviour for instance positive word of mouth communication (McKee *et al.*, 2006:212).

Consequently, considering these findings and the fact that the pertinent focus of this study is perceived usefulness as a form of perceived value, it is firstly hypothesised that banking customers who find electronic banking services useful may have an inclination to tell other customers about the service. Hence:

H_1: Perceived usefulness of the service has a positive and significant impact on positive word of mouth intention.

1.5.1.2 The impact of trust and customer commitment on positive word of mouth intention

As stated in section 1.4.3, trust and commitment are core elements of relationship quality. Furthermore, the impact of relationship quality on behavioural intention continues to be well established in the marketing literature (Ozdemir & Hewett, 2010:46). Studies have confirmed the relationships between trust, commitment and behavioural intentions (Keh & Xie, 2009:379; Ozdemir & Hewett, 2010:46). Additionally, the effect of trust on word of mouth intention has been confirmed as a form of behavioural intention (Lien & Cao, 2014:108; Rauyruen & Miller, 2005:27) as well as amongst commitment and word of mouth intention (Rauyruen & Miller, 2005:27).

Since the present study explores competence trust and continuance commitment, it is further hypothesised that customers who believe that electronic banking services are reliable and who, after evaluating the perceived cost of terminating the service, think that it is more beneficial to remain committed, may also want to tell other customers of the benefits of the service provided. Hence:

H_2: Competence trust in the service has a positive and significant impact on positive word of mouth intention.

H_3: Continuance commitment towards the service has a positive and significant impact on positive word of mouth intention.

1.5.1.3 The impact of trust on customer commitment

Along with the potential impact of trust and commitment on the customer's disposition towards word of mouth, it is possible that customer commitment towards using electronic banking services may be impacted by the degree to which customers trust the service provided.

The impact of trust on customer commitment has been duly noted in marketing literature (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Moreira and Silva, 2015; Shukla *et al*., 2016) and as such is also hypothesised in the present study.

The likelihood exists that the perception which customers have of the service's reliability may impact their decisions to remain committed. Customers who believe that the service is reliable may feel that the cost of terminating the service would be too high, and therefore would rather remain committed to their current service. Hence:

H_4: Competence trust in the service has a positive and significant impact on continuance commitment towards the service.

1.5.1.4 The impact of perceived usefulness on customer commitment

According to Gummesson (1987), relationship quality can be assessed with reference to the sum total of values experienced by the customer. Ravald and Grönroos (1996:24) concur that value-adding attributes are important early in the relationship, while relationship quality carries more weight when the relationship has matured. The perception of value received serves as a subsequent contributing factor towards relationship quality (Moliner, 2009:81; Moliner *et al.*, 2007:1399). Morgan and Hunt (1994:23) also pointed out that benefits emanating from a relationship are antecedents of trust and commitment. Thus, the perceived value of a purchase contributes towards a customer's trust and commitment in an organisation (Moliner *et al.*, 2007:1411).

It is therefore possible that perceived usefulness as a value dimension may have a positive impact on trust and commitment within the relationship quality domain. However, in the context of this study, an assessment of the perceived usefulness of the electronic banking technology that is measured by the extent to which it may enhance the performance and productivity of the banking customer may not contribute to greater perceptions of competence trust, assessing aspects such as that technology related errors are quite rare. For this reason, the current study only focuses on the potential relationship amongst perceived usefulness and continuance commitment, because the possibility exists that customers who perceive the bank's service as useful (because it enhances their productivity) may also view the cost associated with leaving the relationship to be too great and may prefer to remain with the bank.

Hence, it is also hypothesised in this study that:

H_5: Perceived usefulness of the service has a positive and significant impact on continuance commitment towards the service.

1.5.1.5 The mediating effect of customer commitment

The proposed relationships discussed in the previous sections shed more light on the possibility of continuance commitment (a relationship quality factor) as a mediating variable in the proposed model relating to the relationship between perceived usefulness (a perceived value factor) and word of mouth intention. Similarly, the relationship between competence trust (another relationship quality dimension) and continuance commitment, as well as between continuance commitment and word of mouth intention, also points towards the possibility of continuance commitment as a mediator of the impact of competence trust on positive word of mouth intentions. Hence, it is finally proposed that:

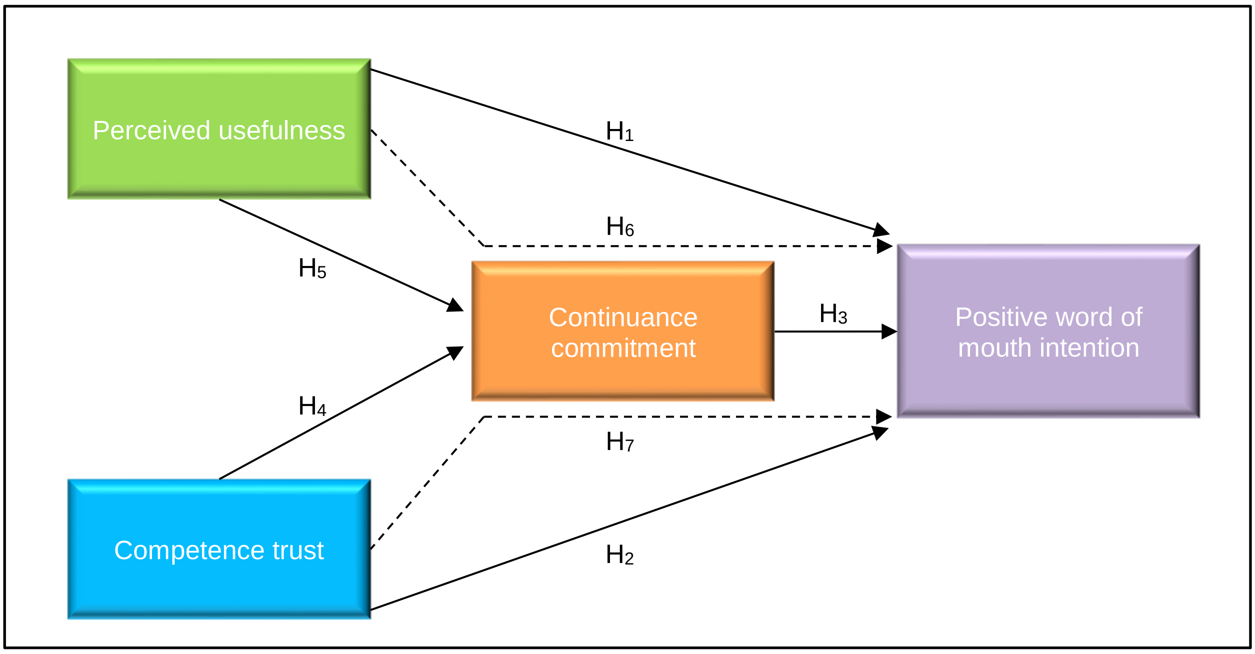
H_6: Perceived usefulness of the service has a significant positive indirect effect on positive word of mouth intention, as mediated by continuance commitment towards the service.

H_7: Competence trust in the service has a significant positive indirect effect on positive word of mouth intention, as mediated by continuance commitment towards the service.

1.5.2 Conceptual model and purpose of the study

In light of the research hypotheses formulated in the previous section, a conceptual model can be proposed for further investigation. The model is presented in Figure 1-1 and provides a visual representation of the potential relationships as identified in the literature review.

Figure 1-1: A conceptual mediated model of positive word of mouth intention in the banking electronic services environment



The present study proposes that the inclination of current electronic banking users to engage in positive word of mouth communication may depend on the extent to which they are convinced of the usefulness of the banking service; whether they believe that the service can be trusted; and the extent to which they are committed towards the service. All three these elements need to be present, because their interrelationship may contribute towards greater positive word of mouth intention. Additionally, it is probable that both perceived usefulness and competence trust may impact positively on continuance commitment. Continuance commitment, perceived usefulness and competence trust may also have significant and positive relationships with positive word of mouth intention. Therefore, it a possible that continuance commitment (a relationship quality factor) may serve as a mediating variable in the proposed model on the relationship between perceived usefulness (a perceived value factor) and word of mouth intention. Also, there is a possibility that continuance commitment may have a mediating role on the impact of competence trust (another relationship quality factor) on positive word of mouth intentions.

The possible combination of these relationships as recognised in the literature review and presented in Figure 1-1 requires further testing and confirmation. Thus, it is the purpose of this study to examine these relationships within the electronic banking context with the aim of developing a mediated model for positive word of mouth intention.

The next section highlights the contributions that the present study hopes to make towards marketing theory and practice.

1.6 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

The proposed model could make a valuable contribution towards marketing theory and practice, as outlined below.

1.6.1 Possible contributions to marketing theory

- The research findings may provide greater insight into the interrelationship between perceived usefulness, competence trust and continuance commitment and their contribution towards positive word of mouth intention.
- Validation of the theoretical model could therefore also offer an indication of the role of customers' perceived value and relationship quality factors that contribute towards positive word of mouth intentions.
- Confirmation of the proposed relationships could expand our knowledge on the importance of relationship marketing practices and the extent to which the provision of value,

strengthened by a relationship quality factor, may contribute towards greater positive word of mouth intentions.

- Insight can also be gained into the extent to which the connection between the two relationship quality factors may have a strengthening impact on positive word of mouth intentions.
- The research findings may further provide strategic direction for subsequent studies aiming to further assess the role of relationship marketing practices in facilitating positive word of mouth intentions as a form of behavioural intention.

1.6.2 Possible contributions to electronic banking services and other self-service technology establishments

- The research findings may offer guidance to retail banks to adapt their marketing strategies to ensure that they are able to facilitate superior positive word of mouth intentions. This may help retail banks to expand their market share and to reach unbanked consumers.
- Banking institutions may develop a greater understanding of the importance of ensuring that existing users of electronic banking services fully understand the usefulness of the provider's electronic banking service offering.
- Insight into the importance of the reliability of electronic banking services may also be gained.
- Ultimately, the research findings may be beneficial to other self-service technology establishments and could provide guidance to organisations in other service sectors to adapt their marketing strategies to facilitate greater positive word of mouth intention.

1.7 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study's primary objective is to develop a mediated model for positive word of mouth intention in the electronic banking environment.

With the goal of achieving the primary objective of this study, the following secondary objectives have been formulated.

Table 1-8: Secondary objectives

Secondary objectives	
Secondary objective 1	To provide an overview of extant literature related to: (a) Perceived value, relationship marketing, relationship quality, behavioural intention, customer loyalty and word of mouth communication. (b) The main constructs of this research study, namely perceived usefulness, competence trust, continuance commitment and positive word of mouth intention. (c) The interrelationships between the main constructs of this study.
Secondary objective 2	To develop a sample profile of existing electronic banking users who participated in this study.
Secondary objective 3	To measure the extent to which bank customers perceive electronic banking services for which they are registered as useful.
Secondary objective 4	To assess the extent to which bank customers demonstrate competence trust in the electronic banking services for which they are registered.
Secondary objective 5	To assess the extent to which bank customers exhibit continuance commitment towards the electronic banking services for which they are registered.
Secondary objective 6	To determine the positive word of mouth intentions of bank customers pertaining to electronic banking services.
Secondary objective 7	To examine the interrelationships between the constructs of this study, namely perceived usefulness, competence trust, continuance commitment and positive word of mouth intentions.

1.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The section below presents a brief outline of the research methodology followed in this study.

1.8.1 Literature sources

The secondary research provided in the literature review was collected from many sources, for instance books, scholarly documents and academic articles. Also, the A-Z publication finder database, EBSCOhost database, Emerald Insight journals, Google Scholar, JSTOR, OneSearch: EBSCO Discovery Service, SA ePublications, SA national catalogue of journals and books, Business Source Premier, ScienceDirect, Boloka: NWU Institutional Repository, SA ePublications, as well as ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Full Text, were perused.

1.8.2 Empirical investigation

The empirical investigation presented in this section contains a detailed explanation of the research design and data collection methods, the target population, the sample plan, the measurement instrument, and the statistical methods used for analysing the data.

1.8.2.1 Research design and data collection methods

A research design can be defined as an overall plan that guides the data collection and analysis phases of research (Feinberg *et al.*, 2013:29) that must be followed to accomplish the objectives of a study. Research designs can be categorised into causal, descriptive and explanatory research types (Saunders, 2016:139). Hair *et al.* (2014:556) refer to causal research design as an experiment with some controlled manipulation, whereas descriptive research is seen as research that provides a rich descriptive representation of information (Feinberg *et al.*, 2013:57). Lastly, the essence of explanatory research, according to Saunders (2016:176), entails studying a problem or a set of circumstances with the intention of explaining the relationships amongst its variables.

An explanatory research design was selected for this study, since its aim is to determine the relationships and interrelationships between a set of predetermined variables, namely perceived usefulness, competence trust, continuance commitment, and their effect on positive word of mouth intentions. The research design was therefore structured and the research problem is clearly motivated, thus motivating the choice of an explanatory research design.

Furthermore, primary data that is collected after the literature review can be divided into two categories, namely quantitative and qualitative research (Burns & Bush, 2014:146). Kumar (2011:104) refers to a quantitative approach as a precise, well-structured research design that has been verified for validity and reliability and which can be overtly well-defined and recognised, whereas qualitative research is relatively unstructured in nature since no rigid format is applied, which allows respondents to answer at greater length (Feinberg *et al.,* 2013:218). Quantitative research was preferred for this study, because the respondents were provided with predetermined response possibilities for their answers to statements presented to them in a questionnaire. These responses were then statistically analysed.

This study used a self-administered survey as it is a cost-effective method of data collection. Standard and uniform questions were formulated carefully in advance in order to avoid misunderstandings among respondents (Smith & Albaum, 2012:43).

The structured self-administrative survey commenced with a covering letter explaining the respondents' rights and obligations as well as a screening question. The remaining sections of the questionnaire focused on capturing more data about the demographic profile of the respondents along with their perceptions regarding the research constructs that are explored in this study.

The measurement of each of the research constructs was done by means of previously validated measurement scales that have been established as reliable and valid. The respondents were requested to indicate their level of agreement with each statement, using a Likert-type scale that ranges from 1 being "strongly disagree", to 5 representing "strongly agree". Table 1-9 below provides a summary of the various sections that were included in the questionnaire.

Table 1-9: Overview of sections included in questionnaire

Questionnaire layout	Explanation
Preface	The preface briefly explained the study to the respondents and ensured them of the confidentiality of their responses. The contact details of the researcher were also provided in the preface.
Screening question	The screening question made provision that only respondents were selected who are currently making use of at least one form of electronic banking services and who are thus in a position to share their experiences about electronic banking.
Construct measurement	Two sections were included to measure respondents' perceptions relating to the research constructs examined in this study, namely perceived usefulness, competence trust, continuance commitment and positive word of mouth intention.
Demographic profile section	A section was included to capture the demographic information of the respondents.
Postscript	The questionnaire concluded by thanking the respondent for participating in the survey.

Fieldworkers were briefed and requested to approach qualifying respondents to fill in the survey in public places. Respondents' participation in the study was completely voluntary and the confidentiality of respondents' answers were ensured.

1.8.2.2 The sampling processes

Kumar (2011:346) notes that sampling entails a procedure of choosing a small number of items (a sample) from a larger group (the population) to be examined. The sample results are used to forecast or estimate the same characteristics (information, situation or consequence) prevalent in the larger group. Table 1-10 below provides a summary of the sampling plan of the study.

Table 1-10: Sampling plan for the study

Sampling	Description
Target population	Males and females, eighteen years and older, residing in selected cities and towns in urban and semi-urban areas in South Africa and who are making use of at least one form of electronic banking service.
Sampling frame	There was no sample frame available, owing to the restrictions of the Protection of Personal Information Act 4 of 2013 that does not allow banks in South Africa to disclose the personal information of their customers.
Sampling technique	Non-probability, purposive (judgement) sampling was used to select sampling units. Non-probability, convenience sampling and quota sampling were used to select sampling elements.
Sampling unit	Pretoria was selected as the sampling unit representing an urban area. Potchefstroom, Parys, Heilbron and Licthenburg were selected as the sampling units representing semi-urban areas.
Sampling element	Males and females, eighteen years and older, residing in selected cities and towns in urban and semi-urban areas in South Africa and who are making use of at least one form of electronic banking service.
Sample size	500 respondents (250 respondents from the urban area – Pretoria) and 250 respondents from the semi-urban areas in total (Potchefstroom, Parys, Heilbron and Licthenburg). The 250 sampling elements selected from the urban area comprised 125 males and 125 females. Similarly, the 250 respondents collected from the cities and towns in the semi-urban areas included 125 males and 125 females.
Extent	Urban and semi-urban areas in South Africa.

1.8.2.3 Target population

Smith and Albaum (2012:148) refer to a population as the total of all the units or elements (individuals, families, establishments) that have a single or more specific applicable aspects or characteristics which they share, to which one wishes to take a broad view based on the study results. For the purpose of this study, the target population consisted of males and females, eighteen years and older residing in selected cities and towns in urban and semi-urban areas in South Africa, and who are making use of at least one form of electronic banking service. It was envisaged that the respondents older than eighteen years would have a bank account and may be registered for electronic banking services. Male and female respondents from both urban and semi-urban areas in South Africa were included in the population to ensure that perceptions from both genders in various regions of the country are obtained regarding electronic banking services and word of mouth intentions. It was furthermore required that respondents had to make use of at least one form of electronic banking service to ensure that they could relate to their own experiences when completing the survey.

1.8.2.4 Sampling frame

A sampling frame is a comprehensive record of sample units in the population (Burns & Bush, 2014:240). The Protection of Personal Information (POPI) Act 4 of 2013, however, does not permit retail banks in South Africa to disclose the personal information of their bank customers. Hence, it was not possible to obtain access to a sample frame of all customers making use of electronic banking at retail banks in South Africa.

1.8.2.5 Sampling technique

Burns and Bush (2014:242) note that sample designs can be classified into two categories: probability methods or non-probability methods. Firstly, when every individual component in the population has an identical chance of being chosen for inclusion it is known as probability sampling (Smith & Albaum, 2012:149). On the other hand, when the theory of probability in selecting aspects from the sampling population is not used, this is referred to as non-probability sampling. Furthermore, non-probability sampling designs are selected when the number of elements in a population is unidentified or cannot be individualistically recognised. In both quantitative and qualitative research, non-probability sampling designs are generally implemented (Kumar, 2011:340), and their sampling methods comprise convenience, purposive, referral, and quota sampling (Burns & Bush, 2014:255).

Non-probability, purposive (judgement) sampling was used in this study to select sampling units, since a sampling frame was not available and all possible respondents did not have a known, non-zero change of being selected. Purposive (judgement) sampling is used when the researcher makes a judgement as to which respondents can offer the best data to accomplish the research objectives of the study. Thus, the researcher only chooses respondents who in his/her view are probable to have the essential data and will be likely to participate (Kumar, 2011:339). For the purpose of this study, the sampling units intentionally comprised of selected cities and towns in South Africa representing urban and semi-urban areas, to ensure that responses were obtained from respondents living in both developed and less developed regions of the country. Cities, towns, townships and suburbs are normally regarded as urban areas (Stats SA, 2011). A semi-urban area is seen as a partly urban area that fits between urban and rural areas (Collins, 2017). The City of Pretoria (representing the urban area), Potchefstroom and Lichtenburg (representing semi-urban areas with a larger population) as well as Parys and Heilbron (representing semi-urban areas with a smaller population) were chosen. Table 1-11 below provides a summary of important statistics pertaining to each city or town.

Table 1-11: Statistical profile of selected cities

City	Population	Economic activity
Pretoria	The estimated population size of Pretoria is 1 763 336 citizens and it is listed as the 4th largest urban area in South Africa (Citypopulation, 2011).	Pretoria falls under the municipality of the City of Tshwane that has shown a great deal of economic growth in the past decade, and the city contributed 27% of the Gauteng province GDP in 2011 (Stats SA, 2011).
Potchefstroom	The estimated population size of Potchefstroom is 148 804 citizens for the year 2011 (Citypopulation, 2011).	In Potchefstroom, 65 920 people are economically active (employed or unemployed but looking for work) and only 21.6% are unemployed. Of the 31 279 youth (aged 15 – 34) that are economically active, 29.5% are unemployed (Stats SA, 2011).
Parys	Parys had an estimated population size of 48 169 citizens for the year 2011 (Citypopulation, 2011).	Parys falls under the Ngwathe Local Municipality that is situated in the northern part of Fezile District Municipality, in the northern part of the Free State Province. The economically active (employed or unemployed but looking for work) comprise 39 555 citizens, and of these 35.2% are unemployed (Stats SA, 2011).
Heilbron	Heilbron had an estimated population size of 27 407 citizens for the year 2011 (Citypopulation, 2011).	Heilbron falls under the Ngwathe Local Municipality that is situated in the northern part of Fezile District Municipality, in the northern part of the Free State Province. The economically active (employed or unemployed but looking for work) comprise 39 555 citizens, and of these 35.2% are unemployed (Stats SA, 2011).
Lichtenburg	Lichtenburg had an estimated population size of 148 804 citizens for the year 2011 (Citypopulation, 2011).	Lichtenberg falls under the Ditsobotla Local Municipality that is located in NgakaModiriMolema District Municipality in the North-West province. The economically active (employed or unemployed but looking for work) comprise 52 434 citizens, and of these 28.3%% are unemployed (Stats SA, 2011).

A non-probability sampling method, which is a blend of convenience and quota sampling, was conducted to select the sampling elements. A convenience sample is drawn at the discretion of the researcher (Burns & Bush, 2014:254). Quota sampling entails the selection of elements from population subgroups that are identified by the researcher and the individual elements are carefully chosen from the subgroups according to the researcher's judgment (Smith & Albaum, 2012:150). For the purpose of this study, the sampling elements were identified as males and females, eighteen years and older, residing in the selected urban and semi-urban areas in South Africa and who are making use of at least one form of electronic banking service. The sampling elements were approached on a convenient basis and the researcher attempted to ensure that male and female respondents from both urban and semi-urban areas were equally represented in this study.

1.8.2.6 Sample size

Sample size is viewed as the number of items to be selected from the total population to establish a sample (Kothari, 2004:56). The proposed sample size for the study was 500 participants, since results based upon larger samples offer greater certainty and are more precise than those based on smaller samples (Kumar, 2011:180). Furthermore, since four constructs were investigated in this study, and to ensure that problems were not encountered with low communalities or missing values, the decision was made to aim for 500 participants (Hair *et al*., 2010). Table 1-12 below provides a summary of the sample size estimates by sample unit and gender.

Table 1-12: Sample size estimates by sample unit and gender

Sample units	Sample size	Total (male and female)	Male	Female
Urban area (Pretoria)	250	250	125	125
Semi-urban areas (Potchefstroom, Parys, Heilbron and Lichtenburg)	250	250	125	125

Source: Researcher's own construction.

As indicated in Table 1-12, the sampling units included an urban area (Pretoria) as well as semi-urban areas (Potchefstroom, Parys, Heilbron and Lichtenburg). These areas were intentionally selected to ensure that responses were obtained from both developed and less developed regions of the country. A non-probability convenience sampling method was used to select the 250 respondents from the urban area and the 250 respondents from the semi-urban area. Gender quotas were applied to each area. The researcher attempted to survey an equal number of male and female respondents per area, so that both genders were equally represented in this study.

Furthermore, the decision was made to collectively survey 250 respondents from the semi-urban area and not to further proportion the respondents per city. The rationale for this approach is that the cities are widely dispersed and due to budget constraints, it would not be possible to remain in the city until the pre-determined quota has been reached. To this end, a non-probability convenience sampling approach was followed and field workers were instructed to survey available respondents in the city or town who qualified to participate in the study for a certain number of hours, and then to move on to the next city or town.

1.8.2.7 Pre-testing the questionnaire

As a part of the research design process, the quantitative questionnaire was validated by means of a pre-test. A pre-test entails completing a try run of the questionnaire on a minor, representative group of respondents to expose questionnaire blunders prior to the launch of the questionnaire (Burn & Bush, 2014: 229).

For the purpose of this study, content validity was measured. Content validity, often denoted to as face validly, refers to the relation of the suitability of the measurement to subjective judgements, typically those of experts in the required field (Feinberg *et al*., 2013:666). For this study, a total of 30 respondents from the population profile in addition to experts in the field (relationship marketing, consumer behaviour) were requested to complete the pre-test questionnaire. The feedback and recommendations were considered and adjustments were implemented prior to questionnaire launch.

1.8.2.8 Data analysis

Brynard *et al.* (2014:62) state that after data has been collected, an in-depth analysis is the next step. Analysis techniques differ and their efficiency depends on the types of information the researcher is gathering, and the type of measurements the study requires (Smith & Albaum, 2012:12).

The collected data was first coded, captured and edited using version 24 of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). After the data was cleaned, frequencies (counts and percentages) as well as descriptive statistics, which include standard deviations and means, were calculated to provide advance understanding into the demographic profile of the respondents, as well as the responses obtained for each construct. Cronbach’s alpha values were also determined to measure the internal consistency reliability of the research constructs. Thereafter, a Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was applied to the data to further assess the validity and reliability of the measurement model. In the final stage of the analysis, the Structural equation model (SEM) was compiled to test the research hypotheses and to determine the validity of the proposed theoretical model. Version 7.4 of the MPlus programme was used to conduct the CFA and SEM analyses.

1.9 CHAPTER OUTLINE

Table 1-13 provides a summary of the chapters of the dissertation.

Table 1-13: Chapter outline of dissertation

Chapter	Content
1	An outline of the research study is provided in this chapter. The chapter focuses on providing insight into the problem examined, as well as the necessary background to the study. A discussion of the South African banking industry is provided, followed by a discussion of the identified research constructs and theories of this study. The concluding part of the chapter presents the conceptual model, the purpose of the study, research objectives and the research methodology used in the study.
2	Chapter 2 provides insight into the theories and research constructs of this study that may ultimately contribute to positive word of mouth intention. Specifically, an investigation is conducted into the perceived value theory, perceived usefulness, relationship marketing, relationship quality, trust and commitment.
3	Chapter 3 offers an exploration of the customer loyalty theory, word of mouth communication, behavioural intention and positive word of mouth intention as a form of behavioural intention of loyalty.
4	Chapter 4 presents the conceptual model and the research hypotheses that have been formulated for the study.
5	A detailed description of the research methodology and process required to accomplish the research objectives is presented in Chapter 5.
6	Chapter 6 presents an analysis of the field data and offers conclusions on the hypotheses.
7	Chapter 7 presents the final conclusions with regard to positive word of mouth intention in the electronic banking environment and propose the final model of this study. Research implications are also highlighted and recommendations for further research are provided.

1.10 SUMMARY

Word of mouth communication can influence the behaviours and attitudes of consumers and therefore offers organisations a means of obtaining a competitive advantage (Brown & Reingen, 1987:350; Mazzarol *et al.*, 2007:1475). Word of mouth communication is seen as the person-to-person communication with regards to brands, products or services between a communicator (a customer) and a receiver (another customer) (Arndt, 1967:3; Libai *et al.*, 2010:269). The word of mouth communication concept is important and it seems that an immense number of studies have been conducted over the years to obtain greater insight into this concept from both an online as well as an offline perspective (Shamhuyenhanzva *et al.*, 2016:439).This study aims to extend extant knowledge on the subject by investigating the mediating effect of the relationship quality factor *continuance commitment* on the relationships between *perceived usefulness* (a perceived value factor) and *positive word of mouth intention*, as well as between *competence trust* (another relationship quality factor) and *positive word of mouth intention*.

The proposed model has not been tested before and is based on the belief that (1) relationship quality may contribute to positive word of mouth intention (Hutchinson *et al*., 2011), (2) customer perceived value may lead to positive word of mouth intention (Hartline & Jones, 1996:207), and (3) perceived value may impact on views of relationship quality (Gummesson, 1987; Moliner, 2009). Previous research has also indicated that the key dimensions of relationship quality, namely trust and commitment, apart from their direct relationship with word of mouth communication, may be related to each other. Customers may first become committed towards the organisation, owing to the development of trusting perceptions, before engaging in positive word of mouth communication behaviour (Radomir *et al.,* 2015:83).

The context of the study is the South African electronic banking environment. The South African retail banks are following international banking trends and are also concentrating on digital and electronic channels as an alternative banking platform, as opposed to the traditional in-branch banking services (Kumar, 2016; PwC, 2016:37; Singh, 2004:190). The successful implementation of these initiatives, however, depends on the extent to which customers are willing to adopt the new technology and make use of electronic banking services to carry out their banking transactions, which may be problematic within the South African retail banking environment. Thus, retail banks can be more successful if they were to focus on existing users to assist them in this endeavour, because service customers seem to favour personal independent sources over impersonal sources of information and tend to show more confidence in personal sources when considering a service purchase (Bansal & Voyer, 2000:167; Murray, 1991:19).

The research design for this study is explanatory and quantitative in nature. A total of 500 respondents older than eighteen years who have a bank account and who are be registered for electronic banking services were requested to complete a self-administered survey. The sampling units intentionally consist of selected cities and towns in South Africa representing urban and semi-urban areas, to ensure that responses are obtained from respondents living in both developed and less developed regions of the country. The City of Pretoria (representing the urban area), Potchefstroom and Lichtenburg (representing semi-urban areas with a larger population) as well as Parys and Heilbron (representing semi-urban areas with a smaller population) were chosen. The self-administered questionnaire was field-tested and consists of previously validated measurement scales that have proven to be reliable and valid. The constructs of the study were measured by a Likert-type scale that ranges from 1, being “strongly disagree” to 5 representing “strongly agree”. Version 24 of the Social Sciences (SPSS) programme was used to calculate the frequencies (counts and percentages), descriptive statistics, and Cronbach’s alpha values. Following this analysis, MPlus version 7.4 was used to conduct the CFA and SEM analyses.

From a theoretical perspective, the research findings may offer insights into the interrelationships between perceived usefulness, competence trust and continuance commitment and their contributions to positive word of mouth intention. Furthermore, the research findings may also provide strategic direction for subsequent studies aiming to further assess the role of relationship marketing practices in facilitating positive word of mouth intention. From a managerial perspective, the research findings could offer guidance to retail banks to adapt their marketing strategies to facilitate greater positive word of mouth intention that may assist them to expand their market share and to reach unbanked customers. Ultimately, the research findings may also be beneficial to other self-service technology establishments and could provide guidance to organisations in other service sectors to adapt their marketing strategies to facilitate greater positive word of mouth intention.

Chapter 2 further explores perceived value, relationship marketing and the constructs that may contribute to positive word of mouth intention.

CHAPTER 2

PERCEIVED VALUE, RELATIONSHIP MARKETING AND RELATIONSHIP QUALITY CONSTRUCTS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 determined that the aim of this study is to extend knowledge on the mediating effect of *continuance commitment* (a relationship quality factor) on the relationships between *perceived usefulness* (a perceived value factor) and *positive word of mouth intention*, as well as between *competence trust* (another relationship quality factor) and *positive word of mouth intention*. An understanding of these matters is important since it may assist retail banks in South Africa to adapt their marketing strategies to facilitate greater positive word of mouth intention among customers and to inspire other potential users to trust and adopt electronic banking services.

The aim of Chapter 2 is to provide insight into the main theories and research constructs that may have an impact on positive word of mouth intention and that are further investigated in the empirical part of the study. The chapter provides an investigation of the perceived value domain, the relationship marketing domain, relationship quality and the constructs perceived usefulness, competence trust and continuance commitment. The perceived value domain discussion focuses on exploring the difference between the value and values concepts as well as relationship value and consumer perceived value. The final part of the perceived value domain discussion focuses on providing insight into the perceived usefulness construct as a key dimension of consumer perceived value. The second part of this chapter examines the generic elements and benefits of the relationship marketing domain and explores relationship quality as a concept. The chapter concludes with an overview of the trust and commitment constructs that are regarded as key dimensions of relationship quality.

2.2 THE PERCEIVED VALUE DOMAIN

2.2.1 The difference between value and values

Perceived value is often vaguely referred to as value (singular) or values (plural) (Boksberger & Melsen, 2011:230). Numerous scholars regard “value” and “values” as similar, in spite of the fact that they are evidently different (Sánchez-Fernández & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007:429). The Oxford Dictionary (2017d) defines value as something that is held to deserve; importance or worth. Value is also seen as relative to competition by providing a superior trade-off amongst benefits and sacrifices in a service or product offering (Ulaga & Eggert, 2006:110). Holbrook (1996:138) further defines value as "*an interactive relativistic preference experience*". Woodruff (1997:142) agrees that value is a preference and refers to consumer value as "…*a consumer's perceived preference for and evaluation of those attributes performance, and consequences arising from use that facilitate (or block) achieving the consumers' goals and purposes in use situations*". Alternatively, "value" is referred to when consumers grade their outcomes as more significant than their inputs (Vera, 2015:148). Babin and Harris (2018:30) propound that value is an individual assessment of the net worth gained from an activity. Consequently, the term value is viewed as a favoured judgement of one transaction or a final end-state (Boksberger & Melsen, 2011:230).

The Oxford Dictionary (2017e) further defines values as "*principles or standards of behaviour*". The end-states of existence and modes of conduct relate to values (Rokeach, 1968:159).When a consumer makes a preference judgment, the understood measure entails values (Sánchez-Fernández & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007:429). Values are seen as, respectively, rules, morals, norms, measures, or ideals that is used as a foundation intended for any favoured judgement (Boksberger & Melsen, 2011:230). Values are regarded as *"enduring beliefs that a particular mode of behavior or end-state of existence is preferable to opposite modes of behavior or end-state"* (Rokeach, 1973:5). Thus, "values" are the rules, morals, norms, measures, goals or items that provide the foundation of an evaluative judgment (Holbrook, 1999:8).

An investigation of the concept of "value" as perceived by the respondents with respect to electronic banking services is therefore explored. Perceived value is also different from relationship value, as explained in the next section.

2.2.2 The difference between relationship value and consumer perceived value

From a managerial perspective, Cheung *et al*. (2010:474) define relationship value as the benefits perceived by consumers and organisations in terms of their expectations from an organisational exchange relationship. Hua *et al*. (2016:613) note that relationship value relates to the prospects of the consumers and the accountability of the organisation to deliver on these prospects in a continuous relation with the supplier. From a consumer's perspective, Golicic and Mentzer (2006:87) define relationship value as the perception of the advantages obtained from having a relation with the organisation, minus the cost of the relation.

In contrast to the above, a widely recognised definition of consumer perceived value is provided by Zeithaml (1988:14), who states that the concept refers to a general evaluation by consumers of the usefulness of a product or services, as measured by the advantages obtained and sacrifices made. The concept consumer perceived value developed from the "Equity Theory" (Yang &

Peterson, 2004:802), which implies that if there is an equilibrium amongst what consumer received in exchange for something that was given up, both parties will feel equally treated and satisfied (Vera, 2015:148). Ultimately, the trade-off amongst related benefits and sacrifices determines the net advantages received by a product or service that consumers observe (Chang & Wang, 2011:339). Consumer sacrifices may relate to non-financial aspects such as the time and energy spent in obtaining the product or service, as well as financial aspects such as the price paid for receiving the product offering. The benefit component relates to the consumer advantages obtained when purchasing the product, for example family, peers, friends and acquaintances may compliment and indicate acceptance when a consumer purchases a specific product or service (Chahal & Kumari, 2012:169).

Therefore, based on the abovementioned, it can be concluded that relationship value concerns a consumer's assessment of the advantages received and sacrifices required in order to have a relationship with the organisation, while consumer perceived value focuses on the consumer's evaluation of the advantages received in relation to the cost incurred for obtaining a product or service.

A further investigation into literature related to consumer perceived value, however, evidenced that Zeithaml's (1988:14) definition of consumer perceived value has been criticised for being too simplistic in nature. There are scholars who believe that the consumer perceived value concept may be more multi-dimensional in nature (Sánchez-Fernández & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007:482). Table 2-1, depicted hereafter, provides an encapsulation of alternative approaches towards consumer perceived value that have been established over the years.

Table 2-1: Alternative approaches to consumer perceived value

Definition and/or short description	Author(s)	Study	Value dimensions
"Customer value is an interactive relativistic preference experience."	Holbrook (1982; 1994; 1999)	Conceptual	Efficiency; Excellence; Play; Aesthetics; Status; Esteem; Ethics; Spirituality; Utilitarian value; Hedonic value
"Perceived value represents a trade-off between buyers' perceptions of quality and sacrifice and is positive when perceptions of quality are greater than the perceptions of sacrifice. At the same time, the increase in price will result in greater perceived sacrifice."	Monroe and Chapman (1987:195)	Conceptual	Acquisition value; Transaction value

Table 2-1: Alternative approaches to consumer perceived value (cont.)

Definition and/or short description	Author(s)	Study	Value dimensions
"A hierarchical (means-end) model of consumer perceptions of price, quality and value. Value is a trade-off between benefits and sacrifices. Benefits include intrinsic and extrinsic attributes, perceived quality, and other relevant high-level abstractions. Sacrifices include monetary and non-monetary prices, such as time, energy and effort."	Zeithaml (1988:14)	Empirical	"Value is low price; Value is whatever I want in a product or service; Value is the quality I get for the price I paid; Value is what I get for all that I give."
"Perceived worth in monetary units of the set of economic, technical, service, and social benefits received by a customer's firm in exchange for the price paid for product's offering, and taking it into consideration, the available alternative of supplier's offerings and price."	Anderson and Narus (1998)	Conceptual	"Value in business markets is the worth in monetary terms of the technical, economic, service, and social benefits."
"Five independent consumption values that steer consumer behavior. Consumer choice is a result of these values."	Sheth *et al*. (1991)	Conceptual	Functional value; Social value; Emotional value; Epistemic value; Conditional value
"Shopping provides customer value instrumentally, and by being a pleasurable end itself. A questionnaire is developed for measuring personal shopping value."	Babin *et al*. (1994)	Empirical	Hedonic value; Utilitarian value
"Value is simply quality, however, the customer defines it, offered at the right price."	Gale (1994)	Conceptual	"Value equals quality relative to price; Quality includes all non-price attributes; Quality, price and value are relative."
"Customer value is a customer's perceived preference for and evaluation of those product attributes, attribute performances, and consequences arising from use that facilitate (or block) achieving the customer's goals and purposes in use situations."	Woodruff (1997:142)	Conceptual	Functional; Social; Emotional; Conditional; Epistemic
"Value is a positive function of what is received and a negative function of what is sacrificed."	Oliver (1999)	Conceptual	Consumption value; Extended value
"The consumer's overall assessment of the utility of a product based on perception of what is received and what is given."	Sweeney and Soutar (2001)	Empirical	Emotional value; Social value; Functional (price/value for money); Functional (performance/quality)

Table 2-1: Alternative approaches to consumer perceived value (cont.)

Definition and/or short description	Author(s)	Study	Value dimensions
"The benefits of sales promotion are defined as the perceived value attached to the sales promotion experience, which can include both promotion exposure and usage."	Chandon *et al*. (2000)	Empirical	"Utilitarian benefits are monetary savings, quality and convenience; Hedonic benefits include value expression, exploration and entertainment."
"A study of experiential value reflecting the benefits of internet and catalogue shopping. The four value dimensions are extracted by using Holbrook's (1994, 1999) classification of extrinsic-intrinsic and active-reactive sources of value."	Mathwick *et al.* (2001)	Empirical	Playfulness; Aesthetics; Customer return on investment; Service excellence
"Based on Sweeney and Soutar's (2001) perceived value scale (PERVAL): The purpose is to develop a multi-dimensional scale for the measurement of customer value of a service. The focus is mainly on the post-purchase evaluation of a service."	Petrick (2002)	Empirical	Non-monetary costs; Monetary price; Emotional response; Quality; Reputation
"Customer value is the perceived outcome of the trade-off of benefit and sacrifice of technical, functional, temporal and spatial dimensions within an e-service context."	Heinonen (2006; 2004)	Empirical	Spatial value; Temporal value; Functional value; Technical value
"Based on Babin *et al.*'s (2005) perspective: The perspective specifically investigated the shopping experience provided by retailers and how it contributes to customer value The perspective identified a need to understand the drivers of total customer value."	Rintamäki *et al.* (2006)	Empirical	Utilitarian value; Hedonic value; Social value
"This perspective is based on Holbrook's customer value perspective. Holbrook's customer value perspective was found lacking because it did not include any negative conceptualisations of customer value."	Gallarza and Saura (2006)	Empirical	Efficiency; Aesthetics; Time and effort spend; Service quality; Social value; Play

Source: Adopted from Gallarza and Gil (2008:7), Näslund *et al.* (2006:303), Rintamäki *et al.* (1996:10-11), Snoj *et al*. (2004:158) and Strydom (2014:59-87).

The multi-dimensional perspective presented by Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) and Babin *et al*. (1994) has been adopted for this study. This view states that perceived value has two dimensions, utilitarian value and hedonic value. Sánchez-Fernández and Iniesta-Bonillo (2007:436) describe hedonic value as the emotional value of the product or service and indicate that it is linked to the customer’s feelings. Utilitarian value, however, involves the practical value of the product or service, and relates to the intellect or the reasoning ability of the consumer (Sánchez-Fernández & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007:436). According to Cha (2009), Chiu *et al*., (2009), and Wu and Chang (2016), utilitarian value relates closely to perceived usefulness, especially where the use of information technology in a services marketing perspective is concerned, as it is thought that utilitarian features are mirrored in perceived usefulness. As such, perceived usefulness is used as proxy to measure utilitarian value in this study.

2.2.3 Perceived usefulness as a key dimension of consumer perceived value

2.2.3.1 Generic elements of the perceived usefulness concept

Over the past few decades, a large number of scholars have set out to formally define the concept perceived usefulness. Table 2-2 below presents a summary of the various definitions of perceived usefulness that have most often been cited.

Table 2-2: Definitions of perceived usefulness

Author(s)	Adopted definition of perceived usefulness
Davis (1989:32)	“Perceived usefulness is defined as the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would enhance their job performance.” Perceived usefulness was measured by considering increased productivity, improvement of effectiveness and enhancement of the users’ job performance.
Karahanna and Straub (1999:238)	“Perceived usefulness is defined as the degree to which a person believes the use of a system would improve their job performance.”
Wang *et al*. (2003:503)	“Perceived usefulness is defined as the extent to which a person believes that using a particular system will enhance his or her job performance.”
Blomstermo *et al*. (2004:356)	“Perceived usefulness is the perceived potential the information has for usage.”
Chiu *et al*. (2009:766)	“Perceived usefulness is defined as the extent to which a consumer believes that online shopping will enhance his or her transaction performance.” Perceived usefulness was tested by considering enchantment of effectiveness, improvement of user performance and increase of the user productivity.
Yee-Loong *et al*. (2010:271)	“Perceived usefulness in this study is the extent to which the individual believes that internet banking is more advantageous when compared to traditional way of conducting banking transactions.” Perceived usefulness was measured by considering enhancement of user effectiveness when using the services and the improvement of the users’ productivity.
Hsiao *et al*. (2016b:346)	“Perceived usefulness refers to users’ subjective probability that IS use will improve their performance, and therefore captures the instrumentality or rational component of their usage decision.” IS in the context of the study referred to information systems.

Considering the definitions provided in Table 2-2 and in light of a further literature investigation, one can propound that the perceived usefulness concept comprises of a number of generic elements.

Most of the definitions cited in Table 2-2 allude to the fact that the use of the product offering may contribute to the *enhancement* or *improvement of a performance*. Improvement is defined as *the act or state of making something better* (Oxford advanced learner's dictionary, 2010:755; Summers *et al*., 2007:259). The purpose of an information system that is utilitarian in nature is to enhance the task performance of the user and to contribute to greater efficiency (Hsiao *et al*., 2016:346). Therefore, it follows that the functional nature of the product offering is perceived as useful if it can enhance performance and lead to greater efficiency for the individual using the technology. The second generic element related to the definition of perceived usefulness is that it appears that scholars have interpret usefulness in terms of the extent to which it may *increase productivity*. Customers' productivity refers to as the ratio of total utility gained by customers to the total resources (namely mental, physical and financial) disbursed by customers (Shipchandler, 2015:561). Furthermore, to enhance user productivity, developers of information systems tend to align system functionality with task requirements and to limit distractions when utilising the technology (Van der Heijden, 2004:696). Consequently, utilitarian systems offer helpful and productivity-oriented value to customers (Hsiao *et al*., 2016:346). The third generic element associated with perceived usefulness concerns enhancement of effectiveness. Effectiveness is defined as "*the degree to which something is successful in producing a desired result*" (Oxford, 2017f). Taking the functional benefits of the technology as discussed above into account, perceived usefulness of technology may also relate to users in managing their personal lives more effectively (Hsiao *et al*., 2016:353).

These three elements of perceived usefulness identified are likely to be present within the electronic banking environment. Electronic banking services have the potential to improve (makes it easier) banking activities performed by customers (Joaquín *et al*., 2009:686). Electronic banking systems bring the consumer closer to the banking services. For example, customers who use an electronic banking service can conduct banking transactions beyond branch banking hours. The online banking channel also provides consumers with the opportunity to view their account balance and make payments or conduct transfers without going to the actual banking branch. Thus, these electronic banking channels have made everyday banking easier for consumers (Aduda & Kingoo, 2012:100) and can also assist consumers in being productive (Yee-Loong *et al*., 2010:286). Using electronic banking such as mobile banking helps customers to accomplish tasks more quickly and gives customers a chance to focus on other tasks that are important to them (Ali *et al*., 2016:708; Aries *et al*., 2016:525). Furthermore, the main goal of electronic banking systems is to generate an effective platform where customers can quickly and easily control the search for information they need for conducting financial activities (Joaquín *et al*., 2009:673). In the electronic banking environment, scholars have identified that using electronic banking services allows customers to manage their finances more efficiently, and that Internet banking have made communication with retail banks much more effective (Yee-Loong *et al*., 2010:286).

Considering the generic elements discussed, the following definition of perceived usefulness is formulated for the purpose of the present study:

> *Perceived usefulness is the extent to which customers believe that electronic banking services will **improve** their **performance**, **increase** their **productivity** and **enhance** their **effectiveness** in executing their banking transactions.*

2.2.3.2 Benefits of perceived usefulness perceptions for the electronic banking environment

As mentioned in Chapter 1 (section 1.1), the South African retail banking sector, in its effort to create value, is following international banking trends and is also concentrating on digital and electronic banking channels as an alternative banking platform to the traditional in-branch banking services (Kumar, 2016; PwC, 2016:37; Singh, 2004:190). The successful implementation of these initiatives, however, depends on the extent to which consumers would be willing to adopt the new technologies and make use of electronic banking services to conduct their banking transactions. It was further proposed in Chapter 1 (section 1.2.1), that customers who perceive the service as useful may want to recommend the service to other potential users, and through their positive word of mouth communications, help to ensure greater acceptance of the service. Thus, perceptions of the perceived usefulness of the electronic banking service may be beneficial to the bank, as such perceptions may ultimately result in users assisting the bank in marketing their services. Consumers will tend to be eager to accept electronic banking services when the benefits compared to traditional ways of banking are known (Yee-Loong *et al*., 2010:281).

Furthermore, customers who believe in the usefulness of the service would also contribute towards reducing the cost per transaction (Jeong & Yoon, 2013:34) and may help to support effective communication channels between themselves and bank employees (Yee-Loong *et al*., 2010:280). As mentioned in Chapter 1 (section 1.3), there are several electronic banking communication channels available to banking consumers. Customers can quickly and easily communicate to the retail bank from any channel they prefer. Conducting transactions online is also more cost-effective than completing the same transaction within a bank branch, as indicated in Table 2-3 below.

Table 2-3: Top five retail banks' banking fees

Bank	Service(s)	Fees
CAPITEC BANK	**Transact**	
	Add, amend or cancel recurring payment (stop order) App; Internet Branch	 Free R5.00
	Recurring payment (stop order) App; Internet Branch	 R1.50 R5.00
	Stop debit order App; Branch	 R5.00
	Transfer to own account App/Internet; Capitec Bank ATM; Branch; Cell phone banking	 Free
	Early release: tax-free savings Capitec Bank ATM Branch	 R5.00 R300.00
	Payment to another bank/Capitec Bank account App; Internet Branch	 R1.50 R5.00
	Payment to Capitec Bank client with verified cell phone number App; Internet; *120*3279# (Cell phone banking)	 R1.50
	Airtime/Data/SMS bundles & electricity App; Internet; card Airtime (another bank ATM)	 Free R1.50
	Statements	
	Transaction/Savings account statement Internet Capitec Bank ATM Branch	 Free R2.50 R5.00
	Flexible savings account statement Internet; Capitec Bank ATM; Branch	 Free
	Transaction/Savings account statement Internet Capitec Bank ATM Branch	 Free R2.50 R5.00
	Credit card statement (original document free) Internet Capitec Bank ATM	 Free R5.00
	Credit card transaction history Internet Capitec Bank ATM	 Free R5.00

Table 2-3: Top five retail banks' banking fees (cont.)

Bank	Service(s)	Fees
ABSA BANK	**Transact**	
	Monthly fees	
	Monthly administration fee	R4.95
	Monthly subscription fees – Online, Mobile, Telephone banking	Free
	Deposits	
	Cheque deposit: Branch	R30.00
	Cheque deposit: Absa ATM	Free
	Cash deposit: Branch	R8.00 + R1.55/R100
	Cash deposit: Absa ATM	R3.95 + R1.35/R100
	Cash withdrawals	
	Branch	R55.00 + R1.60/R100
	Absa ATM/Barclays ATM	R5.00
	Purchases	
	Prepaid Top-up at Absa ATM, POS, Online, Mobile, Telephone	R1.15
	Prepaid Top-up at Absa-supported ATM	R4.15
	Account payments	
	Branch	R55.00
	Absa ATM	R3.50
	Online/Mobile	R2.00
	Telephone (IVR)	R7.50
	Telephone adviser-assisted	R14.50
	Funds transfers	
	Branch	R55.00
	Absa ATM, Online, Mobile, Telephone (IVR)	Free
	Telephone adviser-assisted	R7.00
	Balance enquiries	
	Branch	R6.25
	Absa ATM; Barclays ATM; Absa-supported ATM; POS; Online; Mobile; Telephone (IVR)	Free
	Statement fees	
	Branch (Full statement)	R25.00
	Absa ATM (Absa ATM mini-statement)	R6.25
	eStatement	Free
	Transaction history	
	Telephone adviser-assisted	R25.00
	Enquiry – online, mobile, telephone (IVR)	Free
	Administration fees	
	Stop payments	
	Branch, telephone adviser-assisted	R55.00
	Online	R30.00

Table 2-3: Top five retail banks' banking fees (cont.)

Bank	Service(s)	Fees
NEDBANK	**Transact**	
	Monthly fees	
	Account maintenance fee	R30.00
	Self-service banking: subscription fee	Free
	Deposits	
	Electronic deposit	Free
	Cheque deposit (Branch/ATM)	R20.00 per deposit
	Cash deposit (Branch/ATM)	R11.00 + R1.40/R100 or part thereof.
	Cash withdrawals	
	Cheque encashment	R40.00 + R1.40/R100 or part thereof + cheque service fees.
	Debit or cheque card withdrawal	R40.00 + R1.40/R100 or part thereof.
	Absa ATM/Barclays ATM	R4.50 + R1.40/R100 or part thereof.
	Payments – electronic	
	Debit order (internal)	R5.00
	Self-service terminal; NetBank; Nedbank AppSuite™; Cell phone banking WAP	R8.00
	Telephone banking: agent-assisted	R30.00
	Payments – at a branch	
	To a Nedbank account	R65.00
	To an account at another bank	R65.00
	Inter-account transfers	
	SMS banking	Free
	Cell phone banking WAP; ATM; NetBank; Nedbank AppSuite™	R4.00
	Telephone banking: agent-assisted	R20.00
	Branch	R40.00
	Balance enquiries	
	SMS banking; Cell phone banking WAP; ATM; NetBank; Nedbank AppSuite™	Free
	Branch	R5.00

Table 2-3: Top five retail banks' banking fees (cont.)

Bank	Service(s)	Fees
STANDARD BANK	**Transact**	
	Monthly fees Monthly administration fee Monthly subscription fees – online, mobile, telephone banking	 R4.95 Free
	Deposits Cheque deposit: Branch Cheque deposit: ATM Cash deposit: Branch	 R30.00 R30.00 R8.00 + R1.60/R100 or part thereof
	Cash withdrawals Branch ATM	 R35.00 + R1.60/R100 or part thereof R1.60/R100 or part thereof
	Account payments Branch Electronic interbank payments - ACB	 R50.00 R180.00 + 0.20% max. R900.00
	Funds transfers Branch (inter account) Electronic (inter account); Cell phone banking	 R50.00 Free
	Balance enquiries Branch Absa ATM; Barclays ATM; Absa-supported ATM; POS; Online; Mobile; Telephone (IVR)	 R6.25 Free
	Statement fees Balance enquiry/mini-statement ATM Slip Balance enquiry/mini-statement without ATM slip Balance enquiry/mini-statement branch	 R1.50 Free R7.25
FNB	**Transact**	
	Monthly fees Account maintenance fee Self-service banking: Subscription fee	 R30.00 Free
	Deposits	
	Cheque deposit Branch; ATM	R45.00 + R5.00 per cheque
	Cash deposit Branch ATM	 R60.00 + R1.90/R100 R0.90/R100

Table 2-3: Top five retail banks' banking fees (cont.)

Bank	Service(s)	Fees
FNB	**Cash withdrawals** Branch cheque encashment ATM	 R60.00 + R1.90/R100 R1.85/R100
	Payments Branch; Telephone banking: agent-assisted	 R65.00
	Statements Cell phone banking mini statement ATM Telephone banking: agent-assisted; Branch	 Free R3.00 R25.00
	Balance enquiries SMS banking; Cell phone banking WAP Branch	 Free R5.50

Source: Adopted from ABSA (2017a), Capitec (2017e), FNB (2017d), Nedbank (2017g) and Standard Bank (2017i).

2.3 THE RELATIONSHIP MARKETING DOMAIN

Getting new customers costs five times retaining current customers (Athanasopoulou, 2009:583). Therefore, organisations' main goal is to develop lasting relationships with customers that may result in customer loyalty and have a positive effect on profitability (Shajahan, 2004:49). The relationship marketing concept, however, has been defined in several ways and it is essential to first obtain more insight into the generic elements of this concept and to formulate a formal definition for the purpose of this study.

2.3.1 The generic elements of the relationship marketing concept

Table 2-4 below presents a summary of the different definitions of relationship marketing that have been cited over the years.

Table 2-4: Definitions of relationship marketing

Author(s)	Adopted definition of relationship marketing
Berry (1983:25)	"Relationship marketing is defined as attracting, maintaining and enhancing of customer relationships."
Evans and Laskin (1994:440)	"Relationship marketing is the process whereby a firm builds long-term alliances with both prospective and current customers so that both seller and buyer work toward a common set of specified goals." Relationship marketing is a process of consistent communication with consumers.

Table 2-4: Definitions of relationship marketing (cont.)

Author(s)	Adopted definition of relationship marketing
Grönroos (1989:57)	"Relationship marketing is to establish, maintain, and enhance relationships with customers and other partners, at a profit, so that the objectives of the parties involved are met. This is achieved by a mutual exchange and fulfilment of promises."
Gummesson (1994:2)	"Relationship marketing is marketing seen as relationships, networks and interaction."
Morgan and Hunt (1994:22)	"Relationship marketing refers to all marketing activities directed toward establishing, developing, and maintaining successful relational exchanges". Communication is a vital resource for developing a trusted and committed relationship between organisations and consumers.
Aijo (1996:15)	"Relationship marketing is a close, long-term relationship between various participants (network) involved in exchanging something of value (total marketing process)." Online marketing require close, constant, instant and location-free communication amongst the organisations and their consumer which is in perfect agreement with the principles of relationship marketing.
Bennett (1996:418)	"Consumer relationship marketing seeks to establish long-term, committed, trusting and co-operative relationships 'with customers, characterized by openness, genuine concern for the delivery of high-quality goods and services, responsiveness to customer suggestions, fair dealing, and (crucially) the willingness to sacrifice short-term advantage for long-term gain."
Shajahan (2004:18)	"Relationship marketing involves the ongoing process of identifying and creating new value with individual customers and the sharing of the benefits of this over a long time of association."
Palmatier (2008:4; VII)	"Relationship marketing is the process of identifying, developing, maintaining, and terminating relational exchanges with the purpose of enhancing performance." Relationship marketing often focuses on financial issues such as measuring consumer lifetime value.
Lo (2012:92)	"Relationship marketing is the retention of existing customers by strengthening relationships and preserving their loyalty."
Miquel-Romero *et al*. (2014:667)	"Relationship marketing entails the development of strategies to build relationships with customers, to develop these relationships further and maintain them over the long term, and, through this process, add value." For organisations relationship marketing leads to an increase in consumer life time value.
Gummerus *et al*. (2017:1)	"Relationship marketing was closely linked to the growth of the service sector characterized by long-term customer relationships, focus on customer-firm interaction and customer participation in service outcomes."

Considering the definitions provided in Table 2-4 as well as a further literature investigation it is clear that the relationship marketing concept is comprised of a number of generic elements.

- The first generic theme that emerges from the definitions provided above is that relationship marketing is a strategy that can enhance the *life-time value* of customers. Customer lifetime value represents the overall purchases that a customer makes in his or her lifetime – which can refer to the number of purchases that an organisation loses if a customer leaves the relationship (Armstrong *et al*., 2012:583). In other words, customer life time value is the estimated worth of a customer in economic terms for an organisation – which refers to the overall long-term profitability of a customer (Babin & Harris, 2016:40). A main goal in the application of a relationship marketing strategy is to ensure that customers continue their relationships with the provider; this will assist in enhancing their lifetime value (Little & Marandi, 2003:29). For an organisation, it is vital to retain existing customers – which implies that extending the duration of a relationship is a main marketing objective (Gummesson, 2008:15; Little & Marandi, 2003:28). The lifetime value of customers who remain in the relationship with an organisation tend to be higher than customers who only deal with the business over a short period of time (Shimp & Andrews, 2013:414).

- It is further evident from the definitions provided that for relationships to be established, *two-way communication* should occur amongst the customer and the organisation (Little & Marandi, 2003:30; Sheth & Parvatiyar, 2000:616). Communication is defined as "*the formal as well as informal sharing of information or meaning between the distributor and the manufacture"* (Anderson & Narus, 1984:66). In a customer context, two-way communication refers to an ongoing process in which an organisation and a customer apply all the elements of interpersonal communication (for example listening, feedback, positive language) with the intention to exchange ideas and information efficiently (Lucas, 2012:82). Organisations should provide timely and trustworthy information to customers to develop and maintain a long-term relationship with them (Alrubaiee & Al-Nazer, 2010:162). Communication and dialogue are pivotal in order to maintain and develop effective customer-organisation relationships (Little & Marandi, 2003:30; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Two-way communication is needed to determine and identify the needs of customers and to find relevant solutions (Little & Marandi, 2003:30). Two-way communication between an organisation and customer is therefore vital because it enables the organisation to identify customer needs and to provide a competitive service, so that the value exchange amongst the parties can continue (Christopher *et al.,* 2002:221).

- The third generic element that can be derived from the definitions above is that relationship marketing's key purpose is to develop as a *long-term customer relationship*, and to put emphasis on the customer-organisation interfaces and customer contribution in service results (Gummerus *et al*., 2017:1). Scientific evidence has determined that customers with a long-term orientation are motivated to display long-term planning, persistence and have respect for rules. They are willing to make sacrifices for the long-term and, unlike consumers who have a short-term orientation, do not expect instant rewards (Abubakar & Mokhtar, 2015:469; Hsu & Burns, 2012:1587). Owing to the social and economic relationship benefits, long-term oriented customers prefer a steady and long-lasting relationship.

Social relationship benefits relate to the emotional aspect of the relationship and are categorised with reference to the individual recognition of customers by employees, the customer's personal acquaintance with employees, and developing friendships amongst customers and employees (Colgate *et al*., 2005:427). Social benefits are experienced by customers who form an actual relationship with a service organisation (Dagger *et al.*, 2011:274). The advantages that customers originate from the emotional component of relationships, for example personal recognition by personnel, familiarity and the growth of friendships amongst the customer and the organisation are also considered as social benefits (Dagger *et al.*, 2011:274; Gwinner *et al.*, 1998:110; Little & Marandi, 2003:34). Thus, the social benefits that a customer receives reflect the interpersonal relationships they have with service organisations and their employees (Ng *et al.*, 2011:137). On the other hand, economic relationship benefits refer to the money savings and discounts that customers may receive (Peterson, 1995:280).

It appears that all three the elements identified may be present within the electronic banking environment. Consumer life-time value has been studied within the online banking environment (Hogan *et al*., 2003:2) and it was found that in general, electronic banking institutions that focus on building relationships with customers may enhance their lifetime values, because such customers may want to continue doing business with the bank. Electronic banking is also an interactive process that allows customers to communicate with the bank online and to receive feedback from the bank, such as financial statements or confirmation of a transaction successfully completed. It was also noted that the "*one-to-one interactive communication enabled by the Internet offers sellers and providers of services an unprecedented ability to learn about their customers and use this knowledge in their e-commerce strategies. This ability is especially fruitful in the financial services industry*" (Dewan & Seidmann, 2001:31). The interaction amongst the customer and the provider's services system within the online banking environment serves as a substitute for the customer's direct communication (two-way dialogue) with employees and is as important as communication between individuals. In the specific situation of electronic banking services, with the absence of physical bank branch and a lack of physical communication amongst bank employees and the customer (Yousafzai *et al.*, 2003:851), the system should be consumer-friendly and instructive. Otherwise, the customer will not have a positive experience and will perceive the relationship with the organisation to be less satisfactory (Gummesson, 2008:69).

Consequently, relationship marketing within an online banking setting must be also long-term focused and should aim to win the loyalty of customers. For example, studies conducted on relationship marketing within the online banking environment have noted the importance of investing in resources and ensuring website quality to gain customer loyalty (Brun *et al*., 2014; Floh & Treiblmaier, 2006).

Considering the generic elements discussed above, the following definition of relationship marketing is formulated for the purpose of this study:

> *Relationship marketing is characterised by the building of long-term relationships between electronic banking customers and their banks, where effective two-way communication is facilitated by means of the customer's interaction with the electronic banking system that would allow for the optimisation of consumer lifetime value.*

2.3.2 The benefits of relationship marketing within the electronic banking environment

Relationship building practices have traditionally been researched in an off-line face-to-face environment. Some of the benefits of relationship marketing that have been identified within an off-line environment include that successful relationship marketing allows both parties to develop mutual trust and knowledge about each other in terms of needs and interests. Parties in a relationship are also more interested in helping each other (Lancaster & Massingham, 2011:316). Customers who have a relationship with an organisation know what to expect, which further increases their faith in the organisation (Gwinner *et al.*, 1998:109-110; Little & Marandi, 2003:34). Customers who have confidence in the organisation may feel a sense of security and comfort in the established relationship (Gwinner *et al.*, 1998:104). Furthermore, Gwinner *et al.* (1998:108) noted that a positive linkage exists between confidence benefits and the likelihood of a continuous relationship. Also, Yen *et al.* (2015:184) indicate that confidence benefits leads to loyalty.

With the introduction of the Internet, however, new opportunities have emerged to establish relationships with customers. Information technology can be used to interact with customers online, to deliver good customer service, and to provide relevant information (Lang & Colgate, 2003:29). Using the Internet may therefore help organisations to manage important relationships with customers. The Internet also allows for the co-production of a product offering as well as marketing directed at individual customers. Enduring relationships can be established that may contribute to greater loyalty and a broadened network (Durkin & Howcroft, 2003:62). As such, it has been noted that "*the Internet has the potential to make the greatest technological impact on banking to date*" (Durkin & Howcroft, 2003:62).

2.4 RELATIONSHIP QUALITY

Maintaining and enhancing relationship quality is vital for service providers to sustain a competitive advantage (Athanasopoulou *et al.*, 2012:171). The relationship quality concept, nevertheless, has been defined in numerous ways and it is essential to explore the concept and to establish a formal definition for the purpose of this study. Table 2-5 below presents a summary of the different definitions of relationship quality that have been cited over the years.

Table 2-5: Relationship quality definitions

Author(s)	Adopted definition of relationship quality
Gummesson (1987:19)	"Relational quality is a concept which has been formed to stress that skilled handling of relations between buyer and seller is part of customer-perceived quality."
Crosby *et al.* (1990:70)	"Relationship quality from the customer's perspective is achieved through the salesperson's ability to reduce perceived uncertainty."
Hennig-Thurau and Klee (1997:751)	"Relationship quality can be seen as the degree of appropriateness of a relationship to fulfil the needs of the customer associated with that relationship."
Leuthesser (1997:246)	"Relationship quality as a single measure comprised of both the buyer satisfaction and buyer trust scales."
Jap *et al.* (1999:304)	"Relationship quality is consisting of evaluation of various aspects of relationship – attitudinal, process, and future expectations."
Hennig-Thurau *et al.* (2002:234)	"Relationship quality can be regarded as a metaconstruct composed of several key components reflecting the overall nature of relationships between companies and consumers."
Palmatier *et al.* (2006:183)	"Relationship quality is an overall assessment of the strength of a relationship, conceptualized as a composite or multidimensional construct capturing the different but related facets of a relationship."
Ural (2009:146)	"Relationship quality reflects the intensity of information sharing, communication quality, long-term orientation and satisfaction with the relationship between exporter and importer."
Giovanis *et al.* (2015:745)	"Relationship quality is generally conceptualized as a multi-dimensional construct consisting of several distinct, though related dimensions."
Tehubijuluw (2015:381)	"Relationship quality is the development of an individualized, one-to-one relationship with a customer that becomes increasingly relevant and focused, as the company learns about the customer needs and wants over time. Relationship quality is also defined as a condition in which consumers rely on the integrity of the company and have the future performance of the company due to his past satisfactory performance levels on a consistent basis."

Relationship quality is grounded in the relationship marketing theory (Morgan & Hunt, 1994:22) and is often regarded as an indication of the overall strength of an organisation's relationship with its customers (Palmatier *et al.*, 2006:150). From the definitions provided in Table 2-5, it is also clear that relationship quality concerns a customer's overall assessment of the relationship with the organisation. This can be measured on several distinct but related levels. Relationship quality is therefore perceived as a meta-construct comprising of numerous components that reflect the general nature of the relationship between organisations and customers (Athanasopoulou, 2009:588; Giovanis *et al*., 2015:745; Hennig-Thurau *et al*., 2002:234). Among the factors identified, trust and commitment are viewed as two core elements of relationship quality (Hennig-Thurau *et al*., 2002:234; Morgan & Hunt, 1994:22; Mukherjee & Nath, 2007:1192; Ulaga & Eggert, 2006:314). Within an online context, relationship quality is perceived as the "*quality of the relationship between the consumer and the online merchant*" (Brun *et al.,* 2014:6). Furthermore, trust and commitment have also been noted as important within an online setting (Fang *et al*., 2016:61). Therefore, as mentioned in Chapter 1 (section 1.4.3), for the purpose of this study, the trust and commitment constructs are further explored.

The following definition of relationship quality is considered relevant within the electronic banking environment:

> *Relationship quality is the* ***overall assessment*** *of the* ***relationship strength*** *between electronic banking customers and their banks (the online merchant), which is demonstrated by the degree of customer* ***trust and commitment****.*

2.5 KEY DIMENSIONS OF RELATIONSHIP QUALITY

2.5.1 Trust

The trust concept has been defined in several ways, and therefore it is essential to examine the generic elements of trust and to formulate a working definition of trust for the purpose of this study.

2.5.1.1 Generic elements of trust

Table 2-6 presents a summary of the different definitions of trust that have most often been cited.

Table 2-6: Trust definitions

Author(s)	Adopted definition of trust
Schlenker *et al.* (1973:419)	"Trust is a reliance upon information received from another person about uncertain environmental states and their accompanying outcomes in a risky situation."
Anderson and Narus (1986:326)	"Trust is the firm's belief that another company will perform actions that will result in positive outcomes for the firm, as well as not take unexpected actions that would result in negative outcomes for the firm. The strength of this belief may lead the firm to make a trusting response or action, whereby the firm commits itself to a possible loss, depending upon the subsequent actions of the other company."

Table 2-6: Trust definitions (cont.)

Author(s)	Adopted definition of trust
Crosby *et al.* (1990:70)	"Trust is a confident belief that the salesperson can be relied upon to behave in such a manner that the long-term interest of the customer will be served."
Moorman *et al.* (1992:315)	"Trust is defined as a willingness to rely on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence."
Gundlach and Murphy (1993:41)	"Trust is a faith or confidence that the other party will fulfil obligations set forth in an exchange."
Morgan and Hunt (1994:23)	"Trust is existing when one party has confidence in an exchange partner's reliability and integrity." Open communication is required to establish trust.
Mayer *et al.* (1995:712)	"Trust is the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party." Risk is a vital component of the trust model; "trust will lead to risk taking in a relationship, and the form of the risk taking depends on the situation." Furthermore, trust can be established where a reputation evolves from parties of prior behaviour.
Rousseau *et al.* (1998:395)	"Trust is a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behaviour of another… The path-dependent connection between trust and risk taking arises from a reciprocal relationship: risk creates an opportunity for trust, which leads to risk taking."
Keh and Xie (2009:732)	"Trust is the customer's overall perception towards the ability (i.e. skills and competencies of the trustee), benevolence (i.e. the extent to which a trustee is perceived as being willing to take the other party's interests into account when making decision), and integrity (i.e. the truster's belief that the trustee is honest and fulfils its promises) of the provider." "High reputation can strengthen customers' confidence and reduce risk perceptions when they make judgment on organizational performance and quality of products or services. Thus, customers are more likely to perceive companies with highly favorable reputations as trustworthy."
Molina-Morales *et al.* (2011:120)	"Trust is the mutual confidence between parties to an exchange that none of them will engage in opportunistic behaviour that would exploit any others' vulnerabilities, and thereby violate the values, principles and standards of behaviour they have internalised as part of the exchange."
Sharma *et al.* (2015:47)	"Trust is an evaluation of reliability, credibility and honesty of the exchange partner... The positive feelings of trust reduce perceived risk."
Singh and Jain (2015:971)	"Trust in retail context refers to emotional security in terms of fulfilment of tangible (retailer, employees, products etc.) and intangible (policies, communication, relationship quality etc.) expectations and a belief that dealings with the firm will be reliable, dependable and safe."
Parsa (2015:1248)	"Trust is one party belief in the authenticity of the other party words and commitments."

Considering the definitions provided in Table 2-6 as well as a further literature investigation it is clear that the trust concept is comprised of a number of generic elements.

- The first generic element concerns the view that trust is established in an environment of *transparent and meaningful communication*. Direct, frequent, two-way communications is important, because it demonstrates the organisation's interest in the customer's welfare (Berry, 1995:242-243) and is therefore meaningful. The communication activities, however, need to be transparent in order to establish trust. Transparency is associated with aspects such as "*access, comprehensiveness, relevance, quality, and reliability of information*" (Bhaduri & Ha-Brookshire, 2011:137) and is regarded as fundamental in developing positive relationships with customers. Ultimately, customers' assessment and perceptions of an organisation's transparency is indicative of the extent to which customers would consider the organisation to be trustworthy (Kang & Hustvedt, 2014). Egan (2011:124) also notes that sharing meaningful communication between a customer and an organisation builds trust. Open communication is thus required to establish trust (Morgan & Hunt, 1994:30).

- The second generic element is that trust is created when the *level of perceived risk involved is low*. A person (the trustor) may be more willing to be vulnerable to the activities of another (the trustee) when it is expected that the trustee is benevolent, has the necessary skills required (Mayer *et al.,* 1995:712; Rousseau *et al.,* 1998:395) and will act with integrity (Morgan & Hunt, 1994:23; Sharma *et al.,* 2015:47). The trustor therefore has confidence that the trustee can be relied upon (Crosby e*t al.,* 1990:70; Gundlach & Murphy, 1993:41; Moorman *et al.,* 1992:315) and has his/her best interest at heart (Keh & Xie, 2009:732).

- The third generic element related to trust concerns the reputation of the trustee. It can be argued that the trustor's expectation that the trustee will perform in a particular way is based on the *reputation* of the trustee. Reputation is the consequence of the evaluation amongst what the organisation promises and what the origination finally deliverers; an organisation's reputation can be related with the organisation's trustworthiness (Casaló *et al.*, 2007:586). Consequently, an organisation's reputation would give customers an indication of its honesty and how much it cares for its customers (Doney & Cannon, 1997:37).

It further appears that all three elements identified can be present within the electronic banking environment. The more advanced the level of social communication by the electronic bank's website, the better the effect on the customers trust and, possibility, on online banking activities (Mukherjee & Nath, 2003:8). Electronic banking services allow customers to access contractual performance at time, as well as to approve delivery's form their electronic banking platform. Thus, more meaningful data is instantly obtainable and transparent to customers (Lee, 2009:132).

Furthermore, customer's risk perceptions will influence the level of trust they have in the electronic bank's system (Mukherjee & Nath, 2003:7). Trust and perceived risk are universal concepts that influence consumer behaviour in the financial services sector (Lifen *et al.*, 2010:7). Customers and electronic banks have to rely on one another, because they cannot be sure in advance how the other party will behave (Van Esterik-Plasmeijer *et al.*, 2017:98). In the context of electronic banking, perceived risk is defined as "*the potential of loss in the pursuit of a desired outcome from using electronic banking services*" (Yousafzai *et al.*, 2003:851). Risk in this context also refers to the fear of both parties that the other party will act in a way that is not favourable to them and that can possibly be damaging to them (Van Esterik-Plasmeijer *et al.*, 2017:98). Other forms of perceived risks that customers may experience in the electronic banking context include:

- **Performance risk**, referring to the concern that products and/or services will not act as expected or that the product may be malfunctioning (Aldás-Manzano *et al.*, 2009:676). In an electronic banking context, therefore, performance risk is perceived as the possibility that the electronic banking system may malfunction (Akturan & Tezcan, 2012:448).

- **Time loss risk**. This is defined as the perception that using the service may take up too much time (Akturan & Tezcan, 2012:448; Aldás-Manzano *et al.*, 2009:676). In the electronic banking environment, time risk may be associated to the time it takes when dealing with erroneous transactions, downloading information as well as inconvenience that might be felt as a result of interruptions when receiving payments, or difficulty in navigation (such as finding suitable services and hyperlinks) (Jayawardhena & Foley, 2000:23, 26-28; Lee, 2009:131). It may also involve the time needed to connect and the time it takes to become familiar with the website (Littler & Melanthiou, 2006:436).

- **Social risk**, referring to the possibility of negative responses from customers' social networks when adopting a new product or services (Akturan & Tezcan, 2012:448; Aldás-Manzano *et al.*, 2009:676). For example, Littler and Melanthiou (2006:436) pointed out that the social status of the customer who makes use of electronic banking services may be influenced by either favourable or unfavourable perceptions of electronic banking services by family members, associates or friends.

- **Financial risks**, concerning the potential financial expense related with the original purchase price in addition to the maintenance price of the product (Akturan & Tezcan, 2012:448). There are potential investment costs involved in using electronic banking because the customer needs to have access to computing facilities (Littler & Melanthiou, 2006:436).

Additional aspects that have a bearing on customers' perceived risk include privacy and security; these are considered vital in the sphere of Internet banking (Eriksson *et al.*, 2005:208; Mukherjee & Nath, 2003:7). The most difficult challenge in the electronic banking environment, indeed, is gaining the trust of customers with regard to privacy and security (Furnell & Karweni, 1999:377). This is the case because customers are anxious about security issues and their privacy in the context of electronic banking (Gerrard *et al.*, 2006:164). Protecting information or systems from illegal interruptions or discharges is better known as security (Kassim & Abdullah, 2010:354). Fear of lack of security has been noted to affect customers' use of electronic banking (Kassim & Abdullah, 2010:354; Kassim & Abdulla, 2006:429). For example, if Internet banking customers feel that their transactions are unsafe, they will leave the website even before finishing the transactions (Amin, 2016:294). In turn, privacy concerns protecting several types of information that are gathered while customers interact with the electronic banking system; this may also affect their usage of the systems (Kassim & Abdullah, 2010:354). The data collected can include customer information such as name, sex and address (Nasri & Charfeddine, 2012:4). The main privacy concerns of electronic banking customers are therefore the violation of their privacy and the possible lack of confidentiality (Laforet & Li, 2005:373). Therefore, security and confidentiality of information are essential pre-requisites for any online banking services to be successful (Jeong & Yoon, 2013:32).

Against this background, it is evident that perceived risk is as a major barrier that may discourage customers from considering using electronic banking services (Littler & Melanthiou, 2006:436). Customers may question the bank's ability and willingness to protect them and therefore the bank's integrity as such may be questioned. Trust is as a major risk reducer to help overcome the perceived risk barrier (Lifen *et al.*, 2010:8). From an economic perspective, trust is regarded as a device that decreases the operation expenses of an exchange. Which reduces the customers' perception of risk and improves their probability to be involve in an exchange, subsequently leading to effective dealings (Yu *et al.*, 2015:237).

Finally, it has also been found that a retail bank's reputation is predicated on its trustworthiness (Yap *et al.*, 2010:30). The bank's reputation is extremely pertinent in the electronic context, since dissimilar from traditional banking methods where actual cues for example the appearance of the bank's branch can be considered, structural guarantees in electronic banking mainly depends on intangible cues (Reichheld & Schefter, 2000:107). This suggests that a retail bank with a trustworthy reputation would want to guarantee that every aspect of its electronic banking services is intended to generate and uphold customers' beliefs in the structural guarantees of electronic banking (Yap *et al.*, 2010:30) and that the service can be trusted (Yap *et al*., 2010:35).

In light of the generic elements of trust that have been identified in this section, the following definition of trust is formulated for the purpose of this study:

Within the electronic banking environment, trust can be defined as a belief that the customer's (the trustor's) ***communication*** *with the bank (the trustee) via the electronic banking system is* ***transparent and meaningful****. Trust may also entail an expectation that based on the reputation of the trustee, interactions with the system will not entail a high level of risk.*

2.5.1.2 Dimensions of trust

Trust is comprised of three sub-dimensions, meaning that the concept is multifaceted (Dowell *et al.*, 2013:438). The three sub-dimensions of trust include benevolence, integrity and competence trust (Clark *et al.* 2010:232; Morgan & Hunt 1994).

- **Benevolence trust**

  Mayer *et al*. (1995:716) defined benevolent trust as: "the perception of a positive orientation of the trustor". Benevolent trust is regarded as the subjective or emotional component of trust (Cullen *et al*., 2000:225). Yu *et al.* (2015:204) propose that benevolence trust is the perception that the service organisation is sincerely concerned in the customers' wellbeing that is goes further than selfish revenue reasons. It describes the willingness to perform to a greater level than what is formally anticipated (Dowell *et al*., 2013:438). Essentially, benevolence trust relates to the fact that the organisation is does not only act on self-interest. The fundamental focus of benevolence trust concerns the present and long-term welfare and well-being of the customer (Van Esterik-Plasmeijer *et al*., 2017:102). To conclude, benevolence trust signifies the degree to which one partner is sincerely concerned in the other partner's wellbeing and interested to pursue shared gains (Ulaga & Eggert, 2006:315). Customers may trust an organisation if they believe it is sincerely interested in their welfare.

- **Integrity trust**

  "*Integrity trust is a consumers' belief that a company demonstrates consistency between their values and behavior and adheres to the moral principles of fairness*" (Park *et al*., 2014:297). Also, customers develop integrity trust when organisations adhere to legal and ethical requirements (Park *et al.,* 2014:297). Therefore, integrity trust is the expectancy that the other party will perform in agreement with mutually recognised morals of honesty or values that the other party also agree with, for example not telling a lie and providing sensibly confirmed information (Ridings *et al.,* 2002:276). Fundamentally, integrity trust entails being honest and abiding by promises in a relationship context (Dowell *et al.*, 2013:438).

- **Competence trust**

  The expectancy that a party will act at a set level is known as competence trust (Dowell *et al*., 2013:439). It entails "*group of skills, competencies, and characteristics that enable a party to have influence within a specific domain*" (Mayer *et al.,* 1995:717). The competence dimension of trust is regarded as the practical component of trust; it refers to the faith as to whether a party can deliver on what they promised or not (Cullen *et al*., 2000:225). Competence trust is therefore domain-specific, in other words, it refers to organisations' expertise in a particular area that results in enhanced levels of trust (Wu *et al*., 2010:1026). Additionally, competence trust answers the question as to whether or not an organisation can complete the promised task (Pinto *et al.*, 2008:640). Customers may therefore develop competence trust if they believe in the ability or competence of the organisation to deliver the desired service.

In the online environment, in line with Morgan and Hunt's (1994) multi-dimensional approach to trust, Grabner-Kräuter and Faullant (2008) propose two broad dimensions of online trust, namely a "hard dimension" and a "soft dimension". The "soft dimension" is only applicable in interpersonal trust relationships or when the trusted partner is another person. The "soft dimension" entails features, for instance honesty, benevolence, integrity and credibility that are regarded as the value-based, intrinsic motivation of the trustee to act in favour of the trustor. The trustor's perception of the "soft dimension" is mainly affect-based, whereas the "hard dimension" of trust is mainly grounded on reasoning. The "hard dimension" relates to the ability, predictability and competence of the trusted services or product. Thus, this dimension is mainly functionality-based and concerns all the elements of trust in the context of e-commerce, for example the electronic services website, the services that the web site stands for, and the underlying technology (Grabner-Kräuter & Faullant, 2008:486).

This study focuses on competence trust, which is considered characteristic of the "hard dimension" of online trust. As mentioned in Chapter 1 (section 1.4.3.1), competence trust is concerned with the reliability performance of the electronic banking service – and similar to the perceived usefulness construct, also relates to the functional performance of the technology.

2.5.1.3 Benefits of competence trust in the electronic banking environment

The main benefit for an organisations to develop client trust is that it helps to establish strong client relationships (Steyn *et al.*, 2008:141). Furthermore, increased trust can be related to greater customer retention and organisational cost-effectiveness (Van Vuuren *et al.*, 2012a:85).

In the case of an Internet relationship, customers who have competence trust would believe that the bank can deliver products and services in a correct and appropriate way (Harrison McKnight & Chervany, 2001:49). In a high perceived risk environment for example electronic banking, it is essential for retail banks to indicate that they are proficient of distributing what they promise. Competence decreases the customers' risk perceptions and rises their assurance in electronic banking services (Yu *et al.*, 2015:239).

Furthermore, if customers believe that electronic banking organisations provide the required levels of competence, skills, and knowledge to offer suitable transactional services, customers may be more likely to evaluate electronic banking, such as mobile banking services, favourably. Moreover, customers who believe the electronic banking organisation is able to develop efficient service delivery strategies and deliver acceptable protection from fraud and violation of privacy, may have a greater inclination to continue using electronic banking services. Since electronic banking is a fairly new domain, customers' perceptions of competence are vital, and electronic banking organisations should thus emphasise their competence to appeal to customers. This matter has especially been found relevant within the mobile banking environment (Lin, 2011:254-258).

Thus, banks need to convince customers of their competence to deliver products and services as promised. Increasing electronic system competence trust would decrease customers' perceived risk of conducting transactions online (Lui & Jamieson, 2003:6).

2.5.2 Commitment

Hazra (2013:96) notes that commitment is an important element for an effective long-term orientated relationship. Commitment is key to develop and uphold a relationship (Van Vuuren *et al.*, 2012a:86). If an organisation were to pursue a long-term relationship with its customers, the possibility of such a relationship increases together with the intensity of commitment (Miquel-Romero *et al*., 2014:668). Commitment has, like most concepts explored in the present study, been defined in numerous ways. Therefore, the generic elements of commitment are explored below with a view to formulate a definition of commitment for the purpose of this study.

2.5.2.1 Generic elements of commitment

Table 2-7 below presents a summary of the definitions of commitment that are most often cited.

Table 2-7: Definitions of commitment

Author(s)	Adopted definition of commitment
Morgan and Hunt (1994:23)	"Commitment is an exchange partner believing that an ongoing relationship with another is so important as to warrant maximum efforts at maintaining it; that is, the committed party believes the relationship is worth working on to ensure that it endures indefinitely."
Storbacka *et al.* (1994:25)	"Commitment is defined as the parties' intentions to act and their attitude towards interacting with each other. High relationship value will affect commitment positively."
Garbarino and Johnson (1999:73)	"Commitment is a customer psychological attachment, loyalty, concern for future welfare, identification, and pride in being associated with the organization."
Walter *et al.* (2002:8)	"Commitment is the intention of a customer to maintain a long-term relationship with a supplier."
Gounaris (2005:127)	"Commitment is the desire for continuity manifested by the willingness to invest resources into a relationship."
Roberts-Lombard and Du Plessis (2012:62)	"Commitment is the desire to maintain the relationship and is indicated by ongoing investment into activities which are expected to maintain the relationship into the future."
Roxenhall and Andrésen (2012:87)	"Commitment is a willingness to make sacrifices in the short term in order to attain long-term benefits."
Yu and Tung (2013:114)	"Commitment is an important symbol of good relations as well as a willingness to continue to maintain the relationship."
Akhavanfar (2015:690)	"Commitment is a permanent desire to keep a valuable relationship."
Parsa (2015:1248)	"Commitment in relationship marketing indicates both creating promises and fulfilling the pledges."
Li *et al.* (2016:296)	"Commitment is a person's psychological attachment to an organization, as well as an expectation to maintain the relationship by either party in a relationship."

Considering the definitions provided in Table 2-7 as well as a further literature investigation it is clear that the commitment concept is comprised of a number of generic elements.

- The first generic element concerns the view that commitment entails *to remain in the relationship*. Customers who have made a decision to make use of an organisation's services or products often tend to remain faithful to, and consistent in the relationship with that specific organisation (Shimp & Andrews, 2013:183). Involved customers are usually steadfast in their choices, which results in them remaining consistent in their relationship with an organisation. Additionally, customers remain in a relationship when they invested a great amount of thought and psychological energy into their choices (Kardes *et al*., 2011:293).

- It can be further argued that the customers have a *psychological attachment* to an organisation when they are committed. Psychological attachment refers to "the degree to which the individual internalizes or adopts characteristics or perspectives of the organization" (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986:493). When customers are psychosocially attached to an organisation, they tend to engage in positive word of mouth, and they would maintain the relationship with the organisation. Moreover, psychological attachment can be described as the sense of belonging customer feel towards an organisation, which relates to the long-term successes as well as feelings of loyalty towards an organisation (Dean, 2007:165).

The third generic element that can be identified is that commitment is created when customers *are willing to make* sacrifices in order to continue with the relationship. Committed customers may be willing to make several sacrifices to maintain their relationship with an organisation (Cannon & Homburg, 2001). The most prominent sacrifice that customers are willing to make is the expense required to obtain the organisation's product or service (Ulaga & Eggert, 2005:81). In other words, committed customers are willing to forgo a monetary gain, for the reason that the expected long-term relationship benefits validate short-term sacrifices (Ritter & Andersen, 2014:1007).

It further seems that all three elements identified may be present within the electronic banking environment. Customers will therefore continue their relationship with a bank if the electronic banking service is regarded as safe, or if they are able to access these banking services 24 hours a day from any setting without any postponement or queue, and the outcome electronic banking transactions can be viewed instantly (Al-Jabri & Sohail, 2012:381; Chen, 2013:452). Customers' psychological attachment has developed in the electronic banking environment through their identification with the bank and if they like the electronic banking website (Burn *et al*., 2014:16; Cater & Zabkar, 2009:786). With regard to electronic banking services, customers may be willing to sacrifice a lack of physical communication amongst the bank employees and the customer him or herself (Yousafzai *et al.*, 2003:851). Additionally, a key monetary customer sacrifice is the expense of obtaining the means necessary to conduct the electronic banking services, for example the Internet costs and procuring the necessary equipment (e.g. a computer, laptop or a mobile cell phone).

Considering the generic elements discussed above, the following definition of commitment has been formulated for the purpose of this study:

> *Commitment is characterised by electronic banking customers' psychological attachment to their retail banks and their intention to remain in the relationship and to make sacrifices to benefit from the electronic banking service over the long term.*

2.5.2.2 Dimensions of commitment

The concept of commitment comprises of three sub-dimensions (Allen & Meyer, 1991:61; Pohjanen, 2011:6; Roxenhall & Andrésen, 2012:88), namely: affective, normative and continuance commitment. These dimensions are discussed below.

- **Affective commitment**

  Affective commitment is an *"emotional attachment to, identification with, and participation in the organization*" (Meyer & Smith, 2000:320) and entails a favourable attitude towards the future existence of the relation with a partner (Walter *et al.*, 2002:6). From a customer perspective, affective commitment refers to a positive emotional attachment where the customer develops a psychological bond and have favourable feelings toward an organisation (Gruen *et al*., 2000:37). In other words, the customer commits to an organisation because of emotional and personal reasons (Pohjanen, 2011:3). Therefore, affective commitment is seen as an affective mind-set, referring to the *desire* to commit to a relationship (Schoemmel *et al*., 2015:287), owing to emotional reasons. In an online context, customers develop affective commitment as a result of their identification with an online organisation and, as noted above, if they like the organisation's website (Burn *et al*., 2014:16; Cater & Zabkar, 2009:786). It is therefore an attachment grounded on a customer's desire to remain in the relationship and to keep on using the organisation's website.

- **Normative commitment**

  Normative commitment refers to feelings of obligation by the committed individual to maintain a relationship (Meyer & Smith, 2000:320). Normatively committed customers may show specific behaviour – not for only their own advantage, but because of their belief that it is the "right" and moral thing to do (Wiener, 1982:421). Customers are normatively committed towards an organisation if they regard it as part of their duty, or as a way of reciprocation for previous advantages received form the organisation (Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002:475). If customers feel a psychological bond towards an organisation, they may therefore feel that they should remain with that organisation because of prior positive experiences they had with that organisation (Cater & Zabkar, 2008:788). Thus, normative commitment refers to a situation where customers feel that their obligation to do business with a specific organisation is not only personally beneficial but also because they believe that it is morally the correct course of action (Fullerton, 2011:95; Vesel & Zabkar, 2010:218). For instance, electronic banking customers may have a feeling of duty to remain using a banks' web site, because of prior advantages received, or because they have had a long-term relation with the retail bank (Brun *et al.*, 2014:10).

- **Continuance commitment**

  Continuance commitment occurs when customers feel compelled to continue a relationship (Roxenhall & Andrésen, 2012:88) and depend on the service or product advantages (Allen & Meyer, 1990:4). In other words, continuance commitment suggests that customers may feel obligated to continue a relationship with a service organisation since there is a perception of expensive switching costs, which makes the perceived expense of switching service organisation compensate the advantages (Fullerton, 2003; Jones *et al.,* 2000). Customers' perceptions of continuance commitment may be an outcome of a marketing strategy, for example contractual duties, disciplinary costs and loyalty programmes. Furthermore, continuance commitment may also happen as a result of implied barriers to switching, for example a customer's disinterest, as well as the psychological and time expenses associated with searching and assessing information about substitutes (Ranaweera & Menon, 2013:1602).

In an electronic banking services setting, continuance commitment stems from the basis that it may be problematic for customers to stop using a banks' web site for several motives, for example having invested severely in its use; a perceived scarcity of substitutes, or the sense that the management of the customer's private funds would be interrupted if they decided to stop using the particular electronic banking website (Brun *et al.*, 2014:10,17). In other words, customers who have invested heavily in the use of electronic banking services (by spending time learning how to use the banking system, downloading the necessary applications or creating an online bank account) may want to remain continuously committed towards the technology.

2.5.2.3 Benefits of continuance commitment within the electronic banking environment

Commitment is generally regarded as essential to all the relational interactions amongst the organisation and its numerous parties, which include customers (Morgan & Hunt, 1994:23). A partner's desire to uphold a relationship, i.e. relationship commitment, is a vital pointer of the quality of a relationship (Moorman *et al.*, 1992:316). This desire imitates a customer's expectancy that a relationship will remain to produce advantages in the future (Johnson, 2007:7).

As mentioned in Chapter 1 (section 1.4.3.2), for the aim of this study, the focus is on continuance commitment. Continuance commitment can provide insight into whether customers are prepared to make a continued investment in a relationship in the context of electronic banking services. Furthermore, similar to the perceived usefulness and competence trust constructs, an assessment of the perceived cost of ending or continuing the relationship could also involve an evaluation of the functional performance of the technology. Customers' continuance commitment to electronic banking services is predicated on perceived conveniences, for example 24-hour access, speed of service, absence of geographic borders, and transaction computerisation. These benefits establish the main desirability to the channel, and a convincing realisation of these advantages confirms the effectiveness of the technology and generates the perception that the technology is trustworthy (Johnson, 2007:7) and that one should remain continuance committed.

2.6 SUMMARY

This chapter provided a thorough examination of the perceived value domain, the relationship marketing domain, relationship quality and the constructs perceived usefulness, competence trust and continuance commitment.

The discussion on the perceived value domain focused on exploring the difference between the value and values concepts, as well as relationship value and customers' perceived value. The final part of this discussion set out to provide insight into the perceived usefulness construct as a key dimension of customers' perceived value. For the purpose of this study, perceived usefulness is noted as the extent to which customers believe that electronic banking services will improve their performance, increase their productivity, and enhance their effectiveness in executing their banking transactions.

The second part of this chapter examined the generic elements and benefits of the relationship marketing domain and provided insight into the notion of relationship quality. Relationship marketing is characterised by building long-term relationships between electronic banking customers and their banks, where effective two-way communication is facilitated by means of the customer's interaction with the electronic banking system – this is believed to optimise the customer's lifetime value. In addition, relationship quality refers the overall assessment of the relationship strength between electronic banking customers and their banks, which is demonstrated by the degree of customer trust and commitment.

The chapter concluded with an overview of trust and commitment that are regarded as key dimensions of relationship quality. Within the electronic banking environment, trust can be defined as a belief that the customer's (the trustor's) communication with the bank (the trustee) via the electronic banking system is transparent and meaningful. Trust may also entail the expectation that, based on the reputation of the trustee, interactions with the system will not pose a high level of risk. Commitment is also characterised by electronic banking customers' psychological attachment to their banks. For the purpose of this study, customer's competence trust in and continuance commitment towards electronic banking services are further explored, relating to the extent to which customers belief in the reliability of the service provided by the bank and their willingness to continue with the service to take advantage of potential benefits to be gained and to avoid the cost of defection.

Chapter 3 subsequently provides more insight into customer loyalty, behavioural intention and positive word of mouth intention.

CHAPTER 3

CUSTOMER LOYALTY, BEHAVIOURAL INTENTION AND POSITIVE WORD OF MOUTH INTENTION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 2 elaborated on the central theoretical concepts that may have an impact on positive word of mouth intention and that are further investigated in the empirical part of the study.

The purpose of Chapter 3 is to explore the concepts of customer loyalty, behavioural intention and positive word of mouth communication (that is measured as a form of behavioural intention in this study). The chapter begins with an overview of customer loyalty, followed by a perusal of positive word of mouth communication as a form of customer loyalty. After exploring the communication process, the final part of the chapter is devoted to an overview of behavioural intention and positive word of mouth intention.

3.2 CUSTOMER LOYALTY AND ITS GENERIC ELEMENTS

Organisations can benefit from establishing a loyal customer base (Sapepa *et al.*, 2015:115). Loyal customers is less expensive to service, are eager to pay more for a set of products, and are more likely to indorse a service to other possible customers (Gee *et al.*, 2008:365; Shajahan, 2004:126-127). Hence, this section investigates the generic elements of customer loyalty with the intention of developing a definition specific for this study.

Table 3-1 below presents a summary of the different definitions of customer loyalty that are mostly used.

Table 3-1: Definitions of customer loyalty

Author(s)	Adopted definition of loyalty
Jacoby and Kyner (1973:2)	“Loyalty is the biased (i.e., non-random), behavioural response (i.e., purchase), expressed over time, by some decision-making unit, with respect to one or more alternative brands out of a set of such brands, and is a function of psychological (decision- making, evaluative) process.”
Dick and Basu (1994:102)	“Loyalty…signifies a favourable correspondence between relative attitude and repeat patronage.”
Gremler and Brown (1996:173)	“Loyalty is the degree to which a customer exhibits repeat purchasing behavior from a service provider, possesses a positive attitudinal disposition toward the provider, and considers using only this provider when a need for this service arise.”
Oliver (1999:34)	“Loyalty is a deeply held commitment to rebuy or repatronize/ forgeging a preferred product/service consistently in the future, thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behaviour.”
Anderson and Srinivasan (2003:125)	“Loyalty is defined as the customer’s favorable attitude toward an electronic business resulting in repeat buying behaviour.”
Javadein *et al.* (2008:4)	“Loyalty are those customers who hold favorable attitudes toward an organization, recommend the organization to other consumers and exhibit repurchase behaviour.”
Van Vuuren (2012:96)	“Loyalty can be defined as a customer’s likelihood to choose a particular brand with reference to his or her past purchases.”
Currás-Pérez *et al.* (2013:66)	“Loyalty is a favourable attitude towards that social networking site expressed by the intention to continue using it in the future and recommend that others use it.”
Chen (2015:108)	“Loyalty is as a consumer’s loyal attitude and behavior toward a specific service firm, despite competitors providing alternative services in the market.”
Babin and Harris (2016:254)	“Loyalty is a deeply held commitment to rebuy a product or services regardless of the situational influences that should lead to switching behaviour.”

Based on the definitions provided in the

Table 3-1 as well as a further literature investigation it seems that customer loyalty is comprised of a number of generic elements.

- The first of these elements entails that customer loyalty is a relationship that is *long-term in nature where customers are retained.* Retention is defined as "*the continued possession, use, or control of something*" (Oxford, 2017c). The lower cost associated with a long-term relationship and customer retention is of utmost importance for organisations as it results in increased profitability (Sarshar *et al*., 2010:65). Long-term customers are beneficial to an organisation, since they tend to recommend the product or service offerings to other customers (Reichheld & Sasser, 1989:106).

- The second generic element is that customer loyalty may develop as a result of customers' *past experiences* with the organisations' offerings; this element is *habitual in nature*. Habitual customer decision-making occurs when customers do not seek information at all when a customer problem is recognised – because the choice is based on habit and past experiences. Customers perceive that a specific organisation will solve the problem, because they believe that consumption of that service on previous occasions was of high value (Babin & Harris, 2016:254; Zsambok, 2014:ix), and thus they tend to remain loyal.

- The third generic element related to customer loyalty is that even if there is a *substitute* available, customers will remain with an organisation. Loyal customers therefore stay with an organisation despite competitors providing alternative services (Chen, 2015:108), since the offerings of a specific organisation is believed to be of high value (Babin & Harris, 2016:254; Zsambok, 2014:ix).

All three elements identified may be present within the electronic banking environment. Relationships with electronic banking services may be *long-term in nature* since *a* loyal electronic banking customer will continue using an electronic banking service, even if close friends recommend other banking websites (Yee & Faziharudean, 2010:11). Considering the relevance of past experiences, one can understand that a respectable first-time experience will lead to an optimistic attitude and improved self-efficacy and thus inspire future use, while a bad first-time experience may result in dislike and diminished self-efficacy – and thus prevent further use. Accordingly, is has been noted that customers who feel that electronic banking services, such as smartphone banking is useful for their banking needs, who are satisfied with their experiences and who feel that they can conduct their banking by means of smartphone banking even if there is no one around to help, will continue to use of the smartphone banking service (Aries *et al.*, 2016:525). With respect to the third generic element, customers in the electronic banking environment may choose to remain loyal to and prefer electronic banking services above in-branch banking services for reasons such as convenience and being more productive, or when location and time are considered, and also because the cost of electronic banking services are much lower than traditional in-branch banking services (Aduda & Kingoo, 2012:100; Yee-Loong *et al*., 2010:286).

Therefore, considering the generic elements outlined above, the following definition of customer loyalty has been formulated for the purpose of this study:

> *Customer loyalty refers to decisions made by customers, as informed by* ***past experiences****, to* ***continue*** *to use the electronic banking services for which they are registered,* ***regardless of the availability of substitutes*** *in the market.*

3.3 POSITIVE WORD OF MOUTH COMMUNICATION AS A FORM OF CUSTOMER LOYALTY

Customers who have decided to remain loyal towards an organisation are likely to engage in positive word of mouth communication in favour of the organisation (Sirdeshmukh *et al*., 2002:20; Sivadas & Jindal, 2017; Yi & Gong, 2013). To this end, the present section further explores positive word of mouth communication as an important dimension of customer loyalty.

3.3.1 Generic elements of positive word of mouth communication

Over the past few decades, many scholars set out to formally define positive word of mouth communication. Table 3-2 below presents a summary of different definitions of this concept that have most often been cited.

Table 3-2: Definitions of positive word of mouth communication

Author(s)	Adopted definition of word of mouth
Arndt (1967:3)	"Word of mouth is the oral, person-to-person communication between a perceived non-commercial communicator and a receiver cornering a brand, product, or a service."
Richins (1984:71)	"Word of mouth communication is the act of telling at least one friend or acquaintance about the dissatisfaction."
Bone (1992:579)	"Word of mouth communication is conceptualized herein as a group phenomenon- an exchange of comments, thoughts, and ideas among two or more individuals in which none of the individuals represent a marketing source."
Anderson (1998:6)	"Word of mouth is informal communication between private parties concerning evaluations of goods and services."

Libai *et al.* (2010:269)	"The transfer of information from one customer (or a group of customers) to another customer (or group of customers) in a way that has the potential to change their preferences, actual purchase behavior, or the way they further interact with others."
Kardes *et al.* (2011:317)	"Word of mouth is the act of one consumer talking to another about a brand, and it can happen face-to-face."
Lee and Jaafar (2011:359)	"Word of mouth is informal advice passed between consumers. It is usually interactive, swift, and lacking in commercial bias."
Eze *et al*. (2014:126)	"Word of mouth is the passing of information by verbal means, especially recommendations, but also general information, person-to-person manner."
Lamb *et al*. (2017:272)	"Word of mouth traditionally occurs face-to-face."
Babin and Harris (2018:170)	"Word of mouth is information about products, services and experiences that is transmitted from consumers-to-consumers."

Considering the definitions provided in Table 3-2 and based on a further literature investigation it can be concluded that positive word of mouth communication is comprised of a number of generic elements.

- The first of these elements concerns the view that word of mouth communication *is interpersonal and may occur face-to-face with another customer that is considered a reliable personal source of information.* It is generally believed that customers have more confidence in personal sources when considering a service or product than in an organisations' marketing efforts, for example advertisements (Babin & Harris, 2018:170; Bansal & Voyer, 2000:167). Such personal sources include the social network of the customer, for instance co-workers, peers, neighbour, family and friends (Kardes, 2011:317; Palmer, 2011:155; Pokrywka & Gfrerer, 2012:17). Customers assume that their opinions of a personal nature are honest and can be trusted (Kardes, 2011:317). Therefore, customers who engage in face-to-face communication with other customers are of vital importance for organisations, as such communication may lead customers persuading other customers to use a product or service; it also develops favourable perceptions of the organisation's products or services (Buttle, 1998:242; Gruen *et al.*, 2006:451; Parsa & Sadeghi, 2015:1250).

- The second generic element identified is that word of mouth communication is an *exchange of comments, thoughts, and ideas* about a service or product offering. Customers assign meaning to ideas, thoughts and notions and it is exchanged or shared amongst one another (Babin & Harris, 2018:195; Berger & Iyengar, 2013:568). Positive comments, thoughts, and ideas transpire when favourable news about the organisation is communicated or brands are recommended (De Matos & Rossi, 2008:580; Gruen *et al.*, 2006:451; Lindberg-Repo & Grönroos, 1999:115).

- The third generic element related to positive word of mouth communication is that it is *informal, because customers do not represent a marketing source.* In other words, customers who communicate orally and share comments, thoughts and ideas with another customer regarding a service or product offering do not represent an organisation providing these services (Arndt, 1967:3; Bone, 1992:579; Lee & Jaafar, 2011:359). Therefore, informal communication is highly believable. Customers share experiences because they have the other customers' best interest in mind (Kardes, 20011:317). Customers have a greater belief in personal sources (other customers) when considering a service or product than in an organisations' marketing efforts such as advertisements (Babin & Harris, 2018:170; Bansal & Voyer, 2000:167).

All three elements identified may be present in the electronic banking environment. It was previously noted that customers may engage in *face-to-face communication* with other customers about the usability of an electronic banking service (Casaló *et al*., 2008:403-417). Therefore, customers engage in positive exchanges about the benefits of the electronic banking service with others (Joaquín *et al*., 2009:686). In this regard, informal sources of information in the electronic banking environment include friends and family members to whom a customer makes positive comments, provides recommendations or encourages other customers to use the service (Ng *et al*., 2011:134; Shirsavar *et al*., 2012:455). These sources are not representative of the retail bank's advertising efforts.

Subsequently, considering the generic elements discussed, the following definition of positive word of mouth communication has been formulated for the purpose of this study:

> *Positive word of mouth communication refers to* ***interpersonal and informal exchanges of comments, thoughts and ideas*** *about electronic banking between customers who* ***do not represent the bank*** *and where the interaction may occur in a* ***face-to-face setting****.*

3.3.2 Benefits of positive word of mouth communication as a form of customer loyalty

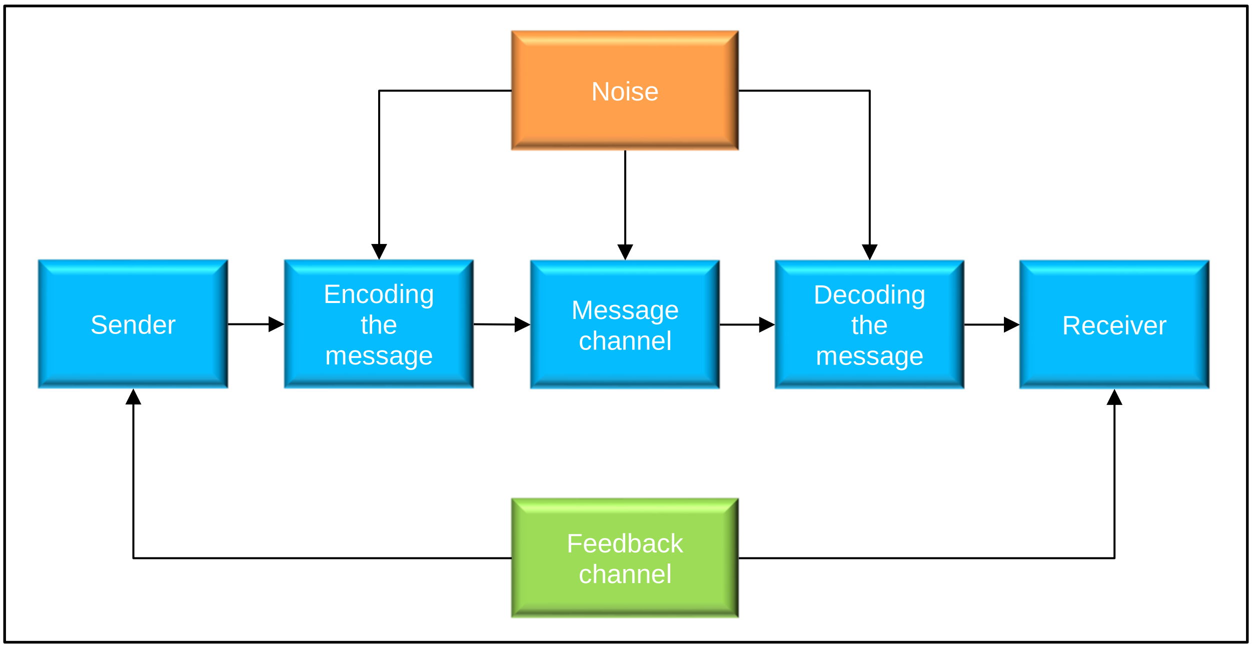
Because of the interpersonal and informal nature of positive word of mouth communication, it is a potentially influential and credible source of information (Harrison-Walker, 2001:62). Customers have more confidence in personal sources (word of mouth communication from social networks of the customer, for instance co-workers, peers, neighbours, family and friends) when considering a service or product than in an organisations' marketing efforts such as advertisements (Babin & Harris, 2018:170; Bansal & Voyer, 2000:167; Eze *et al*., 2014:126; Kardes, 2011:317; Pokrywka & Gfrerer, 2012:17). Therefore, if a customer provides a positive recommendation to another, it is more likely to be successful than a marketing effort of an organisation. Clearly, positive word communication is of vital importance for organisations as it facilitates advantages such as customers persuading other customers to use a product or service, as well as developing favourable perceptions of the organisation's offerings (Buttle, 1998:242; Gruen *et al.*, 2006:451; Parsa & Sadeghi, 2015:1250; Sweeney *et al.*, 2008:350). During the evaluation stage of a product or service, positive word of mouth communication reduces the perceived risks that a customer may have about the service (Woodside & Delozier, 1976:16). Accordingly, positive word of mouth communication decreases marketing costs because it helps to promote products or services without the organisation incurring advertising costs (Lien & Cao, 2014:106).

Considering the benefits of positive word of mouth communication, the subsequent section provides more insight into the communication process.

3.4 THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS

The flow of a message from a sender to a receiver through a channel is formally known as communication (O'Hair *et al*., 2001:21). Generally, organisations are regarded as both receivers and senders in the communication process (Lamb *et al*., 2011:347). From a sender's point of view, organisations make an effort to convince, notify and remind their customers to act in a manner that is compatible with the desire to promote the service or product. For example, in the electronic banking environment banks can inform their customers about the benefits of certain services (such as functionality and the like). From a receiver's point of view, an organisation listens to their customers with the purpose of developing a suitable message, altering current messages and to determine new and innovative communication possibilities (Lamb *et al*., 2017:264). A similar type of situation may occur when customers have informal conversations with one another about a service. A customer (the sender) can make an effort to convince another customer (the receiver) of the benefits of a service provided and alter messages where required to address problems or concerns raised. In other words, the communication process is two-way in nature, which is presented in Figure 3-1. Each of the elements of the communication process are subsequently discussed below.

Figure 3-1: The communication process



Source: Adapted from Lamb *et al*. (2012:347) and Lamb *et al*. (2017:264).

(i) The sender: encoding the message

The sender is referred to as the organisation in the communication process, from which the message originates (Lamb *et al*., 2017:264). In an intrapersonal dialogue, a sender can be a peer, salesclerk or an authoritative figure. An organisation is regarded as the sender in the case of a media release, advertisement or social media campaign (Lamb *et al*., 2011:347). The translation of the sender's ideas and views into a message is referred to as encoding (Lamb *et al*., 2017:265). Encoding occurs in the interpersonal communication stage in which an organisation (the sender) evaluates what must be implemented to successfully put their message into a format that their customer understands. A message refers the concept or idea that the sender desires to portray to the receiver (Lucas, 2012:83-84). A message can be delivered through speech, pictures, signs, and gestures, in writing or words (Lamb *et al*., 2012:348; Lamb *et al*., 2017:265; Lucas, 2012:83). Fundamentally, encoding entails the process of sending a message through a medium intended for the receiver (O'Hair *et al*., 2001:26). Within the context of this study where communication is regarded as an intrapersonal dialogue, the sender refers to an electronic banking customer from where the message originates. The message is regarded as the positive aspects (benefits) that the customer desires to portray to their family, friends, peer or co-workers.

(ii) Message transmission and noise

A channel is needed for the transmission of a message (Lamb *et al*., 2011:348). A channel refers to a medium of communication used to transmit a message (Lamb *et al*., 2017:265; Lucas, 2012:85), for example over the phone, face to face, radio, fax, e-mail or a facial expression or gestures (Lamb *et al*., 2011:348; Lamb *et al*., 2017:265; Lucas, 2012:85). In other words, the medium can be personal (for instance, a salesperson having a conversation with a customer) or interpersonal (for example, an advertisement on Facebook, or on a mobile app) (Babin & Harris, 2018:146). These communication channels can be cluttered with "noise" (Lamb *et al*., 2011:348). Any stimuli in the environment that can interrupt, slow down or distort the communication process may constitute noise (Babin & Harris, 2016:145; Lamb *et al*., 2017:265). Noise includes physiological or psychological factors that interfere with the exact reception of the message. Physiological factors are regarded as physical or health characteristics that can interfere with information reception in the communication process. Psychological factors, in turn, include aspects such as mood, mental health or attention that can hinder the information reception (Lucas, 2012:84). Environment factors can also be classified as noise, for instance external sounds, light, location, weather, or a room's acoustics that interfere with the listening process of the receiver (Lamb *et al*., 2011:348; Lucas, 2012:84). In the context of this study, the word of mouth channel is informal and personal in nature, and entails a face-to-face dialogue between customers, and the types of physiological and psychological factors outlined above can distort the message.

(iii) The receiver decoding the message

An organisation communicates a desired message through a channel to their customers, also known as the receivers, who then decode the message (Babin & Harris, 2016:145). In other words, the receiver is a customer who decodes a message and decides to act on it (Babin & Harris, 2018:146; Lucas, 2012:84). A receiver is not limited to only one customer, as there can be several receivers since customers share their consumption experiences and recommend a service or product (Lamb *et al*., 2017:265). Lamb *et al*. (2011:348) note that to understand the language and symbols sent by the sender through a channel refers to the decoding of the message. In other words, decoding refers to the receiving and processing of the message communicated by the sender (O'Hair *et al*., 2001:27). Although the message has been received, there is uncertainty because there might be selective retention and misrepresentation (Lamb *et al*., 2017:265). Customers tend to manipulate a message or to adapt the message to their individual characteristics (for example needs and their knowledge). Consequently, miscommunication is developed through difference in age, education, culture or social class. Miscommunication can also occur because customers do not always give their full attention while reading or listening, thus leading to misinterpretations of a message (Lamb *et al*., 2011:348; Lamb *et al*., 2017:265). The receiver in the context of this study refers to other customers who listen to the positive word of mouth communication from a current electronic banking customer. Customers need to decode the message that has been received correctly.

(iv) Feedback

The stage in the communication process where a customer responds to the message received is referred to as feedback (Lucas, 2012:84). Feedback generally comes in the form of verbal communication (for example, the customer says “I agree”) and nonverbal communication (where a customer nods, smile or frown for feedback) (Lamb *et al*., 2011:349; Lamb *et al*., 2017:266).

Considering the aim of this study, namely to examine positive word of mouth communication provided by customers to fellow potential customers, the remaining discussions in the following two sub-sections focuses on literature related to input word of mouth (where customers seek more information before making a purchase decision) and output word of mouth (where customers provide information about a product they have purchased). The aim of these discussions is to provide further contextual background to the word of mouth communication process and to explore the information-seeking and information-giving behaviours of customers.

3.4.1 Input word of mouth communication (customers seeking information)

Input word of mouth refers to a procedure where a customer seek services or product information prior to the purchase decision. Trust-level factors and opinion leaders may be important when customers seek information (Bosman, 2012:32). These elements are discussed below.

3.4.1.1 Trust-level factors

The conditions under which customers actively seek information relate to the following factors in the trust-paradigm: source credibility, source tie strength, source’s expertise, and the risk perceived by customers. These are discussed below.

- **Source credibility**

  Anderson and Clevenger (1963:59) defined credibility as the perceived image of a communicator at any point in time by a receiver – either by an individual or a group.

McCroskey (1966:66) added that credibility refers to a listeners' attitude towards a source (the speaker). More recent research by Wu and Wang (2011:452) refers to message source credibility as the degree to which a receiver of a message believes in the sender of that message.

Word of mouth communication from a credible source (another customer) is regarded as more credible than solicited marketers' messages, for example adverting campaigns (Bansal & Voyer, 2000:19; Murray, 1991:166). De Bruyn and Lilien (2008:154) suggested that while customers often regard unsolicited commercial messages from an organisation or unknown source as suspicious, information pertaining to an organisation is considered as unsuspicious if it is received from a close and trusted source. This is because the receiver assumes that the source passed along the message for a specific credible reason (Sormunen, 2009:18). Also, informal sources have a strong influence on customers' behaviour because they perceive the informal source as having nothing to gain from the recommendation (Schiffman *et al*., 2010). Thus, source credibility is regarded as a situation where message believability depends on the credibility status of the sender in the mind and eye of the receiver (Umeogu, 2012:112).

- **Source tie strength**

Closely associated to credibility is tie strength (Bosman, 2012:32). Word of mouth communication occurs within a social context that may be categorised by the means of the closeness of the relationship amongst the seeker of information and the source named 'tie strength' (Bristor, 1990:65; Duhan *et al.*, 1997; Money *et al.*, 1998). Tie strength is considered as a multidimensional construct representing "*the strength of the dyadic interpersonal relationships in the context of social networks*" structures (Money *et al.*, 1998:79). The inherent interpersonal dimensions of tie strength as referred by Frenzen and Davis (1990:6) are support, closeness and intimacy, and association in a relationship. Accordingly, the tie strength may range from durable to weak reliant on numerous other features, for instance the frequency and the intimacy of the exchanges, and types of resources that are exchanged (Marsden & Campbell, 1984:483,499). A communicator with a strong tie is an individual who has a previous relationship with the receiver (for example, friends or family members) (Duhan *et al*., 1997:283). Brown and Reingen (1987:360) propounded that tie strength influences information flow in the sense that strong tie strength that connects individuals increases their interaction frequency. Additionally, the strength of the tie will as well have an influence on how energetically the word of mouth is sought after by the receiver. When tie strength is high, the receiver will feel that the sender has a great deal of credibility (Bansal & Voyer, 2000:168). On the other hand, weak tie strength is prevalent when an individual has minimal or no relationship with the receiver in the past (for example, strangers or fellow customers) (Duhan *et al*., 1997:283).

Customers have a wide range of relationship ties within their social networks. Which ranges from strong primary ties (for instance, close family and friends) to weak secondary ties (for example, acquaintances who are rarely seen or people with whom customers have no ties) from whom customers may obtain information (Steffes & Burgee, 2009:45). Tie strength is important for a customer to perceive a word of mouth message as trustworthy. Strong tie relationships are rather prevalent, since interaction amongst customers and their strong tie relationships occurs more frequently as compared to weak ties or non-existent tie relationships (Pokrywka & Gfrerer, 2012:20, 63).

- **Expertise of the source**

The perceived expertise of the sender is an important determinant of credibility (Sweeney *et al.*, 2008:347). Ohanian (1990:44) stated that expertise is the degree to which an individual is perceived as possessing knowledge, skills or experience to provide accurate information. Bristor (1990:73) further noted that source expertise refers the degree to which a source is perceived as being able to offer accurate information.

Of course, one can assume that the sender's expertise has an influence on how dynamically a word of mouth message is sought. If the receiver of the word of mouth information search for information, they will have faith in the a source who is perceived as well-informed in the context in which the word of mouth information is sought after (Bansal & Voyer, 2000:169; Yale & Gilly, 1995:243). On the other hand, if the sender's level of expertise is perceived as low, the receiver would be demotivated to search for information from that source (Bansal & Voyer, 2000:169).

- **Risk perceived by the customer**

Perceived risk refers to a situation when a customer cannot predict the probability of unfavourable consequences (Kansal *et al.*, 2016:54). In an attempt to reduce risk, customers often obtain information by means of word of mouth communication regarding a product or service (Bansal & Voyer, 2000:169). Buttle (1998:250) noted that word of mouth communication is a risk-reduction strategy which can accomplish a reduction or remove the feeling of discomfort from the risk experience. Additionally, Arndt (1967) determined that individuals who perceive higher risk tend to search for word of mouth information more actively than those with a lower perceived risk. Also, Murray (1991:12) indicated that word of mouth is a vital source of risk-reducing information, and it has a more significant impact on customers than mass media communications, as clarification and feedback are possible.

3.4.1.2 Opinion leaders

Buttle (1998:248) proposed that information primarily emanates from significant individuals called opinion leaders. Thereafter, through word of mouth communication, a message is passed on to friends, thus influencing receivers' behaviours as well as attitudes. Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955:3) referred to an opinion leader as "*a group member playing a key communications role*". Opinion leaders are also known as customers who have a significant influence on the behaviour of other customers with regards to their purchase and adoption behaviour (Babin & Harris, 2018:173). Watts and Dodds (2007:422) stated that it is vital to note that opinion leaders are not "leaders" in the typical sense – they do not head formal organisations nor are they public figures (e.g. a newspaper columnist, critics, or media personalities) whose influence is applied indirectly through organised media or authority structures. Rather, the influence of opinion leaders is regarded as direct, originating from their informal status as individuals who are extremely informed, respected, or simply connected (Watts & Dodds, 2007:422). Thus, an opinion leader is an individual (a customer) that has a substantial influence on the long-run beliefs of a group (other customers).

3.4.2 Output word of mouth communication (customers giving information)

Customers may convey word of mouth communication to others after the purchase or consumption process. Buttle (1998:245) regarded this as output word of mouth communication. Furthermore, extra-personal variables are those contextual conditions that influence the production of output word of mouth (Buttle, 1998:245). Culture, social networks, incentives and business climate are extra-personal variables that may have an impact on output word of mouth communication. These variables are discussed below.

3.4.2.1 Culture

Culture can be described as the totality of learned values, principles and customs that directs the customer behaviour of members of a specific society (Babin & Harris, 2018:181, Schiffman *et al.*, 2010). Culture can reveal itself in terms of three subjective levels. Firstly, the *supranational* level refers to the subjective cultural differences that cross national boundaries or are present in numerous countries. Secondly, the *national* level is defined as shared cultural characters that uniquely define the citizens of a specific country. Lastly, the *group* level refers to the cultural divisions that include several collections of individuals (Schiffman *et al.*, 2010).

The Western cultural view of an individual is that it refers to a person who is an independent, self-sufficient entity who has an exclusive outline of internal attributes (for example traits, capabilities, reasons, and standards) and acts mainly as a result of these internal attributes (Markus & Kitayama, 1991:244). Nevertheless, not all cultures view an individual as autonomous – there are some cultures that have a more interdependent view on personhood (Buttle, 1998:249). Markus and Kitayama (1991:277) noted that "*experiencing interdependence entails seeing oneself as part of an encompassing social relation and recognizing that one's behaviour is determined, contingent on, and to a large extent, organized by what the actor perceives to be the thoughts, feeling and actions of others in the relationship*". If a customer in a collectivist culture subordinates his or her individuality to the collective, this may have a bearing on word of mouth communication, in the sense of a tendency to seek or giving information, optimistic or unfavourable. For instance, in a collectivist culture, unfavourable word of mouth communication about a personally unacceptable experience may not be expressed if the collective view is commonly favourable (Buttle, 1998:249).

3.4.2.2 Social networks

A social network is a group of individuals, organisations or other social beings that are associated by a set of socially meaningful relationships (Kleijnen *et al.*, 2009:16). A customer's social network primarily includes close family and friends (Sweeney *et al.*, 2008:347). All of these relationships provide interpersonal communication opportunities and, therefore, influence a customer's behaviour (Levy, 2012:25).

Services are high in credibility properties which are problematic to assess before consumption (Buttle, 1998:250). Therefore, service customers prefer to search for information from family members, friends and peers rather than from funded advertising sources (Murray, 1991:19). Therefore, maintaining and forming social networks are vital priorities for the top management, marketing and sales departments of an organisation. Social networks can occasionally be regarded as even more significant than professional relationships or a supplier's competence (Gummesson, 2008:173).

Social networks are not fixed; they are the social context of businesses and can be activated according to different needs (Burt, 1992; Granovetter, 1985). Furthermore, word of mouth communication is a more salient predictor of the decision procedure when obtaining services than products, since that services seem more credible which is tough to assess prior to usage (Buttle, 1998). Thus, service customers prefer to search for data from their social networks (for example family, friends and peers) rather than from subsidised profile-raising sources (Murray, 1991:19).

3.4.2.3 Incentives

Given the importance of word of mouth communication, a more proactive stand must be taken by organisations, and they should seek innovative ways to manage and influence word of mouth communication amongst customers (Wirtz & Chew, 2002:142). Wirtz and Chew (2002:142) stated that a key method is to use incentives as a motivator. Incentives are regarded as "*a thing that motivates or encourages someone to do something*" (Oxford, 2017g). Providing customers with incentives to engage in word of mouth communication activities is a common instrument in organisations' marketing strategies (Ryu & Feick, 2007:84). Consequently, numerous organisations aim to embrace the authority of word of mouth communication by providing customers with incentives to refer the organisation to their peers and family (Buttle, 1998:245).

Customers have several motives for engaging in word of mouth communication activities (Tercia & Teichert, 2016:828). Research from the behavioural economics field has determined that customers are more motivated to perform a particular behaviour if they receive a larger proportion of the provided incentive (Ahrens *et al.*, 2013:1044). Marketers have been implementing word of mouth communication incentive programmes with several task or goals for the word of mouth communication provider. Some programmes only offer incentives for new customers signing up for a service or providing incentive to customers for simply forwarding an e-mail message (word of mouth in an Internet context (Wirtz & Chew, 2002:143). Thus, marketers should utilise incentives, for example coupons, to stimulate word of mouth communication (Tercia & Teichert, 2016:827).

3.4.2.4 Business climate

Output word of mouth communication has been connected with circumstances in the business environment (Buttle, 1998:250). Buttle (1998:250) noted that word of mouth communication activities and withdrawal behaviours differ inversely with the level of attentiveness in an industry. As the effort or cost of articulating dissatisfaction increases, the word of mouth communication decreases, but the occurrence of exit behaviour of customers rises (Buttle, 1998:250). The more open an organisation is to customer complaints, the lesser the occurrence of exiting behaviour of customers is; and concomitantly, more positive word of mouth communication occurs because the organisation has the opportunity to remedy legitimate criticisms and maintain customer who may make positive references to other individuals (Richins, 1983:76).

3.5 BEHAVIOURAL INTENTION AND POSITIVE WORD OF MOUTH INTENTION

This study aims to examine the intention of customers to engage in positive word of mouth communication. To this end, this section first provides more insight into behavioural intention, after which positive word of mouth intention is discussed.

Behavioural intention is vital to an organisation that strives to maintain a long-term relationships with their customers (Amin & Nasharuddin, 2013:33). Maruping *et al.* (2016:628) note that behavioural intention is the internal determination to perform a behaviour. Behavioural intention is regarded as an important construct in various technology models, including the Theory of reason action model (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977:888), the Theory of planned action (Ajzen, 1991:181; Hagger *et al.*, 2016) and the Technology acceptance model (Davis, 1989). These theoretical models are based on the proposition that a customer's actual behaviour can be determined by bearing in mind his or her behavioural intention (Albarracin *et al.*, 2001:1826; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975b:301; Hagger *et al.*, 2016; Lorenzo-Blanco *et al.*, 2016; Maruping *et al.*, 2016). Alexandris *et al.* (2002:230) proposed that understanding the reasons why customers remain with a specific organisation and determining the factors that influence their behavioural intentions can be beneficial for organisations.

3.5.1 Genetic elements of the behavioural intention concept and definition of positive word of mouth intention

In the service industry, behavioural intention refers to the likelihood that a customer will re-purchase from the organisation in the near future and support the organisation with positive word of mouth comments (Hutchinson *et al.*, 2011:467). In other words, behavioural intention is considered as the probability that a customer will behave in a specific way in the future.

Over the past few decades, a large number of scholars set out to formally define the concept behavioural intention. Table 3-3 below presents a summary of the different definitions of behavioural intention that have most often been cited.

Table 3-3: Behavioural intention definitions

Author(s)	Adopted definition of behavioural intention
Fishbein and Ajzen (1975:288)	"Behavioural intention refers to a person's subjective probability that he will engage in some specific behaviour."

Ajzen (1991:181)	"Intentions are assumed to capture the motivational factors that influence a behavior; they are indications of how hard people are willing to try, of how much of an effort they are planning to exert, in order to perform the behaviour."
Zeithaml *et al.* (1996:33)	"Behavioral intentions can be viewed as indicators that signal whether customers will remain with or defect from the company."
Ryu *et al.* (2010:420)	"Behavioural intention is a stated likelihood to return to the restaurant and to recommend it to family, friends, and others in the future".
Nonis *et al.* (2014:19)	"Behavioural intentions are a signal that affects an individual's willingness to perform certain behaviour."
Cham *et al.* (2016:417)	"Behavioural intention refers to the medical tourists' tendency to perform a given behavior, that is, their revisit intention to Malaysia and recommend Malaysia as the medical tourism destination to their peers is a consumer tendency to perform a given behaviour, for example, their revisit intention and recommendation to their peers."
Senić and Marinković (2016:209)	"Behavioural intention as an individual's decision to behave in a particular manner in the future."
Swar *et al.* (2017:418)	"Behavioral intention is defined as an individual's subjective probability that he/she will engage in a specified behaviour."

Considering the definitions provided in the Table 3-3, and based on a further literature investigation:

- The first generic element that can be identified concerns the view that behavioural intention is based on a *subjective probability.* Subjective probability is derived from a person's preferences. This relates to the notion that behavioural intention is a *function of subjective norms.* Subjective norms refer to a customers' perceptions or assumptions about others' expectations of certain behaviours that the customer will or will not perform. Subjective norms are also influenced by beliefs, and a customer's beliefs are formed throughout a person's life (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Hanno & Violette, 1996). Customers can be strongly influenced by other customers who spread information about services or products that are available, better known as market mavens (Babin & Harris, 2016:171; Babin & Harris, 2018:173). Additionally, family is regarded as a vital social institution of most customers and may also have a significant influence on customers' attitudes, opinions and behaviours (Lamb *et al*., 2011:104; Lamb *et al*., 2017:106).

- The second generic element is that behavioural intention entails either *favourable or unfavourable behaviour* intentions (Zeithaml *et al.*, 1996:36). Favourable behavioural intention refers to behaviour that indicates that customers are developing a relationship with an organisation by praising the company or expressing a preference for the company (Nonis *et al.*, 2014:20). Favourable behaviour expressed by customers may include positive word of mouth communication, expressing a preference for the organisation over others, increase in purchases, or being willing to pay a premium price (Zeithaml *et al*., 1996:33). Then again, unfavourable behavioural intentions are seen as customers' complaining behaviour and switching behaviour (Lobo *et al.*, 2007:494).

- The third generic element related to behavioural intention is that it entails an *inclination to perform a specific* task. Inclination is defined as: "*A person's natural tendency or urge to act or feel in a particular way; a disposition*" (Oxford, 2017b). Customers may have a tendency to perform tasks such as recommending the service or product offering to others, repeat purchases or socialising with an organisation's employees (Zeithaml *et al*., 1996:33). These behaviours are very important for organisations, since it may increase their market share if customers recommend the product and services to potential new customers. Organisational cost may also decrease because word of mouth communication is a free marketing strategy. Organisations' profitability also increases when customers purchase more products or services (Buttle, 1998:242; Gruen *et al.*, 2006:451; Lien & Cao, 2014:106; Parsa & Sadeghi, 2015:1250).

All three elements identified are present in the electronic banking environment. Considering the first generic element, *subjective norms,* customers' perceptions or assumptions are influenced by other customers, for example their family members, who may have an opinion about the main attributes of electronic banking services (Yiu *et al*., 2007:347). Customers may then demonstrate a willingness to engage in favourable behavioural intentions, such as recommending electronic banking services to others based on, for instance, the fact that electronic banking services are cheaper than branch transactions. Unfavourable behaviour may entail customers complaining to other customers about the fact that they feel electronic banking is unsafe, based on a fear that their personal information may be leaked (Kassim & Abdullah, 2010:354). With respect to the third generic element, customers may have an inclination towards electronic banking services because it is more convenient than branch transactions. For example, customers can conduct banking transactions after branch banking hours and can make payments or conduct transfers without going to the branch (Aduda & Kingoo, 2012:100). It is therefore likely that customers may tend to engage in positive word of mouth communication, as examined in this study.

Subsequently, considering the generic elements discussed, the following definition of behavioural intention has been formulated for the purpose of this study:

> *Behavioural intention refers to electronic banking customers'* ***inclination*** *to engage in* ***favourable or unfavourable*** *behaviour and is based on their* ***subjective perceptions*** *of the service provided.*

Favourable behavioural intention may contribute to benefits such as customers developing a relationship with an organisation by praising the company or expressing that they prefer the company over others (Nonis *et al.*, 2014:20). For the purpose of this study, positive word of mouth intention is examined as a form of favourable behaviour intention. Word of mouth intention can be defined as a customer's belief that he or she will have a conversation about an incident with at least one individual who is not directly related to the service provider (Swanson & Davis, 2003:207). Mikalef *et al.* (2013:25) further emphasise that word of mouth intention occurs when customers share information on a product that they have seen and which they find to be of interest to friends and family.

Additionally, word of mouth intention is regarded as a component of loyalty (De Matos & Rossi, 2008:580). Customer loyalty is perceived as an intention by customers wanting to continue with the relationship and who are therefore likely to perform various sets of behaviours, including engaging in favourable word of mouth communication (Sirdeshmukh *et al.*, 2002:20).

As mentioned before, this study examines positive word of mouth intention, which against the background provided can be defined as:

> *Positive word of mouth intention refers to electronic banking customers' **inclinations** to provide **positive** recommendations about the service provided. Their favourable intended behaviour is likely to be based on **subjective opinions** of the service provided by the bank with whom they want to **continue** having a relationship.*

3.5.2 Benefits of positive word of mouth intention in the electronic banking environment

To be successful in the competitive retail environment, South African banks are investing significantly to serve more customers electronically (Maduku, 2014). Banks believe that such investments will impact positively on their profits and will also increase their market share (Maduku, 2014). According to PwC (2013), South African banks subsequently punt the benefits of electronic banking to their customers. However, South African banking customers often do not share the banks' enthusiasm on electronic banking services (Payments Afrika, 2013). This lack of enthusiasm is driven by a perception among many South African banking customers that traditional banking services still offer a much safer banking experience than electronic banking (News24, 2015). Irrespective of the potential benefits such as reductions in cost, enhanced functionality, confidentiality, expediency and ease of use (Payments Afrika, 2013), over 40% of banking customers still opt for a traditional banking experience.

To address this problem, it would be necessary for retail banks to educate South African customers about the benefits and trustworthiness of electronic banking services. Reaching all potential customers, however, is an impossible task. Banks may be more successful if they were to focus on existing users (who are potential customers' friends and family) to assist in this task. As noted, word of mouth is considered as truthful and sincere as compared to communication received from other sources such as advertising (Sivadas & Jindal, 2017). It is also likely to influence potential customers' decisions to buy a product or service (Ng *et al*., 2011). Customers who influence other customers about electronic banking by having an intention to communicate positive aspects about this service may present a viable strategy for retail banks to facilitate greater acceptance and use of electronic banking services and to grow their market share.

3.6 SUMMARY

The purpose of Chapter 3 was to explore customer loyalty, behavioural intention and positive word of mouth communication (that is measured as a form of behavioural intention in this study). The chapter commenced with an overview of customer loyalty. Customer loyalty refers to decisions made by customers, as informed by past experiences, to continue to use those electronic banking services for which they are registered, regardless of the availability of substitutes in the market. The second part of this chapter examined the generic elements and benefits of positive word of mouth communication, which is regarded as a form of customer loyalty. Positive word of mouth communication refers to the interpersonal and informal exchanges of comments, thoughts and ideas about electronic banking between customers who do not represent a marketing source and where the interaction may occur in a face-to-face setting.

The chapter concluded with an overview of behavioural intention and positive word of mouth intention. In the electronic banking environment, behavioural intention refers to electronic banking customers' inclinations to engage in favourable or unfavourable behaviour and is based on their subjective norms of the service provided. Positive word of mouth intention refers to electronic banking customers' inclinations to provide positive recommendations about the service provided. Their favourable intended behaviour is likely to be based on their subjective opinions of the service provided by the bank with whom they want to continue a relationship.

This discussion concludes the overview of theories and constructs that are examined in this study. The next chapter, Chapter 4, presents the hypotheses that have been formulated for this study.

CHAPTER 4

CONCEPTUALISATION OF THE MODEL

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 2 provided insight into the main theoretical constructs that may have an impact on positive word of mouth intention. An in-depth examination was conducted of the perceived value domain, the relationship marketing domain, relationship quality and the constructs of perceived usefulness, competence trust and continuance commitment. Chapter 3 presented a discussion of the following concepts: customer loyalty, behavioural intention and positive word of mouth communication (that is regarded as a function of behavioural intention in this study).

Chapter 4 aims to further examine the potential interrelationships among the main theoretical constructs of the present study, namely perceive usefulness, competence trust, continuance commitment and word of mouth communication (once again, as a function of behavioural intention). The investigation's focal purpose is to further examine the proposed theoretical model and the research hypotheses that were formulated in Chapter 1 (section 1.5).

4.2 INTERRELATIONSHIPS OF CONSTRUCTS

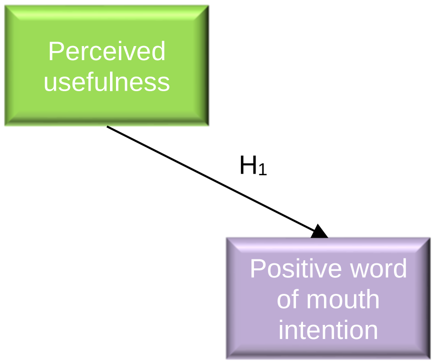
Extant literature on perceived value and relationship marketing was consulted to identify potential interrelationships among the constructs under investigation. The relationship between perceived usefulness and positive word of mouth intention is examined first.

4.2.1 The impact of perceived usefulness on positive word of mouth intention

Table 4-1 offers a brief account of previously identified relationships between perceived usefulness and positive word of mouth intention within different research contexts.

Perceived usefulness is regarded a vital factor for customers' favourable behavioural intentions – such as the decision to continue using an organisation's services (Bhattacherjee, 2001:356; Byoungsoo, 2010:7038). The rationale for this behaviour is that customers who perceive a service as useful are predisposed to believing that the service facilitates the achievement of their daily tasks, which leads to greater satisfaction with the organisation and a relationship that is long-term in nature (Kim, 2011:200). Perceived usefulness can thus be regarded as customers' subjective perception that a service will increase their productivity, improve their effectiveness and enhance overall performance (Chiu *et al.*, 2009:766; Davis,1989:320).

Table 4-1: Proposed impact of perceived usefulness on positive word of mouth intention

<table>
<tr><th>Proposed relationship between constructs</th><th>Relationship between constructs</th><th>Contributing author(s)</th><th>Industry contribution</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="6">
</td><td rowspan="4">Perceived usefulness → Positive word of mouth intention</td><td>Lee (2010:512)</td><td>E-learning</td></tr>
<tr><td>Al-Maghrabi et al. (2011:52)</td><td>Online shopping</td></tr>
<tr><td>Agag and El-Masry (2016:105)</td><td>Online travel</td></tr>
<tr><td>Casaló et al. (2017:1055)</td><td>Social media: Instagram</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Perceived usefulness → Positive word of mouth communication</td><td>Moldovan et al. (2011:112)</td><td>Product innovation</td></tr>
<tr><td>Li and Liu (2014:1048)</td><td>e-Services</td></tr>
</table>

Moreover, it has been established that perceived usefulness is a determining factor for customers' intentions to engage in positive word of mouth about a product or service (Averdung & Wagenfuehrer, 2011:104). Customers' perceived service value functions as an incentive to display loyalty behaviour, for example engaging in positive word of mouth communication (McKee *et al.*, 2006:212). Dong *et al*. (2017:130) further demonstrates a relationship amongst perceived usefulness and positive word of mouth intention in an online setting. It appears that in an online context, customers are willing to participate in positive word of mouth with their communities if they regard the service as useful, valuable and if they feel it saves them time (Song *et al*., 2008:27). In this environment, perceived usefulness has been proved as salient in determining customers' behavioural intentions towards a service or a product (Al-Suqri, 2014:276). With respect to self-service technologies such as electronic banking services, it has been established that if a customer perceives these services as useful, they tend to engage in positive conversations about these (Lin & Chang, 2011:435).

Considering these findings and given that the present study focuses on perceived usefulness as a form of perceived value, it is firstly hypothesised that customers in South Africa who find electronic banking services useful may be inclined to tell other customers about the service. Hence, the following hypothesis is presented concerning electronic banking customers.

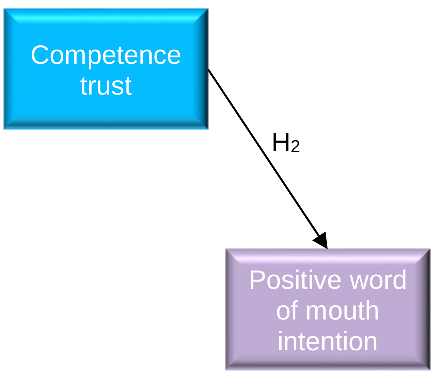
Hypothesis 1
H_1: Perceived usefulness of the service has a positive and significant impact on positive word of mouth intention.

4.2.2 The link between relationship quality factors and positive word of mouth intention

As mentioned in the literature review in Chapter 2 (section 2.4), trust and commitment are perceived as core dimensions of relationship quality. The marketing literature clearly demonstrate that relationship quality has an effect on behavioural intention (Ozdemir & Hewett, 2010:46) and the link between relationship quality factors and behavioural intention has likewise been made, including measurements of positive word of mouth intention (Van Tonder *et al.*, 2017:47).

Table 4-2 provides a summary of the relationships between trust and positive word of mouth communication as well as trust and positive word of mouth intention, as previously established.

Table 4-2: Proposed impact of trust on positive word of mouth intention

Proposed relationship between constructs	Relationship between constructs	Contributing author(s)	Industry contribution
	Trust → Positive word of mouth communication	Ranaweera and Prabhu (2003:84)	Technology
		De Matos and Rossi (2008:579)	Literature research
		Lien and Cao (2014:108)	Services
		Madjid (2013:55)	Retail
		Filieri *et al.* (2015:178)	Tourism
		Parsa and Sadeghi (2015:1251)	Life insurance
	Trust → Positive word of mouth intention	Rauyruen and Miller (2005:23)	Services
		Kim *et al.* (2009:53)	Tourism
		Gu *et al.* (2009:11613)	Electronic banking
		Sahin *et al.* (2011:1293)	Automobile industry
		Su *et al.* (2014:1019)	Travel & tourism marketing
		Tanford (2016:152)	Hospitality

Several studies identify trust as a main element for success in an online context (Elbeltagi & Agag, 2016:292; Li *et al*., 2017:26). Trust in an online setting is therefore crucial to instil confidence in the electronic services provided (Gefen, 2000:726). If a customer trusts an electronic service provider, it is likely that they experience these services as useful and that the electronic service provider has their best interest at heart (Mou *et al*., 2017:128). In light of this, Mayer *et al*. (1995:717) conceptualised competence trust as a *"group of skills, competencies, and characteristics that enable a party to have influence within a specific domain*". In addition, Cullen *et al*. (2000:225) describe competence trust as the practical component of trust, because it comprises the perception as to whether a retail bank can provide what it has promised.

Customers with a high degree of trust towards an electronic service provider can influence others with their experience or opinions regarding the product or services (Hidayanto *et al*., 2014:2400). In fact, in an electronic commerce context, various studies have confirmed the positive link amongst trust and positive word of mouth intention (Alsajjan & Dennis, 2010:961; Hidayanto *et al*., 2014:2403; Verma *et al*., 2015:210; Zhou, 2011:219). Similar results have been obtained in the electronic banking environment, where it has been recognised that trust is a critical factor pertaining to customers' intentions to engage in positive word of mouth (Wang *et al*., 2015:567). If electronic banking services are seen as competent, customers' risk perceptions are reduced and their confidence in these services increases (Yu *et al.*, 2015:239). Customers who have competence trust towards electronic banking services (mobile banking) therefore tend have favourable intentions to engage in positive word of mouth about the electronic banking service (Gu *et al*., 2009:11613).

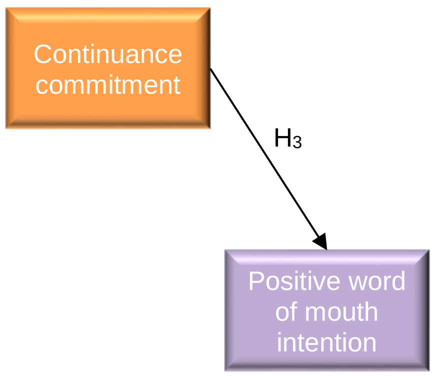
In view of these findings, it is likely that competence trust may positively impact on positive word of mouth communication as a form of behavioural intention among electronic banking customers in South Africa. Therefore, it is hypothesised that customers with competence trust in the electronic banking services will tend to engage in positive word of mouth communication with others. Hence, the following hypothesis is presented concerning electronic banking customers.

With respect to electronic banking services provided in South Africa it is hypothesised that:

Hypothesis 2
H_2: Competence trust in the service has a positive and significant impact on positive word of mouth intention.

Table 4-3 below presents a list of studies that have demonstrated the relationship amongst commitment and positive word of mouth communication in addition to commitment and positive word of mouth intention.

Table 4-3: Proposed impact of customer commitment on positive word of mouth intention

<table>
<tr><th>Proposed relationship between constructs</th><th>Relationship between constructs</th><th>Contributing author(s)</th><th>Industry contribution</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="13">
</td><td rowspan="6">Commitment → Positive word of mouth communication</td><td>Harrison-Walker (2001:66)</td><td>Services</td></tr>
<tr><td>Kim et al. (2001:282)</td><td>Hospitality</td></tr>
<tr><td>Menon and O’Connor (2007:160)</td><td>Banking services</td></tr>
<tr><td>Royo-Vela and Casamassima (2011:525)</td><td>Virtual brand communities</td></tr>
<tr><td>Parsa and Sadeghi (2015:1251)</td><td>Life insurance</td></tr>
<tr><td>Breitsohl and Ruhle (2016:836)</td><td>Organisational</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="7">Commitment → Positive word of mouth intention</td><td>Fullerton (2005b:102)</td><td>Retail</td></tr>
<tr><td>Brown et al. (2005:124)</td><td>Retail</td></tr>
<tr><td>Fullerton (2005a:1376)</td><td>Financial services, retail grocery services and telecommunications services</td></tr>
<tr><td>De Matos and Rossi (2008:579)</td><td>Literature research</td></tr>
<tr><td>Saeed et al. (2014:215)</td><td>Petroleum</td></tr>
<tr><td>Tanford (2016:125)</td><td>Hospitality</td></tr>
<tr><td>Fazal-e-Hasan et al. (2017:204)</td><td>Higher education</td></tr>
</table>

Customers who are committed towards an organisation tend to have a psychological attachment with the organisation and are likely to have a robust desire to continue the relationship with this specific organisation (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999:73; Li *et al.*, 2016:296; Yu &Tung, 2013:114). Customers may also feel obligated to remain committed to the relationship due to reliance on the service or product benefits (Allen & Meyer, 1990:4; Roxenhall & Andrésen, 2012:88). This notion is better known as continuance commitment, since customers tend to feel indebted to remain in the relationship with a service organisation because there is a perception of high switching costs – and this makes the cost of changing their service organisation outweigh the advantages (Fullerton, 2003; Jones *et al.,* 2000).

Customer commitment may result in benefits such as customers' intentions to recommend a service or product to others, or to engage in conversations that are favourable towards the service offerings (Walter *et al*., 2000:1). Other scholars within the field of relationship marketing in South Africa and abroad concur with this view (Saeed *et al.,* 2014:219; Van Tonder *et al.*, 2017:52; Tanford, 2016:125) as well as in the field of electronic services (Dagger *et al*., 2011:278; Kuo & Feng, 2013:958). It is believed that an increase in a customer's intention to behave in a positive manner is associated with a higher level of customer commitment displayed towards the organisation (Du Preez &, 2015:85).

As mentioned in Chapter 1 (section 1.4.3.2), this study presents an investigation of continuance commitment. Continuance commitment towards electronic banking services can provide insight into whether customers are willing to make a continued investment in a relationship with the electronic banking services; this may lead customers to engage in favourable communication about the electronic banking services with other potential customers. Specifically, in an electronic banking services setting, continuance commitment is predicated on the fact that customers may find it difficult to terminate their use of electronic banking services because of various reasons, for instance the convenience of having 24/7 access to banking services, the lack of geographical limitations, or insufficient alternatives (Brun *et al.*, 2014:10, 17; Johnson, 2007:7).

In light of the relationship between commitment and word of mouth intention, it is proposed that with respect to electronic banking customers in South Africa, it is likely that continuance commitment of the service may contribute to positive word of mouth intentions. Customers who believe that the electronic banking services are dependable and who, after an evaluation of the perceived cost of terminating the service, feel that it is beneficial to continue being committed, may also want to tell potential customers of the favourable aspects of these banking services. Extant literature has not yet provided an exhaustive account of the impact of continuance commitment on positive word of mouth intention in the electronic banking environment. By further investigating this proposed relationship, the present study aims to contribute the literature on this matter.

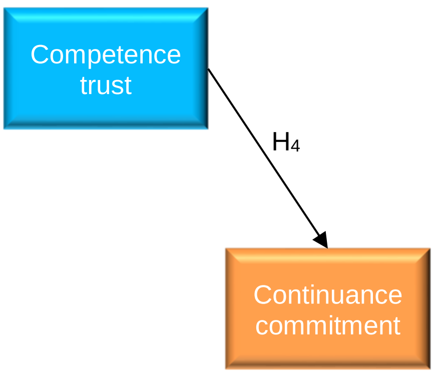
Hence, with respect to electronic banking services provided in South Africa, it is hypothesised that:

Hypothesis 3
H_3: Continuance commitment towards the service has a positive and significant impact on positive word of mouth intention.

4.2.3 The impact of competence trust on continuance commitment

Table 4-4 provides a summary of previous studies that have explored the relationship between trust and commitment.

Table 4-4: Proposed impact of competence trust on continuance commitment

Proposed relationship between constructs	Relationship between constructs	Contributing author(s)	Industry contribution
	Trust → Commitment	Morgan and Hunt (1994:24)	Retail
		Wong and Sohal (2002:43)	Retail
		Bansal *et al*. (2004:245)	Services
		Ulaga and Eggert (2006:322)	Manufacturing
		Caceres and Paparoidamis (2007:853)	Services
		Dwivedi and Johnson (2012:40)	Services
		Saeed *et al*. (2014:215)	Petroleum
		Mpinganjira *et al*. (2013:64)	Retail
		Moreira and Silva (2015:262)	Health care

Trust is present when a customer has faith that an organisation is dependable and as honest. Trust in a relationship context minimises perceptions of risks associated with the relationship (Kassim & Abdulla, 2006:428; Morgan & Hunt, 1994:23). In other words, trust provides customers with a foundation to evaluate the probability of future behaviour of the organisation, as evidenced by past promises and interactions. As a result, uncertainty decreases and relationship commitment develops (Boersma *et al*., 2003:1038; Gundlach *et al.*, 1995:80; Hwang & Lee, 2012:175). Commitment is therefore associated with trust in an exchange relationship. For effective and longstanding relationships to develop, both trust and commitment are required (Morgan & Hunt, 1994:24). This view is also supported by other scholars who contend the notion that trust is a precursor of commitment (Elbeltagi & Agag, 2016:295; Hashim & Tan, 2015:149; Hennig-Thurau & Klee, 1997:751; Ndubisi, 2010:114). Therefore, trust is regarded as a main determinant of commitment (Van Vuuren *et al*., 2017:52).

Within an online setting, it has also been established that trust has an impact on commitment (Elbeltagi & Agag, 2016:301; Wang *et al*., 2016:635). Kassim and Abdulla (2006:438) similarly determined that in an electronic banking environment, trust is strongly correlated with commitment. If customers trust the banking service, they perceive the risk as low and the bank as professional and important, and therefore they tend to be more committed. In the same vein, Ahmed (2010:56) and Styles *et al*. (2008:891) determined empirically that competence trust has an impact on continuance commitment.

Thus, in terms of the context of this study, it seems likely that perceptions of customers in South Africa feel that the reliability of electronic banking services may favourably impact their decisions to remain committed. Furthermore, customers who believe that electronic banking services are reliable may feel that the cost of terminating the service would be too high, and consequently would rather continue being committed to the current service.

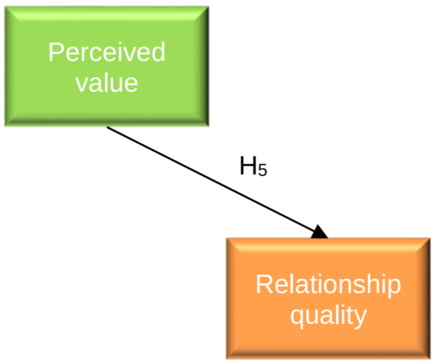
Hence, with respect to electronic banking services provided in South Africa, it is hypothesised that:

Hypothesis 4
H_4: Competence trust in the service has a positive and significant impact on continuance commitment towards the service.

4.2.4 The link between perceived value and relationship quality

Extant research has not yet provided a comprehensive account of the relationship amongst perceived usefulness and the dimensions of competence trust and continuance commitment. However, as noted in Chapter 1 (sections 1.4.2 and 1.4.2.1), perceived usefulness is regarded as a dimension of perceived value, and competence trust and continuance commitment are considered as elements of relationship quality. Furthermore, as indicated in Table 4-5, previous studies demonstrated the link between perceived value and relationship quality.

Table 4-5: Proposed impact of perceived value on relationship quality

Proposed relationship between constructs	Relationship between constructs	Contributing author(s)	Industry contribution
	Perceived value → Relationship quality	Gummesson (1987)	Conceptual
		Ravald and Grönroos (1996:24)	Conceptual
		Moliner *et al*. (2007:1399)	Manufacturing and tourism
		Moliner (2009:81)	Healthcare services

Gummesson (1987) suggested that relationship quality can be understood by means of accumulated value. In the first stage of a relationship, value-adding qualities are vital (Ravald & Grönroos, 1996:24), whereas in the stages where the relations are long-term in nature, the quality of the relationship is of greater importance. Therefore, the perceived value of a purchase serves as an antecedent of perceived relationship quality. Moliner *et al*. (2007:1399) and Moliner (2009:81) support the same connection.

Considering these findings, it is likely that perceived usefulness as a value dimension may have positive and significant impact on the relationship quality dimensions of trust and commitment However, in the context of this study, an assessment of the perceived usefulness of the electronic banking technology that is measured by the extent to which it may enhance the performance and productivity of the banking customer may not contribute to greater perceptions of competence trust, assessing aspects such as that technology related errors are quite rare. For this reason, the current study only focuses on the potential relationship amongst perceived usefulness and continuance commitment, because the possibility exists that customers who perceive the bank's service as useful (because it enhances their productivity) may also view the cost associated with leaving the relationship to be too great and may prefer to remain with the bank.

Hence, with respect to electronic banking services provided in South Africa, it is hypothesised that:

Hypothesis 5
H_5: Perceived usefulness of the service has a positive and significant impact on continuance commitment towards the service.

4.2.5 The mediating role of continuance commitment

A variable that mediates between independent and dependent variables is better known as the mediator variable (Statistics Solutions, 2018).

Considering the above explanation of a mediating variable and the relationships among the constructs, as noted in the previous sections, it is likely that continuance commitment may serve as a mediating variable in the proposed model. Specifically, it is likely that continuance commitment (a relationship quality factor) may serve as a mediating variable pertaining to the positive relationship between perceived usefulness (a perceived value factor) and positive word of mouth intention. Similarly, a positive relationship between competence trust (another relationship quality dimension) and continuance commitment, in addition to between continuance commitment and positive word of mouth intention, may also suggest that continuance commitment serves a mediating role in terms of the positive impact of competence trust on positive word of mouth intentions.

Hence, with respect to electronic banking services provided in South Africa, it is lastly hypothesised that:

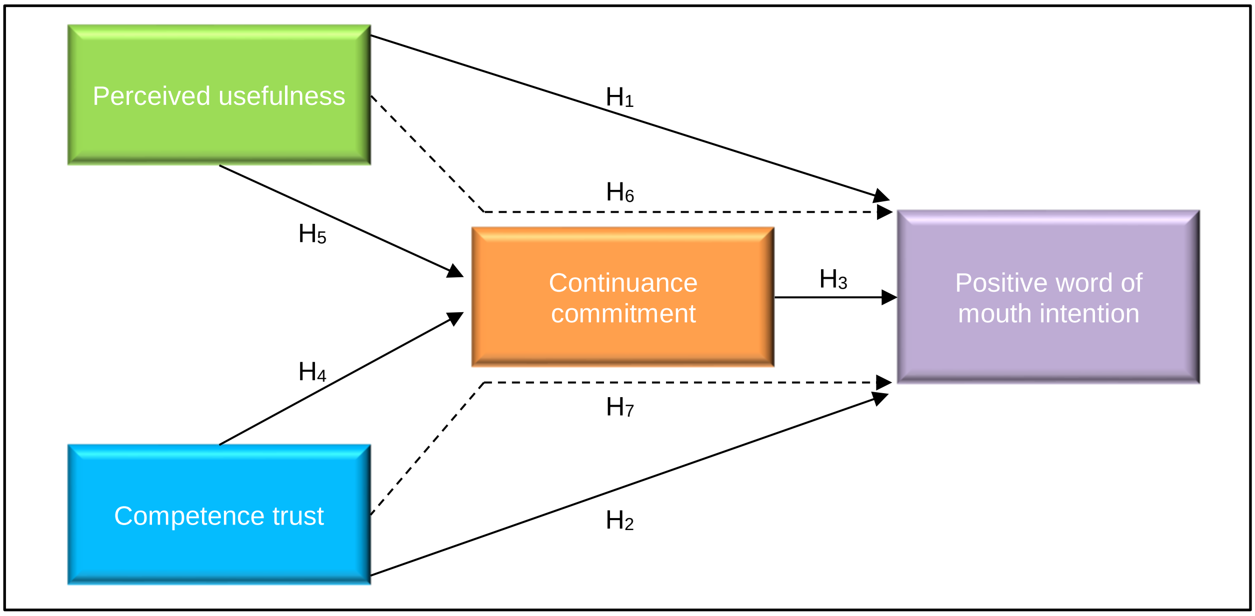
Hypothesis 6
H_6: Perceived usefulness of the service has a significant positive direct effect on positive word of mouth intention, as mediated by continuance commitment towards the service.

Hypothesis 7
H_7: Competence trust in the service has a significant positive indirect effect on positive word of mouth intention, as mediated by continuance commitment towards the service.

4.3 THE PROPOSED THEORETICAL MODEL

In light of these hypotheses, a conceptual model can be proposed for this study. The model is presented in Figure 4-1 and visually represents the potential relationships.

Figure 4-1: Proposed theoretical model



This study proposes that users who are currently using electronic banking services may feel inclined to engage in positive word of mouth communication if they find the electronic banking service useful, if they believe the service is reliable and can be trusted, and if they feel continuance committed towards the service. It is also likely that perceptions of the usefulness of the service and users' competence trust in the service will contribute towards continuance commitment. Ultimately, confirmation of the proposed relationships may further highlight the role of continuance commitment as a mediator in the proposed model. Specifically, continuance commitment may mediate the relationship between perceived usefulness and positive word of mouth intention as well as amongst competence trust and positive word of mouth intention.

4.4 SUMMARY

Chapter 4 presented an in-depth examination of this study's proposed theoretical model and the research hypotheses. The next chapter provides insight into the methodology followed in the present study. Chapter 5 therefore sets out to explain the research design, the data collection method, the sample plan and statistical techniques that were used to explore the relevance of the proposed theoretical model and to test the hypotheses that were formulated for this study.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapters 1 to 4 offered a literature study into the constructs and theories that are salient to the present study. Chapter 2 focused on the perceived value theory and perceived usefulness, and Chapter 3 explored relationship marketing, relationship quality, competence trust, continuance commitment and word of mouth intention as a form of behavioural intention of loyalty. The hypothesised relationships among the four constructs under investigation were further explored in Chapter 4 and were summarised in Figure 4-1.

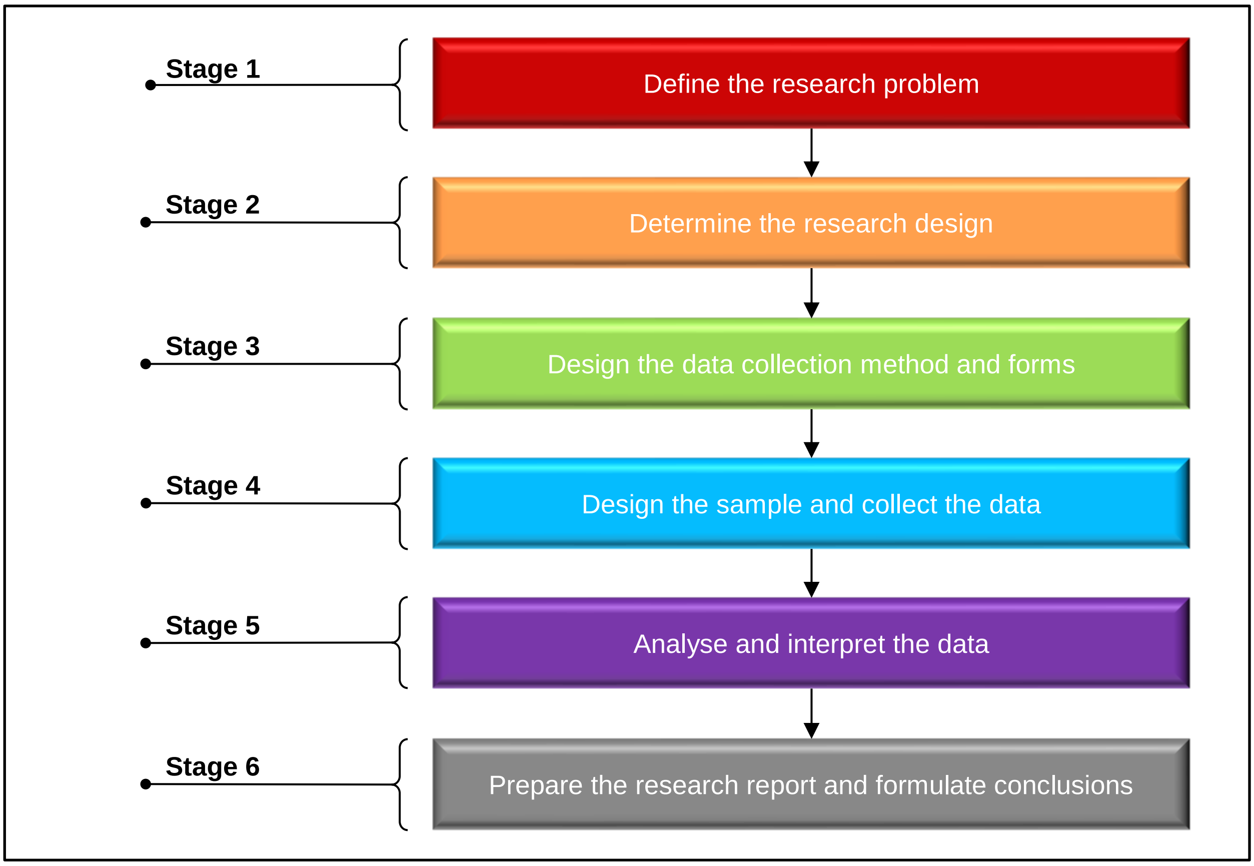
However, further research is necessary to verify the proposed model within the electronic banking environment. To this end, the purpose of Chapter 5 is to outline the research methodology that was used to complete the empirical phase of the study and to verify the theoretical model. Chapter 5 is structured around the different stages of the marketing research process and involves an outline of the data collection method and questionnaire, the sample design, along with the statistical methods used to analyse the research data.

5.2 THE MARKETING RESEARCH PROCESS

The process of designing, gathering, examining and reporting data aimed at solving a marketing problem is central to marketing research (Burns & Bush, 2014:34). Marketing research is regarded as an organised process and aims to provide accurate information that represents a true state of affairs (Malhotra *et al*., 2013:39; Zikmund & Babin, 2013:6).

Figure 5-1 presents the six stages of the marketing research process that have been implemented in this study. These six stages are further explored in the sections that follow.

Figure 5-1: Stages in the marketing research process



Source: Adopted from Berndt and Petzer (2011:25).

5.3 STAGE 1: DEFINE THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The marketing research process begins with the identification of a marketing problem (Malhotra *et al*., 2013:42). Marketing research is needed to solve a problem, especially if the organisation has inadequate information about the matter at hand (Burns & Bush, 2014:70). Insight into the marketing research problem is furthermore vital to assist in formulating specific research objectives (Berndt & Petzer, 2011:27).

A research problem indicates any problem or question that forms the foundation of a research project and is formulated when an issue is unclear and needs to be investigated (Berndt & Petzer, 2011:27; Kumar, 2011:59; Tuckman & Harper, 2012:22; Tustin *et al.*, 2005:77). Formulating the research problem is regarded as the most vital stage of the research process, because if the problem is not clearly defined, inaccurate answers may be obtained at the end of the process. The most accurate answer must therefore be determined for the research question identified (Berndt & Petzer, 2011:27).

The research problem for this study was derived from existing literature. Chapter 1 (refer to section 1.2.1) discusses the research problem and is again presented in Table 5-1.

Table 5-1: The research problem of this study

Positive word of mouth communication, referring to casual conversations between customers about products, has received a significant amount of attention in marketing research owing to its potential to influence the behaviours and attitudes of customers. This study aims to expand knowledge on the subject by examining the mediating effect of the relationship quality factor *continuance commitment* on the relationships between *perceived usefulness* (a perceived value factor) and *positive word of mouth intention*, as well as between *competence trust* (another relationship quality factor) and *positive word of mouth intention*. Positive word of mouth intention concerns the intent of customers to engage in conversations that will favour the organisation. The proposed model has not been tested before and is based on the belief that (1) relationship quality may contribute to positive word of mouth intention, (2) customers' perceived value may lead to positive word of mouth intention, and (3) perceived value may impact on views of relationship quality. Previous research has also indicated that key dimensions of relationship quality, namely trust and commitment, apart from their direct relationship with word of mouth communication, may be related to each other. Customers may first become committed towards the organisation, owing to the development of trusting perceptions, before engaging in positive word of mouth communication behaviour. The context of the present study is the electronic banking environment. It is hoped that this environment can benefit from customers engaging in positive word of mouth conversations with other potential users of the service. Many bank customers may seem prefer the traditional in-branch banking services that are perceived to present fewer risks. It is suggested that existing users of electronic banking services who appreciate the usefulness of the service and trust its reliability (competence trust) may display the intention to recommend the service to other potential users and convince them of the benefits of the service. These relationships may further be strengthened by existing users' continuance commitment towards the service, relating to an avoidance of perceived cost and the loss of benefits in terminating the service.

5.3.1 Primary objective

This study's primary objective is to develop a mediated model for positive word of mouth intention in the electronic banking environment.

5.3.2 Secondary objectives

The secondary objectives that support the abovementioned primary objective are displayed in Table 5-2 below.

Table 5-2: Secondary objectives

Secondary objectives	
Secondary objective 1	To provide an overview of extant literature related to: (a) Perceived value, relationship marketing, relationship quality, behavioural intention, customer loyalty and word of mouth communication. (b) The main constructs of this research study, namely perceived usefulness, competence trust, continuance commitment and positive word of mouth intention. (c) The interrelationships between the main constructs of this study.
Secondary objective 2	To develop a sample profile of existing electronic banking users who participated in this study.
Secondary objective 3	To measure the extent to which bank customers perceive electronic banking services for which they are registered as useful.
Secondary objective 4	To assess the extent to which bank customers demonstrate competence trust in the electronic banking services for which they are registered.
Secondary objective 5	To assess the extent to which bank customers exhibit continuance commitment towards the electronic banking services for which they are registered.
Secondary objective 6	To determine the positive word of mouth intentions of bank customers pertaining to electronic banking services.
Secondary objective 7	To examine the interrelationships between the constructs of this study, namely perceived usefulness, competence trust, continuance commitment and positive word of mouth intentions.

5.4 STAGE 2: DETERMINE THE RESEARCH DESIGN

The main function of a research design is to deliver a plan that guides the data collection and analysis stages of the research (Feinberg *et al.,* 2013:29; Hair *et al*., 2011:144). In other words, a research design ensures that a study's research objectives are achieved (Berndt & Petzer, 2011:31). Research designs can be divided into descriptive, causal and explanatory designs (Saunders, 2016:139) as discussed below.

5.4.1 Descriptive research design

When researchers want to describe something, they use a descriptive research design (Berndt & Petzer, 2011:32). Hair *et al*. (2011:148) note that the main focus of descriptive research is to define responses to questions such as what, where, who, how and when. In other words, descriptive research aims to describe characteristics of groups, individuals, objects, environments and organisations which allow researchers to see the "bigger picture" of a situation (Babin & Zikmund, 2016:54; Malhotra *et al.,* 2013:895). Therefore, this type of research enables the researcher to understand the industry as a whole, to make accurate conclusions from findings, and to make recommendations by answering questions and having knowledge about these characteristics. Also, a descriptive research design's hypothesis is specific, and is controlled and strategic in nature (Malhotra *et al.,* 2013:106). This type of research design generally entails a quantitative and structured approach (Hair *et al*., 2011:149) such as quantitative data analysis of secondary data, panels, surveys and observations (Malhotra *et al.,* 2013:108).

5.4.2 Causal research design

To gain insight into cause-and-effect relationships, a causal research design can be used (Malhotra *et al.,* 2013:115). More specifically, a causal relationship relates to a transformation of one event that results in a consistent transformation in another event within a controlled environment (Hair *et al.*, 2011:152; Malhotra *et al.,* 2013:115). A controlled environment refers to a situation where one of the other variables that can affect the dependent variable(s) is/are regarded as impossible or under control (Malhotra *et al.,* 2013:115). The manipulation of an independent variable(s) to determine the effect on a dependent variable(s) is better known as experimental research (Burns & Bush, 2014:107; Feinberg *et al.,* 2013:668; Zikmund & Babin, 2013:53).

5.4.3 Explanatory research design

Saunders (2016:176) notes that explanatory research sets out to study a problem or a set of circumstances with the intention of explaining the relationships amongst its variables. In other words, explanatory research aims to recognise the degree and basis of cause-and-effect relationships (Dudovskiy, 2017). Dudovskiy (2017) further suggests several benefits of an explanatory research design:

- Explanatory research may play an influential role by classifying reasons behind several processes, along with evaluating the effects of changes on current standards or processes.
- Explanatory research regularly offers the benefits of repetition, if needed.

- This type of design is associated with superior levels of internal validity because of the systematic collection of subjects.

As mentioned in Chapter 1 (section 1.8.2.1), for the purpose of this study, an explanatory research design was selected. The aim of this study is to determine the relationships amongst a set of predetermined variables, namely perceived usefulness, competence trust, continuance commitment and positive word of mouth intention. The research design is structured and the research problem is clearly motivated, namely to explain the relationships among a set of pre-determined variables, hence supporting the selection of the explanatory research design.

5.5 STAGE 3: DESIGN THE DATA COLLECTION METHOD AND FORMS

Stage three of the research process focuses on the methods and forms used to collect data (Berndt & Petzer, 2011:33). Considering the data collection method, it is necessary to distinguish between primary and secondary research data sources (Burns & Bush, 2014:122). Primary data collection occurs when a researcher collects information that is specific to the research problem at hand. On the other hand, secondary data has previously been collected to address a different research problem (Burns & Bush, 2014:122; Feinberg *et al.,* 2013:69). Burns and Bush (2014:74) note that researchers must commence their examinations by collecting secondary data, since it is less expensive and can be attained quickly. Consequently, secondary data sources are discussed below, followed by primary data sources.

5.5.1 Secondary data sources

Secondary data sources are described as prior gathered information for the purpose of another research study or problem (Aaker *et al.,* 2011:93; Burns & Bush, 2014:122; Feinberg *et al.,* 2013:69; Malhotra *et al.,* 2013:132). Vital benefits of secondary data sources include that it is less expensive, saves the researcher time, and that less effort is needed to collect the data (Aaker *et al.,* 2011:95).

For the aim of this study, several academic sources were consulted to conduct an in-depth literature review (Chapters 2 to 4). The sources examined include marketing journals (for example *Journal of marketing* and the *Journal of marketing research*) in addition to academic textbooks.

5.5.2 Primary data sources

The information that is developed or collected specifically for a current research problem refers to primary data (Burns & Bush, 2014:122). Primary data can be divided into two types, namely qualitative and quantitative research (Berndt & Petzer, 2011:45). Qualitative research refers to visual or textual data gathered and is characterised by researchers of the study (Hair *et al*., 2011:455). Burns and Bush (2014:146) describe quantitative research as the management of a set of designed questions with prearranged responses. Table 5-3 presents a number of differences between qualitative and quantitative research methods.

Table 5-3: Qualitative versus quantitative research

	Qualitative research	Quantitative research
Objective	Gaining a qualitative understanding of underlying reasons and motivations.	Quantifying data and generalising results from the sample to the population of interest.
Sample	Small number of non-representative cases.	Large number of representative cases.
Data collection	Unstructured.	Structured.
Data analysis	Non-statistical.	Statistical.
Outcome	Develop an initial understanding.	Recommend a final course of action.

Source: Adopted from Malhotra *et al.* (2013:171).

From Table 5-3, it is evident that qualitative research and quantitative research differ in several aspects. Qualitative research entails gathering, understanding and examining data by the observation of individuals (for example, what they say and what they do) (Burns & Bush, 2014:146). Furthermore, qualitative data collection methods are rather unstructured in nature, because of the flexible format being used that does not limit the length of the respondent's answers (Feinberg *et al.,* 2013:218). In-depth interviews, focus groups, case studies and projective techniques are the most generally used methods for collecting qualitative data (Berndt & Petzer, 2011:46; Hair *et al*., 2014:187).

In contrast, collecting numerical information from respondents is referred to as quantitative research (Hair *et al*., 2011:197). Quantitative research includes a large sample of representatives, where the results are generalised from the sample to the wider population of interest (Malhotra *et al.,* 2013:171). The main purpose of quantitative research is to provide the researcher with specific information to enable him or her to generalise this data to a particular population (Burns & Bush, 2014:146; Feinberg *et al.,* 2013:234). Subsequently, the results are statistically investigated, which can assist in forecasting the behaviour of a population (Feinberg *et al.,* 2013:234).

For the purpose of this study, a quantitative research approach was used, since the objective of the research is to obtain an understanding of the interrelationships between perceived value and relationship quality factors (trust and commitment) and their ultimate effect on positive word of-mouth intention. Therefore, hypothesised relationships among pre-determined constructs were investigated and quantitatively analysed to assist in validating the proposed model.

5.5.3 The data collection method

The selection of the appropriate data collection method is the next stage in the research process (Berndt & Petzer, 2011:26). Feinberg *et al.* (2013:236) note that quantitative research is divided into two data collection methods, namely observations and surveys.

Observational data is gathered by analytically recording observations of customers, situations or objects' actual behaviour patterns (Hair *et al*., 2011:186; Zikmund & Babin, 2013:191). Zikmund and Babin (2013:192) further indicate that two observation methods are most commonly used by researchers, namely visible and hidden observation. Visible observation occurs when respondents are aware that the researcher is observing their behavioural patterns. In contrast, hidden observation takes place when respondents are not aware that their behavioural patterns are observed by a researcher (Zikmund & Babin, 2013:192).

Additionally, surveys can be defined as gathering information from respondents by means of structured questionnaires, which may include respondents' behavioural intentions, actual behaviour, attitudes, awareness and demographic profile (Malhotra *et al.,* 2013:209). Surveys are the most generally used method of data collection. Compared to the observation method, surveys are more cost-effective well-organised in terms of data collection (Burns & Bush, 2014:127). The key focus of surveys is to gather information from respondents in order to achieve the research objectives and to clarify aspects within a population (Berndt & Petzer, 2011:132).

The survey method has several advantages, as explained in Table 5-4 below.

Table 5-4: Advantages of survey research methods

Advantages	Description
Provides standardisation	Questions are presented in the same order and phrased the same for all of the respondents. The response choices or scales are also the identical.
Offers subgroup differences to researchers	Subgroups can be developed by dividing respondents into groups, thus allowing the researchers to compare the subgroups when searching for vital differences amongst respondents.
Provides effective administration	Respondents can complete the questionnaire by reading and responding themselves. Interviewers can also read and record respondents' replies, which saves time and improves effectiveness.
Easier to analyse	Fast tallies, cross-tables and several statistical examinations are possible since computers process the data. The large sample sizes provide the opportunity for the abovementioned aspects.
Uncovering the "unseen" aspects	Surveys allows one to uncover the motives, conditions, patterns of events or mental deliberation of respondents.

Source: Adapted from Burns and Bush (2014:173) and Malhotra *et al.* (2013:210).

Table 5-5 below indicates the categories of survey data collection methods.

Table 5-5: Data collection and computer technology

	No computer	Computer
Interviewer	Person-administered surveys	Computer-assisted surveys
No interviewer	Self-administered surveys	Computer-administered surveys

Source: Adapted from Burns and Bush (2014:175).

These data collection methods as well as their advantages and disadvantages are summarised in Table 5-6 below.

Table 5-6: Advantages and disadvantages of different data collection methods

Data collection method	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
Person-administered surveys	"In a person-administered survey, an interviewer reads questions, either face-to-face or over the telephone, to the respondent and records his or her answers without the use of a computer."	"Person-administered surveys have four unique advantages: They offer feedback, rapport, quality control, and adaptability."	"The drawbacks to using human interviewers are human error, slowness, cost, and interview evaluation".
Computer-assisted surveys	"In a computer-assisted survey, the interviewer basically verbalizes the questions while relying to some degree on computer technology to facilitate the interview work." Here the computer accommodates the interview process by, for example, showing the questions to read, allowing storage of the answers, or, perhaps, even demonstrating some product feature with a video or pictures."	"Computer technology assists the interviewer by making the interview process more efficient and effective. Four advantages of computer-assisted surveys are evident: speed; relatively error-free interviews; use of pictures, videos, and graphics; and quick capture of data."	"Disadvantages of computer-assisted data collection are the requirement of technical skills and high setup costs."
Self-administered surveys	"In a self-administered survey, the respondent completes the survey on his or her own with no agent-human or computer-administering the interview."	"Self-administered surveys have three important advantages: reduced cost, respondent control, and no interviewer-evaluation apprehension."	"The disadvantages of self-administered surveys are respondent control, lack of monitoring, and high questionnaire requirements. If respondents misunderstand or do not follow directions, they may become frustrated and quit."

Table 5-6: Advantages and disadvantages of different data collection methods (cont.)

Data collection method	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
Computer-administered surveys	"In a computer-administered survey, a computer plays an integral role in posing the questions and recording respondents' answers. The prototypical computer-administered survey is an online survey in which respondents are directed to a website that houses the questionnaire."	"Breadth of user-friendly features, relatively inexpensive, reduction of interview evaluation concern in respondents."	"Requires computer-literate and internet-connected respondents."

Source: Adopted from Burns and Bush (2014:175-180).

For the purpose of this study, a self-administered survey method was chosen to collect the data. In addition to the advantages discussed above, this method is cost-effective and appropriate for collecting the data required for statistical analysis to validate the proposed theoretical model.

Self-administered surveys, however, have a number of limitations. Firstly, the regulation of the survey is in the hands of the respondents, and this means that the survey can be left uncompleted, or that the responses may not be truthful, or that respondents may not complete the surveys in the time allocated or may refuse to return the survey (Burns & Bush, 2014:179). In order to overcome these limitations, the researcher can remind respondents to complete the surveys and to remind them of the time allocation. One more limitation of self-administered surveys is that one cannot monitor respondents, which may result in respondents not understanding the phrasing of questions and becoming frustrated (Burns & Bush, 2014:179). To overcome this limitation, the survey must be designed with clear indications on how to complete the survey, and the questions must be clearly formulated. For the purpose of this study, the potential limitations of the self-administered survey method were noted and the strategic recommendations for preventing these problems were implemented.

The section below presents a number of criteria that were taken into account with the design of the self-administered questionnaire.

5.5.4 The questionnaire as a form of data collection

Questionnaires are defined as a structured method of data collection, designed to gather data from respondents through a series of written or verbal questions, which a respondent then answers (Malhotra *et al.,* 2013:907). The six main functions of a questionnaire noted by Burns and Bush (2014:214) are firstly to convert the research objectives into questions that respondents need to answer. Secondly, the questionnaire covers the information on which validity and reliability calculations are based. Furthermore, response categories as well as questions are standardised to confirm that respondents respond to equal stimuli. Questionnaires can also speed up the data analysis process. Questionnaires are seen as providing a lasting record of research. Lastly, respondents are likely to cooperate throughout the process if the wording of the questionnaire, question flow and appearance of the questionnaire keep their interest.

The section below provides a description of the process implemented to design the questionnaire.

5.5.4.1 Question response formats

Researchers may choose between unstructured (open-ended questions) and structured (fixed-alternative) questions (Berndt & Petzer, 2011:187; Malhotra *et al.,* 2013:340). Open-ended questions, which are also known as unstructured questions, entail that respondents answer questions in their own words (Malhotra *et al.,* 2013:340). Open-ended questions have the advantage of presenting in-depth insights into a specific aspect, since unprompted responses may be found that add the richness and depth of information (Berndt & Petzer, 2011:187). A limitation of open-ended questions noted by Feinberg *et al.* (2013:274-275), however, is that such research may be expensive and requires a great deal of time, since the coding and examination of open-ended questions requires professional skills.

Therefore, fixed-alternative questions are sometimes used instead. Fixed-alternative questions, also referred to as structured questions, provide respondents with a restricted number of answers, so that the researcher can obtain precise information (Berndt & Petzer, 2011:187). Malhotra *et al.* (2013:341) note that structured questions include multiple-choice questions, dichotomous questions or scale questions.

Multiple choice questions need respondents to choose an answer from pre-determined options with prearranged responses (Feinberg *et al.,* 2013:276). Such questions are easy and fast to administrate. Furthermore, multiple choice questions limit the answers of respondents to what "matters". A limitation of multiple-choice questions is that the design is expensive and time-consuming. An example of multiple-choice questions is when a respondent is asked to answer a specific question, for instance "What is your age?" which may include the options "younger than 18", "18-25", "26-35" and so on (Feinberg *et al.*, 2013:276; Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:341).

In turn, dichotomous questions provide respondents with only two response alternatives, for instance "yes" or "no". An advantage of dichotomous questions is that they are easy and fast to administrate. Additionally, the responses are binary (the questions have only two possible answers, for example “Domestic” or “Foreign”), which is easy to code, process, analyse and report. A limitation is that researchers may make the assumption that all respondents view an issue in dichotomous terms, but in reality, respondents have grades of feelings towards topics (Feinberg *et al.*, 2013:276; Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:341).

Lastly, scale questions refer to questions that are structured in such a way that the different response options measure respondents’ perceptions regarding the measured item (Craig & Douglas, 2005:267; McDaniel & Gates, 2010:299). Scaling techniques can be categorised into comparative and non-comparative scales. Comparative scales refer to a direct comparison of stimulus objects with one another, while non-comparative scales mean that “each stimulus object is scaled independently of the other objects in the stimulus set” (Malhotra *et al.,* 2013:286-287). Non-comparative techniques are frequently used in market research. These include continuous and itemised rating scales (Malhotra *et al.,* 2013:304), as summarised in Table 5-7.

Table 5-7: Basic non-comparative scales

Scale		Basic characteristics	Advantages	Disadvantages
Continuous rating scale		Place a mark on a continuous line.	Easy to construct.	Scoring can be difficult unless computerised.
Itemised rating scales	Likert scale	Degree of agreement on a “1” (strongly disagree) to “5” (strongly disagree) scale.	Easy to construct, administer and understand.	More time-consuming.
	Semantic differential	Seven-point scale with binary scale.	Versatile (i.e., appropriate to many situations).	Controversy as to whether there are intervals between the data.
	Staple scale	Unipolar scale, ten-point scale, “-5” to “+5”, without a neutral point (zero).	Construction is easy and administration is by telephone.	Confusing and difficult application.

Source: Adopted from Malhotra *et al.* (2013:304).

For the purpose of this study, the questionnaire mostly contained fixed-alternative questions, since this type of questions is easier for respondents to respond to and does not require much time from respondents (Berndt & Petzer, 2011:187). All three of the fixed-alternative formats, namely multiple-choice, dichotomous and scale questions were used in the questionnaire. Furthermore, the questionnaire has one open-ended question that required respondents to specify the year in which they were born. The questionnaire made use of five-point Likert-scale questions, since this type of question can measure respondents’ levels of agreement with particular statements regarding the identified constructs (perceived usefulness, continuance commitment, competence trust and positive word of mouth intention).

5.5.4.2 Levels of measurement

Measurement refers to a standardised process that includes assigning symbols or numbers to specific features of the object in question according to pre-specified rules (Malhotra *et al.,* 2013:249). Nominal, ordinal, interval and ratio scales are the four basic measurement levels (Burns & Bush, 2014:205). These are discussed in Table 5-8.

Table 5-8: Levels of measurement and their properties

Level of measurement	Description	Rules for assigning number	Statistics/Statistical tests
Nominal scales	Numbers are used as labels to categorise and recognise objects, events or customers (e.g. gender, social class and geographical area).	The objects are either identical or different.	Percentages, mode and chi-square.
Ordinal scales	A rank order is allocated to the responses of respondents. It also determines whether an object holds relatively more characteristics than other objects. For instance, a question can determine how a respondent rank a statement by means of certain categories (e.g. strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree).	The objects are greater or smaller.	Percentile, median, rank-order correlation/ Friedman and ANOVA.
Interval scales	Numbers are used to rate events or objects, with an equal distance between the numbers. For example, a question can measure a statement by means of a 10-point scale where 10 is equal to strongly agree and 1 is equal to strongly disagree.	The intervals between adjacent ranks are equal.	Mean, standard deviation, product moment correlation, t-tests, ANOVA, regression and factor analysis.
Ratio scales	Ratio scales include all of the properties of interval, nominal and ordinal scales, as well as the form of an absolute zero. Ratio scales refers to the identification, classification and ranking of objects, as well as the comparison of intervals or differences amongst objects (e.g. respondents' weight, age, income).	There is a meaningful zero, so comparison of absolute magnitudes is possible.	Geometric and harmonic mean, coefficient of variation.

Source: Adapted from Aaker *et al*. (2011:250), Babin and Zikmund (2016:249), Burns and Bush (2014:205), Feinberg *et al*. (2013:122), Hair *et al*. (2011:215), and Malhotra *et al*. (2013:283).

For the purpose of this study, the design of the questionnaire included nominal, ordinal and interval measurement scales. The nominal measurement scale was used to accomplish the objective of gathering descriptive statistics, for example determining a demographic profile of electronic banking customers in South Africa. The ordinal measurement scale was used to measure responses on a 5-point Likert scale, focusing on the identified constructs. The ordinal data was then processed into interval data to perform the analysis required in this study. Finally, an open-ended question determined the age of the respondents. Therefore, nominal data was obtained that was converted into ordinal data.

Furthermore, attention must be paid to the sequence of the questions in addition to the phrasing and layout of the questionnaire. The sections bellow provides recommendations that were implemented in the design of the questionnaire.

5.5.4.3 Structure and sequence of the questionnaire

If a questionnaire is constructed in such a manner that the respondents view the questions as simple, interesting and understandable, they are likely to complete the entire questionnaire (Zikmund & Babin, 2013:294). In other words, the sequence of the questionnaire may increase the respondents' contribution and cooperation when completing the questionnaire. The following basic guidelines are provided by Aaker *et al.* (2010:289) on the sequencing of a questionnaire:

- Start the questionnaire with a non-threatening question, which creates understanding and allows respondents to develop confidence in their ability to complete the questionnaire.
- A smooth and logical flow is required throughout the questionnaire. In other words, finalise questions about a specific topic and proceed to the next one.
- For most questionnaires, it is more effective to proceed from general, broad questions to more specific questions. In other words, one should follow the funnel approach throughout the questionnaire, which entails first asking general questions about a specific topic prior to the more specific questions about the topic.
- Sensitive and difficult questions such as income status, ability and the like ought to be asked at the end of the questionnaire.

5.5.4.4 Phrasing of the questionnaire

The phrasing of questions is a vital aspect of a questionnaire. The information that must be obtained should focus on a specific topic or a single issue (Berndt & Petzer, 2011:187). Burns and Bush (2014:216-222) identify four "Do's" and "Don'ts" for the phrasing of a questionnaire. These aspects are summarised in Table 5-9.

Table 5-9: Do's and Don'ts for phrasing of questionnaires

Four Do's for questionnaire phrasing	Four Don'ts for questionnaire phrasing
Questions must focus on a specific topic or a single issue at a time.	Questions should not lead a respondent towards a specific response. A leading question refers a question that is phrased in such a way that it provides a strong cue or expectation as to what a respondent should answer.
Pointless and redundant words in questions should be removed. In other words, questions should be brief.	Questions should not be "loaded" with words. A loaded question is defined as a question that has "buried in its wording events a sneaky presupposition, or it might make reference to universal belief or shared rules of behaviour".
A question should be grammatically simple. For example, a question should have only a single predicate and subject.	Questions should not be "double-barrelled" in nature. In other words, a question should not ask two different question in one question.
The focus of questions should be crystal clear. In other words, avoid phrasing questions with words that are vague or that can be misinterpreted.	The words in a question should not put undue emphasis on a specific characteristic of the topic.

Source: Adopted from Burns and Bush (2014:216-222).

5.5.4.5 Layout of the questionnaire

The questionnaire layout must be done professionally and neatly (Berndt & Petzer, 2011:196), because a well laid-out questionnaire encourages respondents to be thorough and to complete in their answers, which is necessary for the researcher to gather high-quality data (Burns & Bush, 2014:222). For instance, the questionnaire sections must not run over multiple pages; if possible, one should avoid scales longer than five items; the flow must be logical and phrasing must be clear (Berndt & Petzer, 2011:196; Burns & Bush, 2014:222-223).

5.5.4.6 Pre-testing

A pre-test means conducting a dry-run of the questionnaire on a small, representative sample of the respondents to recognise faults in the questionnaire prior to the final distribution of the questionnaires (Burns & Bush, 2014:229). As a part of the research design process, the quantitative questionnaire in this study was therefore validated by means of a pre-test, and content validity was also assessed. Content validity refers to the suitability of the measurement scales according to the subjective judgement of specialists in the relevant field (Feinberg *et al.,* 2013:666). Thirty respondents from the population profile in addition to experts in the field of relationship marketing and consumer behaviour were requested to complete the questionnaire (comp. Burns & Bush, 2014:229; Malhotra *et al.,* 2013:351). Comments and recommendations were considered and changes were made before the final questionnaire was distributed.

5.5.4.7 Overview of final questionnaire

The information collected for this study formed part of a larger project on consumer helping behaviour. One screening question and three sections of the overall questionnaire were relevant to this study. The questionnaire began with a preface that briefly explained the study to respondents and that provided reassurance that their responses would be treated with confidentiality. Thereafter, two screenings questions were asked, of which only the first applied to this study. The first screening question ensured that respondents were limited to individuals who were at the time making use of at least one form of electronic banking services and who were therefore in a position to share their experiences about electronic banking, so that only the data obtained from respondents who were making use of at least one form of electronic banking services was further examined in this study.

The three sections of the questionnaire that applied to this study had the following research aims:

- **First section:** The aim of the first section was to collect information on the independent variables of this study. Respondents were presented with a list of statements and requested to indicate the degree to which they agreed with each statement on a five-point unlabelled Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree). Previously validated measurement scales relating to perceived usefulness, competence trust and continuance commitment were adapted for the purpose of this study.

- **Second section:** The aim of the second section was to collect information on the dependent variable of this study. The respondents were again presented with a list of statements and were requested to indicate the degree to which they agreed with each statement on a five-point unlabelled Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree). A previously validated measurement scale relating to word of mouth intention was adapted for the purpose of this study.

- **Third section:** The aim of the third section relevant to this study was to obtain insight into the demographic profiles of the respondents and focused on collecting information regarding the respondents' gender and age.

The statements used for the purpose of the study are summarised in Table 5-10. All the statements were obtained and adapted from prior research studies. The related levels of measurement and response formats that were used for each statement are specified in Table 5-10. Where relevant, the research objectives and findings related to hypotheses are highlighted in the table.

Table 5-10: Summary of questions and statements in relation to sources used, response format, measurement level, secondary objectives and research hypotheses

Question number & statement	Source	Response format	Level of measurement	Secondary objective	Research hypothesis
Screening question					
Which of the following types of e-banking services do you use to carry out banking transactions? (for example, paying bills.) *(More than one option may be selected.)*	Self-generated	Multiple-choice	Nominal	–	–
Section 1					
Perceived usefulness (PU)					
PU1: Using e-banking services will improve my performance in managing my personal life.	Hsiao *et al.* (2015)	Multi-item scale – unlabelled Likert-type scale	Interval	3 & 7	H_1, H_5, H_6
PU2: Using e-banking services will increase my productivity in managing my personal life.					
PU3: Using e-banking services will enhance my effectiveness in managing my personal life.					
Continuance commitment (CC)					
CC1: My time management dictates that I make use of e-banking services to carry out my banking transactions.	Johnson (2007)	Multi-item scale – unlabelled Likert-type scale.	Interval	5 & 7	H_3, H_4, H_5, H_6, H_7
CC2: My business transactions would require considerably more time and effort, if I were to stop using e-banking services.					
CC3: For the sake of being able to function more efficiently, I feel motivated to use e-banking services.					
CC4: When I consider the convenience of e-banking services, it makes sense for me to use it.					

Table 5-10: Summary of questions and statements in relation to sources used, response format, measurement level, secondary objectives and research hypotheses (cont.)

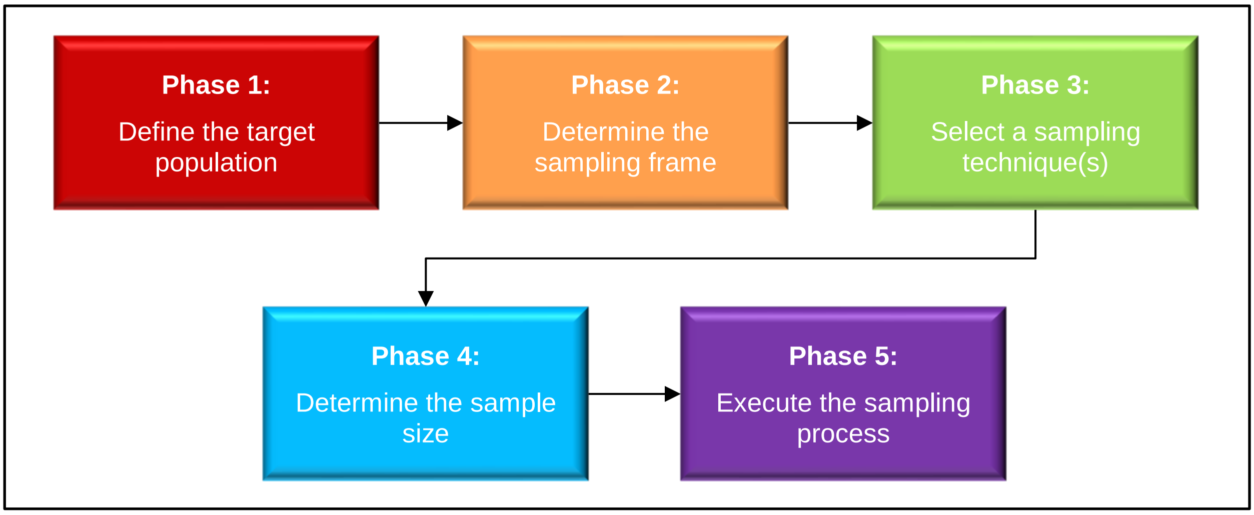
Question number & statement	Source	Response format	Level of measurement	Secondary objective	Research hypothesis
Competence trust (CT)					
CT1: I can rely on e-banking technology to execute my transactions reliably.	Johnson (2007)	Multi-item scale – unlabelled Likert-type scale	Interval	4 & 7	H_2, H_4, H_7
CT2: Given the state of existing e-banking technology, I believe that technology related errors are quite rare.					
CT3: In my opinion the e-banking technology I use is very reliable.					
Section 2					
Positive word of mouth communication as a form of behavioural intention (PWOMI)					
PWOMI1: If asked, I would say positive things about e-banking services to other people.	Yi and Gong (2013)	Multi-item scale – unlabelled Likert-type scale	Interval	6 & 7	H_1, H_2, H_3, H_6, H_7
PWOMI2: If asked, I would recommend e-banking services to other people.					
PWOMI3: If asked, I would encourage other people to use e-banking services.					
Section 3					
Demographic profile section (DP)					
DP1: What is your gender?	Self-generated	Dichotomous	Nominal	2	–
DP2: In which year were you born?		Open-ended	Nominal and ordinal		

5.6 STAGE 4: DESIGN THE SAMPLE AND COLLECT THE DATA

5.6.1 The sampling design process

Burns and Bush (2014:239) refer to a sample as a subsection of a larger population that represents the entire group. Figure 5-2 demonstrates the phases in the sampling design process.

Figure 5-2: The sampling design process



Source: Adopted from Malhotra *et al.* (2013:368).

5.6.1.1 Phase 1: Define the target population

A target population refers to the group of elements or objects that hold the vital data from which the researchers can determine findings and make conclusions (Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:367). It is vital that the target population is carefully chosen and defined for a research study – with regard to elements, sampling units, extent and time (Berndt & Petzer, 2011:171).

The target population of this study comprised male and female customers of eighteen years or older who are residing in Pretoria, Potchefstroom, Parys, Heilbron and Lichtenburg (urban and semi-urban areas in South Africa) (extent), who are currently (time) making use of at least one form of electronic banking services (element and sample unit).

5.6.1.2 Phase 2: Determine the sampling frame

Feinberg *et al.* (2013:302) indicate that a sampling frame is a list that includes all the obtainable sample units from which researchers can choose. In other words, a sampling frame is a comprehensive record of sample units in the population (Burns & Bush, 2014:240). For the purpose of this study, a sampling frame could not be attained, given the Protection of Personal Information (POPI) Act 4 of 2013, which does not permit retail banks in South Africa to release the personal information of their customers. Therefore, it was not possible to get access to a sample frame of clients who use electronic banking services at retail banks in South Africa.

5.6.1.3 Phase 3: Select a sampling technique(s)

The selection of a sampling technique is a vital part of a research study. Hair *et al*. (2011:167) state that traditional sampling methods can be classified into two categories, namely probability sampling and non-probability sampling techniques.

Burns and Bush (2014:242) and Hair *et al*. (2011:167) define probability sampling as a sampling technique where the sampling elements are chosen randomly; in other words, every member of the population has a recognised chance (probability) of being chosen (Burns & Bush, 2014:242; Hair *et al*., 2011:167). Alternatively, non-probability sampling is grounded on some part of the judgement of the researchers involved in the study, and there is no known chance (probability) for all the members of a population to be selected (Burns & Bush, 2014:242; Feinberg *et al.,* 2013:304). Table 5-11 portrays the various probability and non-probability sampling techniques.

Table 5-11: Probability and non-probability sampling techniques

Probability sampling	
Simple random sampling	"The researcher uses random numbers from a computer, random digit dialling, or some other random selection procedure that guarantees each member of the population in the sample frame has an identical chance of being selected into the sample."
Systematic sampling	"Using a sample frame that lists members of the population, the researcher selects a random starting point for the first sample member. A constant skip interval, calculated by dividing the number of population members in the sample frame by the sample size, is then used to select every other sample member from the sample frame. A skip interval must be used so that the entire list is covered, regardless of the starting point. This procedure accomplishes the same end as simple random sampling, and it is more efficient."
Cluster sampling	"The sample frame is divided into groups called clusters, each of which must be considered to be similar to the others. The researcher can then randomly select a few clusters and perform a census of each one (one stage). Alternatively, the researcher can randomly select more clusters and take samples from each one (two stage). This method is desirable when highly similar clusters can be easily identified, such as subdivisions spread across a wide geographic area."
Stratified sampling	"If the population is believed to have a skewed distribution for one or more of its distinguishing factors (e.g. income or product usage), the researcher identifies subpopulations in the sample frame called strata. A simple random sample is then taken of each stratum. Weighting procedures may be applied to estimate population values, such as the mean. This approach is better suited than other probability sampling methods for populations that are not distributed in a bell-shaped pattern (i.e. skewed)."

Table 5-11: Probability and non-probability sampling techniques (cont.)

Non-probability sampling	
Convenience sampling	"The researcher or interviewer uses a high-traffic location, such as a busy pedestrian area or a shopping mall as the sample frame from which to intercept potential respondents. Sample frame error occurs in the form of members of the population who are infrequent or nonusers of that location. Other errors may result from the arbitrary way the interviewer selects respondents."
Judgement sampling / Purposive sampling	"The researcher uses his or her judgment or that of some other knowledgeable person to identify who will be in the sample. Subjectivity and convenience enter in here; certain members of the population will have a smaller chance of selection than will others."
Referral sampling	"Respondents are asked for the names or identities of others like themselves who might qualify to take part in the survey. Members of the population who are less well known or disliked or whose opinions conflict with the selected respondents have a low probability of being selected."
Quota sampling	"The researcher identifies quota characteristics, such as demographic or product use factors, and uses these to set up quotas for each class of respondent. The sizes of the quotas are determined by the researcher's belief about the relative size of each class of respondent in the population. Often, quota sampling is used as a means of ensuring that convenience samples will have the desired proportion of different respondent classes."

Source: Adopted from Burns and Bush (2014:243, 255).

For the purpose of this study, a non-probability, purposive (judgement) sampling was used to select sampling units, because a sampling frame was not available and all possible respondents did not have a known, non-zero change of being selected. Furthermore, the sampling units intentionally consisted of selected cities and towns in South Africa representing urban and semi-urban areas, to ensure that responses were obtained from respondents living in both well-developed and less developed regions of the country (refer to section 1.8.2.5 and Table 1-11). A non-probability sampling method, being a combination of convenience and quota sampling, was also selected. In this study, the sampling elements were identified as males and females, eighteen years and older, residing in the selected urban and semi-urban areas in South Africa and who are making use of at least one form of electronic banking services. The sampling elements were approached on a convenience basis and the researcher aimed to ensure that an equal number of male and female respondents from both urban and semi-urban areas were represented.

5.6.1.4 Phase 4: Determine the sample size

When determining a sample size for a study, several elements must be taken in consideration, namely the number of variables, the nature of the analyses, the nature of the research, the sample size of prior studies, as well as completion and incident rates in addition to resource constraints

(Malhotra *et al.,* 2013:370). In the context of this study, as indicated in Chapter 1 (Table 1-12), 500 participants were the proposed sample size. Kumar (2011:180) notes that findings based on larger samples have greater generalisability than those based on small sample sizes. In addition, the larger the sample size, the more accurate the conclusions will be. Four constructs were examined in this study, and to avoid complications such as low communalities or absent values, the choice was made to aim for 500 participants (Hair *et al.,* 2010).

5.6.1.5 Phase 5: Execute the sampling process

The sampling process concludes with a precise specification of how the sampling design will be applied with regard to the target population, sampling frame, sampling unit, sampling technique as well as the sample size (Malhotra *et al.*, 2013:370). Table 5-12 recaps the sample plan selected for the purpose of this study.

Table 5-12: Sample plan of this study

Sampling	Description
Target population	Males and females, eighteen years and older, residing in selected cities and towns in urban and semi-urban areas in South Africa and who are making use of at least one form of electronic banking services.
Sampling frame	There is no sample frame available, owing to the restrictions of the Protection of Personal Information Act 4 of 2013 that does not allow banks in South Africa to disclose the personal information of their clients.
Sampling technique	Non-probability, purposive (judgement) sampling was used to select sampling units. Non-probability, convenience sampling and quota sampling was used to select sampling elements.
Sampling unit	Pretoria was selected as the sampling unit representing an urban area. Potchefstroom, Parys, Heilbron and Licthenburg were selected as the sampling units representing semi-urban areas.
Sampling element	Males and females, eighteen years and older residing in selected cities and towns in urban and semi-urban areas in South Africa who were making use of at least one form of electronic banking services at the time.
Sample size	500 respondents (250 respondents from the urban area [Pretoria] and 250 respondents from the semi-urban areas together [Potchefstroom, Parys, Heilbron and Licthenburg]). The 250 sampling elements selected from the urban area comprised 125 males and 125 females. Similarly, the 250 respondents collected from the towns in the semi-urban areas collectively comprised 125 males and 125 females.
Extent	Urban and semi-urban areas in South Africa.

5.6.2 Collecting the data

Data collection refers to the process of obtaining or gathering of information from respondents. There are several collection techniques that need diverse methods of data collection (Zikmund & Babin, 2013:64). Thus, if the research requires fieldwork, it is vital that fieldworkers are carefully chosen, qualified and supervised during the data collection process (Malhotra *et al.,* 2013:429).

As mentioned in the previous section, a convenience sampling approach was followed, and field workers were trained to approach potential respondents in public places (in the selected urban and semi-urban areas) to take part in the study. Respondents were selected on a convenience basis, while keeping in mind the preferred gender quotas. Potential respondents were approached and were politely asked if they would be willing to contribute to the study. Upon agreement, field workers requested respondents to complete the self-administered questionnaire. If a possible respondent was not interested, the next available respondent who was part of the target population was approached and invited to participate part in the study. The research data was collected during May and June 2016.

5.7 STAGE 5: ANALYSE AND INTERPRET THE DATA

Analysing and interpreting the information is the following stage of the research process. Data analysis involves calculating, summarising and reasoning of research data to make sense of the information that has been obtained (Zikmund & Babin, 2013:64). The data that was gathered from questionnaires must be prepared prior to any data analysis (Hair *et al.,* 2011:295). Several authors (Aaker *et al.,* 2011:381; Hair *et al.,* 2011:295; Malhotra *et al.,* 2013:447) indicate that the preliminary data preparation process includes editing, coding, transcribing and cleaning data. Table 5-13 provides a brief description of the preliminary data preparation process.

Table 5-13: Preliminary data preparation process elements

Element	Description
Editing	Examining the questionnaires to identify errors, uncertainties and mistakes that may have occurred in responses, for example questions that have not been completed or missing sections or pages.
Coding	Assigning a code, typically a number, to all the probable responses for every question in the questionnaire.
Transcribing	Capturing the coded data from the questionnaire into a statistical program, in this instance SPSS version 24 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences).
Data cleaning	Examining the captured data to identify inconsistencies and absent responses.

Source: Adapted from Hair *et al.* (2010:246-296), Malhotra *et al.* (2013:453-448) and Zikmund and Babin (2013:64).

For this study, data was scrutinised for validity, completeness as well as accuracy. The data was coded and the Statistical Consultation Service of the North-West University of Potchefstroom (StatCS) was responsible for transmitting the data into a statistical computer program named SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), version 24. The data editing and cleaning process as described in Table 5-13 was considered and questionnaires with missing information were discarded. The remaining part of this section provides the data analysis strategy used in this study.

5.7.1 Reporting the descriptive and inferential statistics

Descriptive analysis refers to summarising the basics findings from the study's sample (Burns & Bush, 2014:317). Several descriptive statistical techniques can be used to analyse data gathered from the questionnaire (Hair *et al*., 2011:310). Table 5-14 presents the descriptive analysis techniques used in this study.

Table 5-14: Descriptive statistical techniques used in this study

Technique	Definition	Application of techniques
Frequency	Frequency indicates the number of times a specific value or a variable happens (Zikmund & Babin, 2012:337).	Table 6-2
Percentage	Percentage is the number of respondents who responded to a question in the same way, generally multiplied by 100 (Aaker *et al.,* 2011:387).	Table 6-1 Table 6-2
Mean	The mean (also known as the average) is the mathematic average of a set of numbers (Burns & Bush, 2014:320).	Table 6-3 Table 6-4 Table 6-5 Table 6-6 Table 6-11
Standard deviation	Burns and Bush (2014:321) define standard deviation as the indication of "the degree of variation in a way that can be translated into bell-shaped curve distribution". "The standard deviation is a measure that summarises the amount by which every value within a dataset varies from the mean" (Student Learning Development, 2009:3).	Table 6-3 Table 6-4 Table 6-5 Table 6-6

For this study, the means and standard deviation were measured for every statement measuring the identified constructs (perceived usefulness, competence trust, continuance commitment and positive word of mouth intention). Moreover, the frequencies and percentages were calculated for the demographic and patronage profile of the respondents who participated in the study and to report on the sample response rate.

5.7.2 Assessing reliability and validity

Reliable and valid measurement scales are regard as salient (Burns & Bush, 2014:214).

5.7.2.1 Reliability

Reliability entails that the measurement scale must be internally dependable (Zikmund & Babin, 2013:257). Numerous scholars indicate that three approaches can be conducted to measure reliability (Feinberg *et al.,* 2013:132; Hair *et al.,* 2011:233; Malhotra *et al.,* 2013:317-318; Zikmund & Babin, 2013:257). These three approaches are summarised in Table 5-15.

Table 5-15: Approaches to measure reliability

Approach	Description
Test-retest reliability	Test-retest reliability is determined through the constant measurement of the similar group or respondents by the means of the same measurement device and identical circumstances (Hair *et al*., 2011:234).
Alternative-forms reliability	Alternative-forms reliability refers to instances when identical respondents are measured at two different time intervals by means of two corresponding sets of scales (Malhotra *et al.,* 2013:317).
Internal consistency reliability	Internal consistency reliability is conducted to calculate the consistency of results attained from various items within a summated scale (Malhotra *et al.,* 2013:318). Every item in the scale measures some aspect of the construct which is also measured by the scale as a whole (Hair *et al.,* 2011:235). Split-half and the coefficient alpha are the two types of internal consistency reliability (Hair *et al.,* 2011:235). The split-half technique is determined when the researcher divides the group of scale items into equal groups and correlated both sets of scale items (Hair *et al.,* 2011:235). A scale is regarded as reliable when the two equal groups correlate highly (Zikmund & Babin, 2013:257). The Cronbach's alpha summarises the average of all of the probable coefficients from all the possible groupings of split halves (Hair *et al.,* 2011:235).

For this study, the reliability of the central constructs (perceived usefulness, competence trust, continuance commitment and positive word of mouth intention) was determined by calculating their Cronbach's alpha values. The scales were regarded as reliable if the Cronbach's alpha value of the construct was 0.70 or larger (Zikmund & Babin, 2013:257).

5.7.2.2 Validity

Validity is the extent to which a scale score essentially imitates the features that is measured (Babin & Zikmund, 2016:281). In other words, validity is seen as the accuracy of a measurement

(Burns & Bush, 2014:214). Several scholars (Malhotra *et al.,* 2013:318-319; Zikmund & Babin, 2013:258-259) note that there are three basic types of validity, as summarised in Table 5-16.

Table 5-16: Basic types of validity

Approach	Description
Content validity / face validity	This is a systematic but subjective calculation of a scale's ability to measure what is indented to be measured (Hair *et al*., 2011:238). Furthermore, content validity entails experts' subjective judgements regarding the appropriateness of the measurement (Feinberg *et al.,* 2013:131). Content validity reflects how well the content of a scale portrays the task that is being measured (Malhotra *et al.,* 2013:318).
Criterion validity	This entails whether the measurement scale functioned as anticipated in relation to other variables which were chosen as vital criteria (Malhotra *et al.,* 2013:318). Two different forms of criterion validity exist, namely concurrent and predictive validity (Hair *et al*., 2011:240). Concurrent validity is measured when there are two measurements that are evaluated at the same time, while predictive validity refers to when a researcher gathers data on the scale at a specific time and data on the criterion variables at a future time (Malhotra *et al.,* 2013:319).
Construct validity	Construct validity reports those construct or characteristics that a scale measures (Malhotra *et al.,* 2013:319). Discriminant validity and convergent validity are determined to measure construct validity (Hair *et al.,* 2011:239).

Content and construct validity were measured in this study. Regarding content validity, a questionnaire was developed and previously validated measurement scales were adapted for the purpose of this study, as noted above. Careful attention was paid to ensure that the measurement scales selected were aligned to the literature review, as presented in Chapters 2 and 3. As noted in section 5.5.4.6, the questionnaire was also pre-tested among respondents with characteristics similar to the population of the study as well as a panel of subject experts. The central constructs of this study (perceived usefulness, competence trust, continuance commitment and positive word of mouth intention) were further validated by performing confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The following section discusses the confirmatory factor analysis approach that was followed.

5.7.2.3 Confirmatory factor analysis

Malhotra *et al.* (2013:461) note that the key purpose of multivariate techniques is to examine two or more measurement elements at the same time to determine the relationship amongst those elements. There are two types of multivariate techniques, namely interdependence or dependence techniques (Hair *et al.,* 2011:359). Interdependence methods are defined as "*any statistical method whose goal is to interrelate a group of variables, without attempting to use them to make predictions about another set of variables*", while a dependence method refers to *"any* *statistical technique that attempts to relate one set of values (the dependent variables) to another set of values (the intendent variables)*" (Hair *et al.,* 2011:359).

A multivariate interdependence technique was used in this study. Establishing the interrelationships amongst a group of variables and determining the underlying structure is better known as a factor analysis (Feinberg *et al.,* 2013:480). Factor analysis can be either confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) or exploratory factor analysis (EFA) (Malhotra *et al.,* 2013:622-623). A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted in this study. A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is defined as "*a version of factor analysis in which specific hypotheses about structure and relations between the latent variables that underlie the data are tested*" (Field, 2005:726). This study made use of the MPlus statistical program version 7.4, to conduct the CFA analysis.

In order to determine the fit-of-the-measurement model, various statistical tests are used in a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Table 5-17 presents the fit indices that were used in this study.

Table 5-17: List of fit indices

Fit index & Definition	Recommended cut-off value
Relative Chi-square ratio (x2/df) (Chi square/degrees of freedom) The chi-square test's main function is to assess the complete model fit, which regulates whether the model fits well in general and is not associated with a baseline model (McDonald & Ho, 2002:72).	< 5.00 (Wheaton *et al.*, 1977:99)
RMSEA (Root Mean Squared Approximation of Error) RMSEA is the fit index that indicates the general amount of misfit per degree of freedom (Foster *et al*., 2006:109).	< 0.05 = good fit < 0.08 = acceptable fit < 0.10 = average fit (Hoe, 2008:78; McDonald & Ho, 2002:72)
CFI (Comparative Fit Index) CFI, better known as the null-model, which indicates the relative non-centrality amongst the hypothesised model and the baseline model of modified independence, where error variances are solely calculated (Bagozzi & Yi, 2012:28).	> 0.90 (Hoe, 2008:78; Hu & Bentler, 1999:27)
TLI (Tucker-Lewis Index) TLI serves as an index to compare the proposed null model and the null models that were adjusted for degrees of freedom (Cullinane, 2011:484).	> 0.90 (Bentler & Bonnet, 1980)

5.7.2.4 Assessment of convergent validity

During the assessment of convergent validity, construct validity, average variances extracted and factor loadings are considered. Convergent validity is "*the extent to which a construct is positively correlated with the other measures of the same construct*" (Hair *et al.,* 2014:618-619).

The factor loadings in the measurement models should be above the suggested threshold of 0.50 or equal to 0.50 (Hair *et al*., 2010:612). The average variance extracted value for each construct should also be larger than 0.50 (Hair *et al*., 2014:618). The average variance extracted (AVE) percentages was determined as follows:

$$AVE = \frac{\Sigma^{n}\mathrm{i} = 2\dot{\lambda}^{2}\mathrm{i}}{n}$$

Where:

λ = standard factor loading

n = the number of items

The construct reliability value of all of the latent variables, as recommended by Hair *et al.* (2010:46) should be 0.70 or larger, which indicates strong internal convergence. The construct reliability can be determined as follows:

$$CR = \frac{(\Sigma_{i=1}^{n}\lambda_i)^2}{\left(\Sigma_{i=1}^{n}\lambda_i\right)^2 + \left(\Sigma_{i=1}^{n}\delta_i\right)}$$

Where:

λ = standard factor loading

n = the number of items

δ = error variance of an item

5.7.2.5 Assessment of discriminant validity

The assessment of discriminant validity indicates whether a distinction exists between the various constructs in the measurement model (Hair *et al*., 2011:239; Malhotra *et al.,* 2013:319). Three steps are required to determine discriminant validity. Firstly, one needs to identify a construct from experience and theory, which is regarded as different from the concept that is being validated. Thereafter, one should identify the way in which the two scales represent the constructs likely to be provided. It is expected that the scores on the scales will be uncorrelated. Lastly, one gathers the scores of the two scales and calculates the correlation. If the correlation between any two constructs is lower than the square root of the AVE values of the two respective constructs, evidence is provided of discriminant validity between the two constructs (Hair *et al*., 2011:238). These steps were applied in the verification of discriminant validity.

5.7.3 Structural equation modelling (SEM)

SEM refers to a multivariate statistical model which establishes and measures a number of simultaneous relationships that involve several dependent and explanatory variables that further also allows for inserting latent variables (Mazzocchi, 2011:385). In other words, to examine the theoretical relationships prosed and to test the measurement properties by single confirmatory, the multivariate technique is known as structural equation modelling (SEM) (Malhotra *et al.,* 2013:710). Furthermore, the structural equation model (SEM) evaluates every independent variable's importance within the complete model and identifies the model's total fit with the gathered data, by way of multiple regression and factor analytic methods (Pallant, 2010:105).

According to Bowen and Guo (2011:17), the structural equation model allows one to develop a correlation matrix once a theoretical model has been established that involves the hypothesised relationship amongst variables. To estimate the relations amongst the variables in the model, a maximum likelihood estimation process is performed (Blunch, 2013:72). Then, a comparison amongst the proposed theoretical model and the observed data (the correlation matrix) is conducted. The structural equation model (SEM) then analyses the interrelationships amongst the predicted variables in addition to the observed variables that match (Meyers *et al*., 2006:614). For this study, the structural equation model SEM was completed with the assistance of the MPlus statistical program version 7.4.

The goodness-of-fit results demonstrate the validity of the measurement model. For this study, a mixture of fit measures was conducted. As suggested by Hair *et al*. (2014:570-580, 587), the same model fit criteria apply when conducting a CFA and SEM analysis (as shown in Table 6-14).

The next stage in the SEM analysis is to conduct a path analysis. Standardised regression weights (otherwise known as standardised path coefficients) with a value 0.10 have a small effect; a medium effect is a value around 0.30; and lastly, a large effect entails values above 0.50 (Hair *et al.,* 2014:617). At a significance level of 0.05 (p-value < 0.05), statistical significance can be attained (Blunch, 2013:275). **For the purpose of this study,** a structural equation model was conducted with the purpose of assessing the interrelationship of the constructs portrayed in the proposed theoretical model.

5.8 STAGE 6: PREPARE THE RESEARCH REPORT AND FORMULATE CONCLUSIONS

The final stage of the research process entails the preparation and presentation of the final research report (Berndt & Petzer, 2011:25). In the next chapter, the key results of this study are presented, which is followed by a closing chapter (Chapter 7) that offers the recommendations and conclusions of this study.

5.9 SUMMARY

This chapter described the research methodology used in this study and provided insight into the different stages of the marketing research process. The next chapter reports the key results obtained from the field study.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 5 provided an overview of the research methodology followed in this study. This chapter presents and discusses the findings obtained from the field survey. The response realisation rate is reported first, which is followed by an overview of the demographic and patronage profiles of the respondents who completed the survey. Next, the descriptive results for all sections of the questionnaire are reported. Subsequent to this, a discussion of the reliability and validity of the measurement scales used follows, after which the results of the structural equation model (SEM) analysis are presented. The chapter ends with an overall conclusion of the hypotheses that were formulated in Chapter 1.

6.2 RESPONSE REALISATION RATE

As noted in Chapter 5 (section 5.6.1.3), a convenience sampling approach was followed, and field workers were trained to approach potential respondents in public places (in the selected urban and semi-urban areas) to participate in the study. The respondents were chosen on a convenience basis, while keeping in mind the proposed gender quotas. Potential respondents were approached and were politely asked if they would be willing to participate in the study. Upon agreement, the respondent was asked to complete the self-administered questionnaire. If a possible respondent was not interested, the next available respondent representing the target population was approached and invited to participate.

The aim was to survey 500 respondents (250 respondents from the urban area (Pretoria) and 250 respondents from the semi-urban areas in total (Potchefstroom, Parys, Heilbron and Licthenburg). Table 6-1 provides a summary of the number of respondents and the final realisation rate that was attained.

Table 6-1: Response realisation rate

Minimum sample size required	500
Number of completed questionnaires	516
Number of questionnaires discarded due to many incomplete responses	5
Response rate (511/500 x 100)	102.2%

As seen in Table 6-1, a total of 516 respondents completed the questionnaire, which were more than the initial 500 anticipated. A total of 255 questionnaires were obtained from the urban area, while 261 questionnaires were obtained from the semi-urban areas. From the 516 completed questionnaires, only five were discarded due to various incomplete responses, resulting in a response rate of 102.2%. (Two questionnaires from the urban area sample and three questionnaires from the semi-urban area sample were discarded.)

The final sample of 511 completed questionnaires falls within the minimum sample size range for conducting an analysis on the identified constructs (Hair *et al.,* 2014:170,187). The sections below offer a summary of the results that were obtained from the completed questionnaires.

6.3 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE AND PATRONAGE HABITS

A demographic and patronage habits profile was compiled to gain insight into the respondents who participated in the study. Table 6-2 represents the counts (n) and percentages (%) (n/511) obtained for the demographic and patronage habits variables that were measured in this study.

Table 6-2: Demographic profile and patronage habits

Demographic variables	Count (n)	Percentages (%)
Gender		
Male	228	45.1%
Female	278	54.9%
(Missing value)	5	
Age		
18-24	149	29.5%
25-34	174	34.5%
35-44	63	12.5%
45-54	65	12.9%
55-64	45	8.9%
65 and older	9	1.8%
(Missing value)	6	

Table 6-2: Demographic profile and patronage habits (cont.)

Demographic variables	Count (n)	Percentages (%)
Electronic banking services*		
Telephone banking	61	11.9%
(Missing value)	450	88.1%
Internet banking (using a computer)	306	59.9%
(Missing value)	205	40.1%
Internet banking (using a mobile banking app)	233	45.6%
(Missing value)	278	54.4%
Cell phone banking	234	45.8%
(Missing value)	277	54.2%

*Respondents were allowed to select more than one option from the list provided.

Table 6-2 indicates that although it was not possible to survey an equal number of male and female respondents, both genders are well represented in the database – a total of 45.1% male respondents and 54.9% females participated in this study. In the urban area, 44% of the respondents are males and 56% females. Similarly, in the semi-urban areas more females (55%) than males (45%) participated in the study.

All respondents who participated in the survey are older than 18 years. Table 6-2 further shows that almost two thirds (64%) of respondents who completed the questionnaire were younger than 35 years, thus indicating that a relatively young sample participated in the survey. Overall, answers obtained from the screening question indicated that all respondents who participated in the survey used at least one form of electronic banking service. Therefore, respondents were able to relate to their own experiences when answering the questionnaire. From Table 6-2 it is further evident that, overall, Internet banking using a computer was the most popular form of electronic banking with 59.5% responses (47% males and 53% females), followed by cell phone banking (45.8%) (47% males and 53% females), Internet banking services (using a mobile banking app) (45.6%) (47% males and 53% females), and telephone banking (11.9%) (54% males and 46% females). The respondents were allowed to select more than one option from the list provided. It further emerged that telephone banking services were more popular among males than females, while the remaining electronic banking options were more popular amongst female respondents than male ones.

This study does not report on the number of respondents per type of bank, employment status or race. In the preliminary fieldwork it became evident that respondents were reluctant to participate in banking surveys due to fear of fraudulent interactions, particularly since the study assessed electronic banking behaviour. Therefore, the researcher was limited to the variables listed in Table 6-2 to assess the demographic and patronage habits of the respondents. The information obtained, however, was useful in verifying that only respondents forming part of this study's target population would participate part in the survey.

The following main findings can be deduced regarding respondents' demographic and patronage habit profiles.

Main finding 1: Both genders were well represented in the database, although slightly more females (54.9%) than males (45.1%) participated in the survey.

Main finding 2: Two thirds (64%) of respondents who completed the questionnaire are younger than 35 years, thereby indicating that a relatively young sample participated in the survey.

Main finding 3: Since all respondents were using at least one form of electronic banking services, they were able to draw on their own experiences in answering the questionnaire.

Main finding 4: Overall, Internet banking using a computer was the most popular form of electronic banking with 59.5% responses (47% males and 53% females).

Main finding 5: Telephone banking services were more popular amongst males than females, while the remaining electronic banking options were more popular amongst female respondents than male respondents.

Main finding 6: The sample surveyed consisted of male and female respondents, eighteen years and older, residing in selected cities and towns in urban and semi-urban areas in South Africa and who were making use of at least one form of electronic banking services.

6.4 PERCEIVED USEFULNESS, RELATIONSHIP QUALITY AND BEHAVIOURAL INTENTION

The purpose of the first two sections of the questionnaire was to obtain information from respondents concerning perceived usefulness, relationship quality dimensions (competence trust and continuance commitment) and positive word of mouth communication as a form of behavioural intention. The descriptive statistics is reported in the sections that follow.

6.4.1 Perceived usefulness

The objective of the perceived usefulness measurement scale was to assess the extent to which bank customers' perceived electronic banking services for which they are registered as useful. Altogether, three statements were adapted from prior studies regarding perceived usefulness. Respondents had to specify their level of agreement on a five-point unlabelled Likert scale where 1 represents "strongly disagree" and "5 represents "strongly agree". Table 6-3 presents the means and standard deviations (SD) for each item, measuring perceived usefulness.

Table 6-3: Respondents' levels of perceived usefulness

Statement	Mean	SD
PU1: Using e-banking services will improve my performance in managing my personal life.	4.03	0.92
PU2: Using e-banking services will increase my productivity in managing my personal life.	4.04	0.89
PU3: Using e-banking services will enhance my effectiveness in managing my personal life.	4.04	0.88

From Table 6-3 it is evident that respondents for the most part agreed with statement PU2, "Using e-banking services will enhance my productivity in managing my personal life" (mean = 4.04; SD = 0.89) and statement PU3, "Using e-banking services will increase my effectiveness in managing my personal life" (mean = 4.04; SD = 0.88). The least agreed upon statement was PU1, "Using e-banking services will improve my performance in managing my personal life" (mean = 4.03; SD = 0.92). The following main findings are reported regarding respondents' perceptions of the usefulness of the electronic banking services.

Main finding 7: Regarding the respondents' perceptions of the usefulness of electronic banking services, they mostly agreed that using electronic banking services would enhance their effectiveness and productivity in managing their personal lives.

Main finding 8: Regarding the respondents' perceptions of the usefulness of electronic banking services, they agreed least that using electronic banking services would improve their performance in managing their personal lives.

6.4.2 Relationship quality dimensions

The respondents' levels of competence trust and continuance commitment (representing relationship quality constructs) were assessed next. The respondents had to specify their level of agreement on a five-point unlabelled Likert scale where 1 represents "strongly disagree" and 5 represents "strongly agree".

Specifically, the respondents' levels of competence trust were measured with three statements that were adapted from prior studies regarding trust as a dimension of relationship quality. Table 6-4 presents the means and standard deviations (SD) for each item, measuring competence trust.

Table 6-4: Respondents' levels of competence trust

Statement	Mean	SD
CT1: I can rely on e-banking technology to execute my transactions reliably.	4.09	0.88
CT2: Given the state of existing e-banking technology, I believe that technology-related errors are quite rare.	3.74	0.98
CT3: In my opinion, the e-banking technology I use is very reliable.	3.97	0.85

From Table 6-4 it emerges that respondents mostly agreed with statement CT1, "I can rely on e-banking technology to execute my transactions reliably" (mean = 4.09; SD = 0.88). They least agreed with statement CT2, "Given the state of existing e-banking technology, I believe that technology-related errors are quite rare" (mean = 3.74; SD = 0.98).

The following main finding are reported regarding respondents' level of competence trust towards electronic banking services.

Main finding 9: Concerning respondents' level of competence trust towards electronic banking services, they mostly agreed that they could rely on electronic banking technology to execute their transactions reliably.

Main finding 10: Concerning respondents' level of competence trust towards electronic banking services, they least agreed that given the state of existing electronic banking technology, they believed that technology-related errors were quite rare.

The respondents' levels of continuance commitment towards electronic banking services were measured with four statements that were adapted from prior studies regarding continuance commitment as a dimension of relationship quality. Table 6-5 represents the means and standard deviations (SD) for each item, measuring continuance commitment.

Table 6-5: Respondents' levels of continuance commitment

Statement	Mean	SD
CC1: My time management dictates that I make use of e-banking services to carry out my banking transactions.	4.06	0.92
CC2: My business transactions would require considerable more time and effort, if I were to stop using e-banking services.	4.11	0.96
CC3: For the sake of being able to function more efficiently, I feel motivated to use e-banking services.	4.05	0.91
CC4: When I consider the convenience of e-banking services, it makes sense for me to use it.	4.22	0.82

As presented in Table 6-5, respondents mostly agreed with statement CC4, "When I consider the convenience of e-banking services, it makes sense for me to use it" (mean = 4.22; SD = 0.82). The least agreed upon statement was CC3, "For the sake of being able to function more efficiently, I feel motivated to use e-banking services" (mean = 4.05; SD = 0.91).

The following main finding is reported regarding respondents' level of continuance commitment towards electronic banking services.

Main finding 11: Regarding the respondents' level of continuance commitment towards electronic banking services, they mostly agreed that when they consider the convenience of electronic banking services, it made sense for them to use it.

Main finding 12: Regarding the respondents' levels of continuance commitment towards electronic banking services, they least agreed that for the sake of being able to function more efficiently, they feel motivated to use electronic banking services.

6.4.3 Positive word of mouth communication as a form of behavioural intention

The objective of the word of the mouth intention measurement scale was to assess the extent to which electronic banking customers intend to say positive things about the service to fellow consumers. Overall, three statements were adapted from prior studies regarding positive word of mouth intention. The respondents had to specify their levels of agreement on a five-point unlabelled Likert scale where 1 represents “strongly disagree” and 5 represents “strongly agree”. Table 6-6 presents the means and standard deviations (SD) for each item, measuring positive word of mouth intention.

Table 6-6: Respondents’ levels of positive word of mouth intention as a form of behavioural intention

Statement	Mean	SD
PWOMI1: If asked, I would say positive things about e-banking services to other people.	4.18	0.80
PWOMI2: If asked, I would recommend e-banking services to other people.	4.27	0.82
PWOMI3: If asked, I would encourage other people to use e-banking services.	4.24	0.83

As shown in Table 6-6, the respondents most agreed with statement PWOMI2, “If asked, I would recommend e-banking services to other people” (mean = 4.27; SD = 0.82). The least agreed upon statement was PWOMI1, “If asked, I would say positive things about e-banking services to other people” (mean = 4.18; SD = 0.80).

The following main findings are reported regarding respondents’ levels of positive word of mouth intention towards electronic banking services.

Main finding 13: Regarding respondents’ level of positive word of mouth intention towards electronic banking services, they mostly agreed that if asked, they would recommend electronic banking services to other people.

Main finding 14: Regarding the respondents’ levels of positive word of mouth intention towards electronic banking services, they least agreed that if asked, they would say positive things about e-banking services to other people.

6.5 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY ASSESSMENT

When a structural equation modelling (SEM) is conducted, the most relevant, valid and reliable items of the measures must be used. Consequently, the data was assessed for reliability and validity.

6.5.1 Reliability test

As explained in Chapter 5 (section 5.7.2), reliability requires that the measurement scale must be internally dependable (Zikmund & Babin, 2013:257). Specifically, with respect to internal consistency reliability, every item in the scale measures some aspect of the construct which is also measured by the scale as a whole (Hair *et al*., 2011:235).

To measure the reliability of measurement scales, the Cronbach's alpha value of all the constructs was determined (Mazzocchi, 2011:10). According to Malhotra *et al*. (2010:318) Cronbach's alpha or coefficient alpha is regarded as "the average of all of the possible split-half coefficients resulting from different ways of splitting the scale items". The Cronbach's alpha has a maximum value of 1.00, and a value above 0.70 indicates reliability (Mazzocchi, 2011:10). Table 6-7 presents the Cronbach's alpha values of the variables perceived usefulness, competence trust, continuance commitment and positive word of mouth intention. The values are all above 0.70 and range between 0.85 and 0.94. Therefore, all four constructs investigated in this study can be considered highly reliable.

Table 6-7: Cronbach's alpha values

Construct	Cronbach's alpha values
Perceived usefulness	0.93
Competence trust	0.85
Continuance commitment	0.90
Positive word of mouth intention	0.94

Main finding 15: All the measurement scales measuring the constructs of perceived usefulness, competence trust, continuance commitment and positive word of mouth intention can be considered highly reliable since they all display high internal consistency and reliability.

6.5.2 Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to assess the validity of the measurement model. The measurement model comprised the four constructs investigated in this study, namely perceived usefulness, competence trust, continuance commitment and positive word of mouth intention. The investigation included an assessment of model fit, convergent, discriminant and construct validity.

6.5.2.1 Model fit

Table 6-8 presents the fit statistics of the measurement model.

Table 6-8: Model fit

Fit index	X^2	df	X^2/df	TLI	CFI	RMSEA
Model	156.13	59	2.65	0.94	0.96	0.06
Suggested value			<5.00	>0.90	>0.90	<0.08

The chi-square test's key function is to evaluate the complete model fit, which determines whether the model fits well overall and is not precisely associated with a baseline model (McDonald & Ho, 2002:72). As presented in Table 6-8, the CFA results shows that the chi-square/degrees of freedom (X_2/df) ratio is 2.65. This value is smaller than the maximum cut-off value of 5.00 as recommended by Wheaton *et al*. (1977:99).

Several additional fit statistical analyses were conducted to further evaluate the appropriateness of the measurement model. As shown in Table 6-8, the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), which measures the incremental fit of the model, is 0.94. The incremental fit of a model is regarded as good when TLI > 0.90; consequently, hence the TLI statistic indicated a good fit (Mazzocchi, 2011:322). The comparative fit index (CFI) statistic for the measurement model was 0.96, which is a good fit, since the suggested value is larger than 0.90 (Mazzocchi, 2011:322). It is further evident from Table 6-8 that the RMSEA value is 0.06, which is less than 0.80 and thus indicates an acceptable model fit (Hoe, 2008:78; McDonald & Ho, 2002:72).

Therefore, the following main finding can be formulated from the measurement model fit statistics.

Main finding 16: The CFA fit statistics calculated for the four-component measurement model offered validation that an acceptable model fit was attained.

6.5.2.2 Convergent validity

Table 6-9 presents the standardised factor loadings, standard errors of the effect sizes and significance value (p-value) for each measurement item of the four latent variables investigated.

Table 6-9: Standardised factor loadings, standardised errors and significance values

Latent variable	Measurement items	Std. loading	Std. error	p-value*
Perceived usefulness	Using e-banking services will improve my performance in managing my personal life.	0.87	0.02	0.001
	Using e-banking services will increase my productivity in managing my personal life.	0.97	0.01	0.001
	Using e-banking services will enhance my effectiveness in managing my personal life.	0.92	0.02	0.001
Competence trust	I can rely on e-banking technology to execute my transactions reliably.	0.83	0.03	0.001
	Given the state of existing e-banking technology, I believe that technology related errors are quite rare.	0.74	0.04	0.001
	In my opinion, the e-banking technology I use is very reliable.	0.88	0.03	0.001
Continuance commitment	My time management dictates that I make use of e-banking services to carry out my banking transactions.	0.82	0.03	0.001
	My business transactions would require considerable more time and effort, if I were to stop using e-banking services.	0.83	0.03	0.001
	For the sake of being able to function more efficiently, I feel motivated to use e-banking services.	0.87	0.02	0.001
	When I consider the convenience of e-banking services, it makes sense for me to use it.	0.82	0.03	0.001
Positive word of mouth intention	If asked, I would say positive things about e-banking services to other people.	0.87	0.02	0.001
	If asked, I would recommend e-banking services to other people.	0.92	0.03	0.001
	If asked, I would encourage other people to use e-banking services.	0.92	0.03	0.001

*Note: $p<0.001$

Standardised factor loadings provide an indication of the relationship amongst the latent and measurement variables. As evident from Table 6-9, the factor loadings of all measurement variables are significant and above the suggested threshold of 0.50 (Hair *et al.*, 2014:115), thereby indicating that all factors loaded significantly on their respective constructs (latent variables) and could be retained in the model.

Hence, main finding 17 was formulated as follows.

Main finding 17: The standardised factor loadings established that all measurement items loaded significantly onto their respective latent variables and could be retained in the measurement model.

Table 6-10 represents a summary of the composite reliability and average variance extracted (AVE) values for each construct.

Table 6-10: Test for composite reliability and convergent validity

Variable	CR	AVE
Perceived usefulness	0.75	0.85
Competence trust	0.75	0.67
Continuance commitment	0.80	0.69
Positive word of mouth intention	0.75	0.82
Acceptable value	**>0.70**	**>0.50**

Furthermore, from Table 6-10 it is evident that the composite reliability values (CR) range from 0.75 to 0.80. These values all exceed the threshold value of 0.7 (Hair *et al*., 2010:46), thus indicating strong internal consistency.

Main finding 18: With respect to each latent variable, the CR values indicate strong internal consistency.

Lastly, the AVE values ranged from 0.67 to 0.85 and thus all surpassed the recommended criterion of 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981:46). Hence, considering these findings along with the findings from the factor loadings and the construct reliabilities, it can be concluded that the latent variables of perceived usefulness, competence trust, continuance commitment and positive word of mouth intention are reliable and show good convergent validity.

Main finding 19: All four constructs of the measurement model (perceived usefulness, competence trust, continuance commitment and positive word of mouth intention) have strong reliability and convergent validity.

6.5.2.3 Discriminant validity

Discriminant validity was assessed to verify if the latent variables measured are distinct from one another. In terms of discriminant validity, calculations show that the AVE for each construct was above the shared variance between any two constructs – for example, the largest covariance was between continuance commitment (AVE = 0.69) and perceived usefulness (AVE = 0.85), giving a shared variance (squared correlation between the two variables; R^2) of 0.55. This provides evidence of discriminant validity (Hair *et al*., 2011:238).

Main finding 20: The results obtained from the correlation matrix and AVE values provide evidence that the four constructs of the measurement model all have discriminant validity.

6.5.2.4 Summary of model validity

Validity is referred to as the accurateness of a measurement instrument (Burns & Bush, 2014:214). Consequently, validity can be seen as the degree to which scale scores actually replicate the features that is being measured (Babin & Zikmund, 2016:281). Face validity/ content validity, in addition to construct validity, were examined in this study. Specifically, face validity/content validity was determined by using previously validated measurement items in the survey, and that in earlier studies have proven to be valid and reliable. A pilot test was also conducted that provided further confirmation that the measurement items measured what they were planned to measure (refer to section 5.5.4.6).

The identified constructs of this study (perceived usefulness, competence trust, continuance commitment and positive word of mouth) were further validated by preforming a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). As discussed in section 6.5, the CFA results provided evidence of measurement model fit, as well as convergent and discriminant validity. Accordingly, it can be concluded that construct validity was also obtained (Hair *et al.,* 2011:239).

Main finding 21: Face validity was obtained. Thus, the measurement items measured what they planned to measure.

Main finding 22: Construct validity was obtained, which provided evidence that the constructs measured are distinct from one another and that for each construct measured, the relevant measurement items associated with the construct have a high level of variance in common.

Finally, Table 6-11 summarises the overall mean scores for all four final constructs.

Table 6-11: Overall mean score

Construct	Statements	Overall mean score
Perceived usefulness	Statement 1.1 – 1.3	4.04
Competence trust	Statement 1.4 – 1.6	3.93
Continuance commitment	Statement 1.7 – 1.10	4.11
Positive word of mouth intention	Statement 1.11 – 1.13	4.23

For the identified constructs, the mean values vary between 3.93 and 4.23. The constructs were measured on a five-point Likert scale where 1 represented "strongly disagree" and 5 "strongly agree". Thus, it is evident that the overall mean scores for all the constructs are relatively positive.

Main finding 23: The overall mean scores for the respondents' levels of perceived usefulness towards electronic banking services are above the mid-point of the measurement scale, which indicates that respondents perceived electronic banking services as useful.

Main finding 24: The overall mean score for the respondents' levels of competence trust towards electronic banking services is above the mid-point of the measurement scale, which indicates that respondents demonstrated competence trust in electronic banking services.

Main finding 25: The overall mean score for the respondents' levels of continuance commitment towards electronic banking services is above the mid-point of the measurement scale, which indicates that respondents displayed continuance committed towards electronic banking services.

Main finding 26: The overall mean score for the respondents' levels of positive word of mouth intention towards electronic banking services is above the mid-point of the measurement scale, which indicates that they intended to participate in in positive word of mouth communication about electronic banking services.

6.6 STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODELLING (SEM)

The theoretical model of this study, as discussed in Chapter 4 and presented below in Figure 6-1 was assessed by means of structural equation modelling (SEM).

The maximum likelihood estimation method was used to determine the relationships amongst the model's four constructs, namely perceived usefulness, competence trust, continuance commitment and positive word of mouth intention.

Figure 6-1: Proposed theoretical model

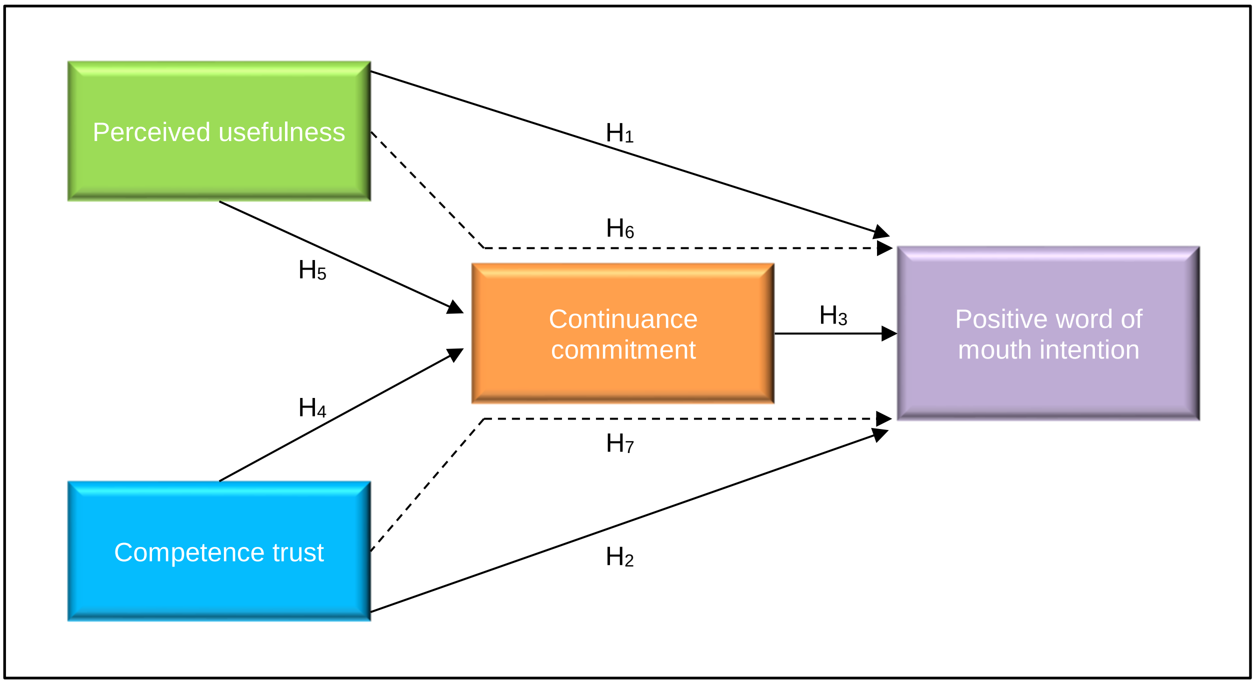


Table 6-12 provides a summary of the hypotheses that were formulated for this study.

Table 6-12: Hypotheses formulated for SEM

Hypotheses for SEM
H_1: Perceived usefulness of the service has a positive and significant impact on positive word of mouth intention.
H_2: Competence trust in the service has a positive and significant impact on positive word of mouth intention.
H_3: Continuance commitment towards the service has a positive and significant impact on positive word of mouth intention.
H_4: Competence trust in the service has a positive and significant impact on continuance commitment towards the service.

Table 6-12: Hypotheses formulated for SEM (cont.)

Hypotheses for SEM	
H_5:	Perceived usefulness of the service has a positive and significant impact on continuance commitment towards the service.
H_6:	Perceived usefulness of the service has a significant positive indirect effect on positive word of mouth intention, as mediated by continuance commitment towards the service.
H_7:	Competence trust in the service has a significant positive indirect effect on positive word of mouth intention, as mediated by continuance commitment towards the service.

6.6.1 Structural model assessment

Based on the acceptable model fit of the measurement model (CFA), reliability, factor loadings, correlational relationships and discriminant and convergent validity, the analysis continued by specifying a structural model and adding regressions to the measurement model in line with the research hypotheses.

As presented in Chapter 5 (section 5.7.3), a SEM is conducted to test the total goodness-of-fit of the research model in addition to providing assistance with defining the relationships amongst the identified constructs.

Table 6-13 presents the fit statistics obtained for the structural model.

Table 6-13: Results of SEM analysis

	X^2	df	X^2/df	TLI	CFI	RMSEA
Model	156.13	59	2.65	0.94	0.96	0.06
Suggested value			<5.00	>0.90	>0.90	<0.08

From Table 6-13 it is evident that the chi-square/degrees of freedom (X_2/df) ratio is 2.65. This value is considered acceptable, given that it is smaller than the maximum cut-off value of 5.00 as suggested by Wheaton *et al*. (1977:99). The incremental fit of a model is measured as good when TLI > 0.90; consequently, the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) indicated a good fit since it was 0.94 (Mazzocchi, 2011:322).

The comparative fit index (CFI) statistic for the measurement model was considered to be a superior fit, since 0.96 is larger than the suggested value of 0.90 (Mazzocchi, 2011:322). Furthermore, if the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) is smaller than or equal to

0.08, it indicates an acceptable model fit (Hoe, 2008:78; McDonald & Ho, 2002:72). Table 6-13 portrays that RMSEA was 0.06, which supports an acceptable model fit.

Main finding 27: Considering the fit statistics presented, it can be concluded that the structural model of this study has an acceptable model fit.

6.6.2 Hypothesis testing

Figure 6-2 provides a summary of the regression results obtained.

Figure 6-2: Structural model estimation

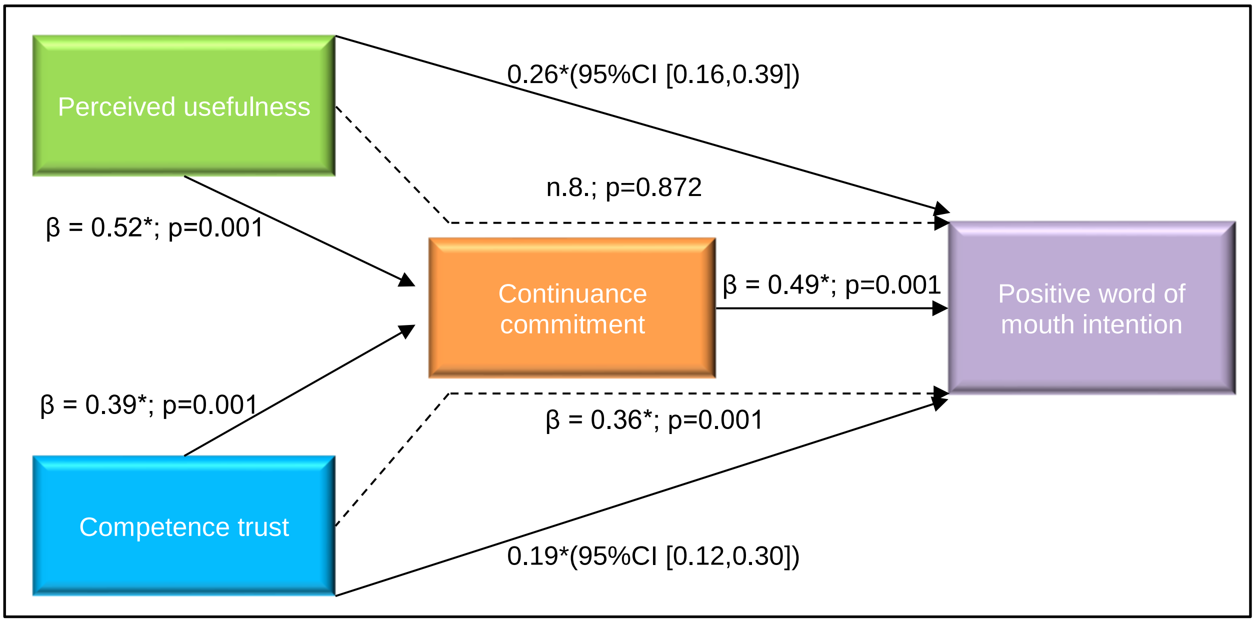


Table 6-14: Hypothesis testing: the direct effects

Hypothesis	Relationship	Std. β	S.E.	p-value	Result
H_1	Perceived usefulness → Positive word of mouth intention	-0.01	0.07	0.872	Non-significant
H_2	Competence trust → Positive word of mouth intention	0.36	0.07	0.001	Significant
H_3	Continuance commitment → Positive word of mouth intention	0.49	0.09	0.001	Significant
H_4	Competence trust → Continuance commitment	0.39	0.06	0.001	Significant
H_5	Perceived usefulness → Continuance commitment	0.52	0.06	0.001	Significant

Note: Std. = Standardised; β = beta coefficient; S.E. = Standard error; significant at $p<0.001$

The regression results revealed that perceived usefulness had a significant positive impact on continuance commitment (β = 0.52; S.E. = 0.06; $p < 0.001$; supporting *H_5*), but a non-significant impact on PWOM intention (β = -0.01; S.E. = 0.07; $p = 0.872$; rejecting *H_1*). Competence trust, in turn, had a significant positive impact on both continuance commitment (β = 0.39; S.E. = 0.06; $p < 0.001$; supporting *H_4*) and positive word of mouth intention (β = 0.36; S.E. = 0.07; $p < 0.001$; supporting *H_2*). Lastly, in terms of regression, continuance commitment had a significant positive impact on positive word of mouth intention (β = 0.49; S.E. = 0.09; $p < 0.001$; supporting *H_3*).

Finally, bootstrapping with 5 000 resamples from the data revealed two significant indirect effects. In the first instance, perceived usefulness had an indirect relationship with positive word of mouth intention through continuance commitment (0.26; $p < 0.001$; 95% CI [0.16, 0.39]) – indicating an indirect (full) mediation model as the direct effect from perceived usefulness to positive word of mouth intention was insignificant. Secondly, evidence was found for continuance commitment as a complementary (partial) mediator (0.19; $p < 0.001$; 95% CI [0.12, 0.30]) in the relationship between competence trust and positive word of mouth intention – as the direct relationship was also significant (Zhao *et al*., 2010:201). Therefore, the final two research hypotheses proposed (H_6 and H_7) could also be accepted. Overall, the R2 value for positive word of mouth intention is 0.606, indicating that the model explains 60.6% of the variance in positive word of mouth intention. The key findings relating to the hypotheses formulated for this study are presented below.

Main finding 28: Perceived usefulness of the service does not have a positive and significant impact on positive word of mouth intention.

Main finding 29: Competence trust in the service has a positive and significant impact on positive word of mouth intention.

Main finding 30: Continuance commitment towards the service has a positive and significant impact on positive word of mouth intention.

Main finding 31: Competence trust in the service has a positive and significant impact on continuance commitment towards the service.

Main finding 32: Perceived usefulness of the service has a positive and significant impact on continuance commitment towards the service.

Main finding 33: Perceived usefulness of the service has a significant positive indirect effect on positive word of mouth intention, as mediated by continuance commitment towards the service.

Main finding 34: Competence trust in the service has a significant positive indirect effect on positive word of mouth intention, as mediated by continuance commitment towards the service.

6.7 SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

This section provides a summary of the main findings that were derived in this chapter.

6.7.1 Main results according to research objectives

Table 6-15 provides a summary of main empirical findings relating to each secondary objective formulated. However, an in-depth theoretical background investigation was conducted in Chapters 1 to 3 to address the first secondary objective. Hence, Table 6-15 commences with secondary objective 2.

Table 6-15: Summary of main empirical findings relating to each secondary objective formulated

Secondary objective 2: To develop a sample profile of existing electronic banking users who participated in this study.	
Main finding 1	Both genders were well represented in the database, although slightly more females (54.9%) than males (45.1%) participated in the survey.
Main finding 2	Two thirds (64%) of respondents who completed the questionnaire are younger than 35 years, thereby indicating that a relatively young sample participated in the survey.
Main finding 3	Since all respondents were using at least one form of electronic banking services, they were able to draw on their own experiences in answering the questionnaire.
Main finding 4	Overall, Internet banking using a computer was the most popular form of electronic banking with 59.5% responses (47% males and 53% females).
Main finding 5	Telephone banking services were more popular amongst males than females, while the remaining electronic banking options were more popular amongst female respondents than male respondents.
Main finding 6	The sample surveyed consisted of male and female respondents, eighteen years and older, residing in selected cities and towns in urban and semi-urban areas in South Africa and who were making use of at least one form of electronic banking services.

Table 6-15: Summary of main empirical findings relating to each secondary objective formulated (cont.)

Secondary objective 3: To measure the extent to which bank customers perceive electronic banking services for which they are registered as useful.	
Main finding 7	Regarding the respondents' perceptions of the usefulness of electronic banking services, they mostly agreed that using electronic banking services would enhance their effectiveness and productivity in managing their personal lives.
Main finding 8	Regarding the respondents' perceptions of the usefulness of electronic banking services, they agreed least that using electronic banking services would improve their performance in managing their personal lives.
Secondary objective 4: To assess the extent to which bank customers demonstrate competence trust in the electronic banking services for which they are registered.	
Main finding 9	Concerning respondents' level of competence trust towards electronic banking services, they mostly agreed that they could rely on electronic banking technology to execute their transactions reliably.
Main finding 10	Concerning respondents' level of competence trust towards electronic banking services, they least agreed that given the state of existing electronic banking technology, they believed that technology-related errors were quite rare.
Secondary objective 5: To assess the extent to which bank customers exhibit continuance commitment towards the electronic banking services for which they are registered.	
Main finding 11	Regarding the respondents' level of continuance commitment towards electronic banking services, they mostly agreed that when they consider the convenience of electronic banking services, it made sense for them to use it.
Main finding 12	Regarding the respondents' levels of continuance commitment towards electronic banking services, they least agreed that for the sake of being able to function more efficiently, they feel motivated to use electronic banking services.
Secondary objective 6: To determine the positive word of mouth intentions of bank customers pertaining to electronic banking services.	
Main finding 13	Regarding respondents' level of positive word of mouth intention towards electronic banking services, they mostly agreed that if asked, they would recommend electronic banking services to other people.
Main finding 14	Regarding the respondents' levels of positive word of mouth intention towards electronic banking services, they least agreed that if asked, they would say positive things about e-banking services to other people.
Secondary objective 7: To examine the interrelationships between the constructs of this study, namely perceived usefulness, competence trust, continuance commitment and positive word of mouth intentions.	
Main finding 15	All the measurement scales measuring the constructs of perceived usefulness, competence trust, continuance commitment and positive word of mouth intention can be considered highly reliable since they all display high internal consistency and reliability.
Main finding 16	The CFA fit statistics calculated for the four-component measurement model offered validation that an acceptable model fit was attained.
Main finding 17	The standardised factor loadings established that all measurement items loaded significantly onto their respective latent variables and could be retained in the measurement model.

Table 6-15: Summary of main empirical findings relating to each secondary objective formulated (cont.)

Secondary objective 7: To examine the interrelationships between the constructs of this study, namely perceived usefulness, competence trust, continuance commitment and positive word of mouth intentions.	
Main finding 18	With respect to each latent variable, the CR values indicate strong internal consistency.
Main finding 19	All four constructs of the measurement model (perceived usefulness, competence trust, continuance commitment and positive word of mouth intention) have strong reliability and convergent validity.
Main finding 20	The results obtained from the correlation matrix and AVE values provide evidence that the four constructs of the measurement model all have discriminant validity.
Main finding 21	Face validity was obtained. Thus, the measurement items measured what they planned to measure.
Main finding 22	Construct validity was obtained, which provided evidence that the constructs measured are distinct from one another and that for each construct measured, the relevant measurement items associated with the construct have a high level of variance in common.
Main finding 23	The overall mean scores for the respondents' levels of perceived usefulness towards electronic banking services are above the mid-point of the measurement scale, which indicates that respondents perceived electronic banking services as useful.
Main finding 24	The overall mean score for the respondents' levels of competence trust towards electronic banking services is above the mid-point of the measurement scale, which indicates that respondents demonstrated competence trust in electronic banking services.
Main finding 25	The overall mean score for the respondents' levels of continuance commitment towards electronic banking services is above the mid-point of the measurement scale, which indicates that respondents displayed continuance committed towards electronic banking services.
Main finding 26	The overall mean score for the respondents' levels of positive word of mouth intention towards electronic banking services is above the mid-point of the measurement scale, which indicates that they intended to participate in in positive word of mouth communication about electronic banking services.
Main finding 27	Considering the fit statistics presented, it can be concluded that the structural model of this study has an acceptable model fit.
Main finding 28	Perceived usefulness of the service does not have a positive and significant impact on positive word of mouth intention.
Main finding 29	Competence trust in the service has a positive and significant impact on positive word of mouth intention.
Main finding 30	Continuance commitment towards the service has a positive and significant impact on positive word of mouth intention.
Main finding 31	Competence trust in the service has a positive and significant impact on continuance commitment towards the service.

Table 6-15: Summary of main empirical findings relating to each secondary objective formulated (cont.)

Secondary objective 7: To examine the interrelationships between the constructs of this study, namely perceived usefulness, competence trust, continuance commitment and positive word of mouth intentions.	
Main finding 32	Perceived usefulness of the service has a positive and significant impact on continuance commitment towards the service.
Main finding 33	Perceived usefulness of the service has a significant positive indirect effect on positive word of mouth intention, as mediated by continuance commitment towards the service.
Main finding 34	Competence trust in the service has a significant positive indirect effect on positive word of mouth intention, as mediated by continuance commitment towards the service.

6.8 SUMMARY

In Chapter 6, the empirical research findings were presented and interpreted. Together with the sample realisation rate, the demographic profile of respondents who completed the questionnaire for this study was presented. The empirical findings obtained from the remaining sections of the questionnaire with reference to respondents' levels of perceived usefulness, competence trust, continuance commitment and positive word of mouth intention followed.

In this chapter statistical analysis findings were also reported, including frequencies and percentages, means in addition to standard deviations, Cronbach's alpha coefficients (which tested internal consistency reliability), model fit analysis, factor loadings, and face, convergent and discriminant validity through CFA, overall mean scores and, lastly, direct and indirect effects.

Also, a SEM was conducted with the purpose of comparing the proposed theoretical model with the data obtained. Lastly, the chapter concluded with a summary of all the key findings of the secondary objectives of the study.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 7 concludes this study by presenting conclusions and recommendations regarding positive word of mouth intention in the electronic banking environment. The conclusions presented in this chapter were derived from the empirical results that was examined in Chapter 6, as well as the findings from the literature reviews that were conducted in Chapters 1 to 4 and that led to this study's model conceptualisation.

The chapter begins with a summary of the research problem that was investigated. Thereafter, conclusions, implications and recommendations are presented for each of the secondary research objectives. Next, a table is provided, indicating the connection between the research objectives, the literature reviews, the questionnaire sections, the proposed hypotheses, key findings as well as the study's conclusions and recommendations. The chapter concludes with a number of limitations of the study. Recommendations for future research on this topic are also provided.

7.2 OVERVIEW AND SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

As indicated in Chapter 1 (section 1.3), the South African retail banking industry is extremely competitive. The retail banking landscape in the country is dominated by five retail banks: Standard Bank, ABSA (which is foreign controlled), Nedbank, Capitec and FNB – with Standard Bank serving the largest number of customers followed by the other four banks (BusinessTech, 2015; BusinessTech, 2016; Buzz South Africa, 2017). Furthermore, as explained in section 1.2.1, to be successful in this competitive banking environment, South African banks are following international banking trends and are also focused on providing digital and electronic channels as a substitute banking platform for traditional in-branch banking services (Kumar, 2016; PwC, 2016:37; Singh, 2004:190). Banks believe that such investments will impact positively on their profits and will also increase their market share by providing convenience, and by potentially gaining the unbanked consumer (Cheng *et al.*, 2006:1559; PwC, 2016:38).

The effective implementation of these initiatives, however, depends on the degree to which customers would be willing to accept the innovative technologies and whether they are willing to conduct their banking services electronically. This may be difficult within the South African retail banking environment. PwC (2016:58) and Singh (2004:189-193) established that customers in South Africa favour traditional in-branch banking services rather electronic banking since they feel unsafe in the digital environment. For instance, the customers want the reassurance that their personal information will be protected and want to avoid the risk of fraudulent transactions. Some customers also do not necessarily have the facts on how to use electronic banking or believe that it is timely and costly. Specifically, in South African rural areas, customers tend to be reluctant to use electronic banking services in spite of the availability of these services (Masocha *et al.*, 2011:1858-1859).

Therefore, it is essential for South African retail banks to educate their customers about the advantages and trustworthiness of electronic banking services. However, to reach all possible banking customers is an impossible task and customers may still remain sceptical. Retail banks may be more successful if they were to concentrate on current electronic banking customers (who are the possible customer's peers and family members) to support them in this task, since service customers seem to prefer personal sources of information and recommendations from friends and family members they trust over impersonal sources from organisations (Murray, 1991:12). Furthermore, customers tend to feel more comfortable gaining information and assurance from personal sources when considering in mind a service purchase, because, as stated by Bansal and Voyer (2000:167), "*a consumer may not understand a service fully before its consumption, he or she might seek WOM information from an experienced source*".

Therefore, retail banks may benefit from existing customers engaging in positive word of mouth communication who may convince potential customers of the benefits of electronic banking services. Ultimately, the strategy may enable greater acceptance and use of electronic banking services and may increase a bank's market share.

Nevertheless, for the effective implementation of this strategy, a model of factors that may contribute towards positive word of mouth communication as a form of behavioural intention by current South African electronic banking customers is necessary. Such a model may provide strategic direction to South African retail banks towards adjusting their marketing strategies accordingly. However, this matter has received little attention in academic research and therefore requires further exploration.

To address this research gap, the primary objective of this study was to develop a mediated model for positive word of mouth intention in the electronic banking environment (see Chapter 1, section 1.7). A number of secondary objectives were also identified to support the primary research objective (Chapter 1, section 1.7).

The section below focuses on the research findings obtained from both the theoretical and empirical examinations and aims to offer an advanced understanding of the interrelationships amongst the identified constructs and positive word of mouth intention. For every secondary objective, implications are derived, and strategic recommendations are offered to provide direction to retail banks for enabling positive word of mouth communication amongst current and potential customers of their electronic banking services.

7.3 CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SECONDARY OBJECTIVES

The discussion commences with the secondary objectives concerning the literature study conducted.

7.3.1 Secondary objectives 1(a) to 1(c)

Secondary objective 1
To provide an overview of extant literature related to: (a) Perceived value, relationship marketing, relationship quality, behavioural intention, customer loyalty and word of mouth communication. (b) The main constructs of this research study, namely perceived usefulness, competence trust, continuance commitment and positive word of mouth intention. (c) The interrelationships between the main constructs of this research study.

This study's secondary objectives 1(a) to 1(c) were addressed as follows:

- Secondary objective 1(a), which entailed a literature review of perceived value, relationship marketing, relationship quality, behavioural intention, customer loyalty and word of mouth communication, was examined in Chapter 1 (sections 1.4, 1.4.1, 1.4.2, 1.4.3 and 1.4.4), Chapter 2 (sections 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, and 2.5) and Chapter 3 (sections 3.2, 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5).

- Secondary objective 1(b), which focused on the main constructs of this study, was addressed in Chapters 1, 2 and 3. Specifically, Chapter 1 briefly examined perceived usefulness (section 1.4.2.1), competence trust (section 1.4.3.1), continuance commitment (section 1.4.3.2) and positive word of mouth intention (section 1.4.4.1). Chapter 2 provided an investigation of perceived usefulness (section 2.2.3), competence trust (section 2.5.1) and continuance commitment (section 2.5.2). Chapter 3 offered insights into positive word of mouth intention (sections 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5).

- Secondary objective 1(c), which relates to the interrelationships amongst the main constructs of this study was addressed in Chapter 1 (section 1.5.1) and Chapter 4 (section 4.2). The resulting conceptual model was presented in section 4.3.

From the secondary objectives 1(a) to 1(c), no key findings were derived. The insights obtained from the literature review, however, assisted in the interpretation of the empirical findings and helped to formulate the study's main implications and recommendations.

7.3.2 Secondary objective 2

Secondary objective 2
To develop a sample profile of existing electronic banking users who participated in this study.

Section 3 of the questionnaire gathered the necessary demographic and patronage habits information to address secondary objective 2. This section of the questionnaire assessed respondents' gender, year of birth, usage of electronic banking services and location.

The main findings concerning the demographic and patronage habits information obtained from this study were presented in section 6.3 (main findings 1 to 6), and are summarised again below:

- Both genders were well represented in the database, although slightly more females (54.9%) than males (45.1%) participated in the survey (main finding 1, section 6.3).

- Two thirds (64%) of respondents who completed the questionnaire are younger than 35 years, thereby indicating that a relatively young sample participated in the survey (main finding 2, section 6.3).

- Since all respondents were using at least one form of electronic banking services, they were able to draw on their own experiences in answering the questionnaire (main finding 3, section 6.3).

- Overall, Internet banking using a computer was the most popular form of electronic banking with 59.5% responses (47% males and 53% females) (main finding 4, section 6.3).

- Telephone banking services were more popular amongst males than females, while the remaining electronic banking options were more popular amongst female respondents than male respondents (main finding 5, section 6.3).

- As noted, the sample surveyed consisted of male and female respondents, eighteen years and older, residing in selected cities and towns in urban and semi-urban areas in South Africa and who were making use of at least one form of electronic banking services (main finding 6, section 6.3).

Based on the key findings from section 6.3, the following main conclusions, implications and recommendations can be noted.

- **Main conclusion 1**

  All respondents who participated in the study were older than 18 years of age, with two thirds of them being younger than 35 years Furthermore, both genders were represented, but slightly more females participated in the study. The respondents reside in both urban and semi-urban areas in South Africa and were making use of at least one form of electronic banking service. The most popular form of electronic banking services was found to be Internet banking using a computer. Also, telephone banking services were more popular amongst males than females, while the remaining electronic banking options were more popular amongst female respondents. Consequently, all respondents who participated in this study form part of the target population as noted in Chapter 1 (section 1.8.2.3).

- **Implication 1**

  Participants in this study were fairly young, with most respondents being 35 or younger and thus grew up in an era of technology. It further seems that respondents tend to make use of opportunities offered by technology such as banking by means of electronic banking services. It thus appears that the respondents are willing to buy into the benefits of electronic banking services, that they have experience in using the services and are in a position to tell other potential customers of the benefits of electronic banking services. Moreover, it is also evident that there were electronic banking customers in both urban and semi-urban areas, which indicates that it is possible for retail banks to use customers in both urban and semi-urban areas to spread positive messages about electronic banking services. In addition, various forms of electronic banking services are used, and thus it seems that customers buy into the benefits of the different channels of electronic banking services and can therefore inform potential customers about these services.

- **Recommendation 1**

  Keeping in mind that possible favourable communication may be a result for these respondents to spread the word about electronic banking services, it is vital for retail banks to further investigate their needs and to implement marketing strategies to enhance the intentions of present customers to recommend and highlight the positive aspects of electronic banking services to potential customers. Retail banks need to understand the features and benefits that attracted the customers to these services and that would motivate them to convince potential users to use these services. Importantly, the features and benefits of all forms of electronic banking services must be considered, because customers use of a variety of the available services. Users over the age of 35 years, however, may have different motivations than the respondents of this study to use these the services. This may require retail banks to pay attention to this matter when designing their strategies. Retail banks also need to ensure that their strategies for encouraging positive word of mouth intention include both customers in urban and semi-urban areas. It may also be worthwhile for retail banks to investigate why Internet banking using a computer is the most popular form of electronic banking and why telephone banking services tend to be more popular amongst males than females.

7.3.3 Secondary objective 3

Secondary objective 3
To measure the extent to which bank customers perceive electronic banking services for which they are registered as useful.

In Chapter 2, the literature review highlighted that a universal definition for perceived value has not been agreed upon, but value can be defined as a customer's superior perception of an individual interaction with the organisation or of the eventual consequence of this interaction (Boksberger & Melsen, 2011:230). Sánchez-Fernández and Iniesta-Bonillo (2007:482) believe that the construct of perceived value is interdisciplinary in nature, and various conceptualisations of the construct are presented in the literature. From the customer's perspective, Zeithaml (1988:14) alluded that perceived value refers to how a customer values the usefulness of a product or service considering the benefits received and the sacrifices made to obtain such a product or service.

Sánchez-Fernández and Iniesta-Bonillo (2007) and Wang *et al*. (2004) consider perceived value and the organisation's ability to create perceived value for customers as critical in fostering and upholding a distinct advantage over competitors. Furthermore, perceived value is considered a construct consisting of a single dimension by some, and as a construct consisting of multiple dimensions by others (Gallarza & Saura, 2006; Monroe & Chapman, 1987:195; Sánchez-Fernández & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007; Zeithaml, 1988:14).

As a multi-dimensional construct, Sánchez-Fernández and Iniesta-Bonillo (2007) propound that this concept comprises several interconnected attributes. This approach to value is not new and has been supported by several other authors – including Babin *et al*. (1994) and Holbrook and Hirschman (1982), who identified two perceived value dimensions, namely hedonic and utilitarian value.

Sánchez-Fernández and Iniesta-Bonillo (2007:436) define hedonic value as the emotional value of the product or service and indicate that it relates to a customer's feelings. On the other hand, utilitarian value entails the practical value of the product or service and relates to the intellect or the reasoning ability of the consumer (Sánchez-Fernández & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007:436). As far as the use of information technology in a services marketing perspective is concerned, utilitarian value relates closely to perceived usefulness, since it is felt that utilitarian features are mirrored in perceived usefulness (Cha, 2009; Chiu *et al*, 2009; Wu & Chang 2016). Similarly, the perceived enjoyment construct is used when assessing the hedonic aspects of information technology usage (Al-Maghrabi *et al.*, 2011:56; Childers *et al.*, 2001:514; Chiu *et al.*, 2009:763; Hsiao *et al.*, 2016:346; Yang *et al.*, 2012:513).

Perceived usefulness and perceived enjoyment are also key constructs embedded in the technology acceptance model (TAM), as they are considered key drivers of consumer attitudes, behaviours and intentions (Karahanna & Straub, 1998; Revels *et al*., 2010; Wang, 2016). TAM has been proposed to improve the understanding of consumer attitudes, behaviours and intentions where innovative technologies are concerned (Lin & Chang, 2011). The model helps to understand the acceptance of these technologies by consumers (Wang, 2016). Perceived enjoyment refers to "*the extent to which the activity of using the computer is perceived to be enjoyable in its own right, apart from any performance consequences that may be anticipated*" (Davis *et al*., 1992:1113). Perceived usefulness is also described as the degree to which an individual anticipates the particular self-service technology to be helpful in the execution of an activity, such as banking (Davis *et al*., 1989). According to Al-Suqri (2014), perceived usefulness is critical in determining consumer behaviours – more specifically, their intentions to a novel technology. Therefore, this study concentrated on perceived usefulness in scrutinising the behavioural intentions of banking customers where innovative technologies are concerned.

Chapter 2 further explored the elements of perceived usefulness and how these may relate to the electronic banking environment. Firstly, customers may perceive electronic banking services as useful if there is an *improvement or enhancement in their performance* in managing their personal lives. For instance, electronic banking services can be conducted anytime and anywhere after branch hours as well as additional services can be done online (view bank statements, transfers and checking account balance) that may be indicative of the usefulness of the service. Next, customers may also perceive electronic banking services as useful if the electronic banking service *increases their productivity* in managing their personal lives. For example, mobile banking a form of electronic banking service enables customers to accomplish tasks more quickly which allows them more time to conduct other tasks that are more important to them, and as such may enhance the customer's productivity. Lastly, customers may perceive electronic banking services as useful if the electronic banking service *enhances their effectiveness* in managing their personal lives. For instance, customers' effectiveness may increase, as electronic banking platforms provide them with the opportunity to quickly and easily control information regarding monetary activities. Furthermore, customer efficiency may improve because these channels make communication with retail banks more effective.

The following main findings with regards to perceived usefulness can be derived from the literature review:

- Various perspectives exist on the concept of perceived value.
- The perceived value view presented by Babin *et al*. (1994) and Holbrook and Hirschman (1982), denoting a utilitarian value dimension and a hedonic value dimension was chosen for this study.
- Hedonic value involves the emotional value of the product or service.
- Utilitarian value entails the functional value of a service.
- Perceived enjoyment is used as a representation to measure hedonic value.
- Perceived usefulness is used as representation to measure utilitarian value.
- Perceived usefulness involves the user's belief that using a system will improve his or her performance.
- Perceived enjoyment refers to "*the extent to which the activity of using the computer is perceived to be enjoyable in its own right, apart from any performance consequences that may be anticipated*".
- Perceived usefulness was selected for further investigation and in the context of this study, perceived usefulness relates to the extent to which customers believe that electronic

banking services will **improve** their **performance**, **increase their productivity** and **enhance their effectiveness** in executing their banking transactions.

The third secondary objective of this study was to measure the extent to which bank customers perceive electronic banking services for which they are registered as useful. To address this objective, the main findings of both the empirical and literature review are integrated next to assist in identifying the main conclusion, implication and recommendation.

It was revealed in the literature review that for electronic banking customers to perceive electronic banking services as useful, the service must *improve their performance* in managing their personal lives, increase productivity and enhance their effectiveness in managing their personal lives. Table 6-3 further specified that the mean values for all the statements measuring perceived usefulness ranged between 4.03 and 4.04. Consequently, even though statement PU1, representing main finding 8 (section 6.4.1), obtained the lowest rating, overall the respondents tended to agree with the statements that measured perceived usefulness. Thus, the literature review findings concerning perceived usefulness are relevant for electronic banking services. The respondents agreed that electronic banking services *increases their productivity and* their *effectiveness* in managing their personal lives; and that it improves their *performance* in managing their personal lives.

Consequently, based on the main findings of both the empirical and literature review, the following main conclusion, implication and recommendation can be noted:

- **Main conclusion 2**

  The respondents were of opinion that the electronic banking services they use are useful in their daily lives, as measured by perceptions of an increase in performance, effectiveness and productivity.

- **Implication 2**

  The implication of this finding is that perceived usefulness of a system is indicated by the extent to which the system advances a customer’s effectiveness, productivity and performance. Thus, retail banks offering electronic banking services that will improve customer effectiveness, productivity and performance is more likely to be perceived as useful by the customer.

- **Recommendation 2**

  Retail banks wanting customers to perceive their electronic banking services as useful must focus on creating perceptions of effectiveness, productivity and performance. It is further imperative for retail banks to delve deeper into the reasons why their existing users perceive the bank's services as enhancing their effectiveness, productivity and performance and to further build on these characteristics to strengthen their position among customers. It would also be sound practice for retail banks to remain up to date with the latest technological developments as well as competitor developments and to make regular improvements to their electronic banking service offering to ensure that customers continuously benefit from this service towards improving their daily lives and thus for the bank to remain competitive.

7.3.4 Secondary objective 4

Secondary objective 4
To assess the extent to which bank customers demonstrate competence trust in the electronic banking services for which they are registered.

The literature review regarding trust in Chapter 2 revealed that trust is based on the relationship marketing theory and is measured as a core relationship quality element (Hennig-Thurau *et al*., 2002:234; Morgan & Hunt, 1994:22; Mukherjee & Nath, 2007:1192; Ulaga & Eggert, 2006:314). Section 2.3.1 indicated that relationship marketing entails maintaining, building, enhancing customer-organisation relationships (Berry, 1983:25; Grönroos, 1989:57; Gummerus *et al.*, 2017:1). Furthermore, section 2.4.1 indicated that relationship quality is based on the relationship marketing theory (Morgan & Hunt, 1994:22) and involves a customer's general assessment of the relationship with the organisation that is measured on numerous different but connected levels. Relationship quality is perceived as a meta-construct comprising many components that reflect the overall nature of the relationship between organisations and customers (Athanasopoulou, 2009:588; Giovanis *et al*. 2015:745; Hennig-Thurau *et al*., 2002:234). In turn, trust is regarded as one of the core components of relationship quality (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2002:234; Morgan & Hunt, 1994:22; Mukherjee & Nath, 2007:1192; Ulaga & Eggert, 2006:314). Section 2.5.1.1 noted that trust relates to honesty and reliability and that both the customer and organisation will honour their word and commitments (Mayer *et al.*, 1995:712; Parsa, 2015:1248). Customer trust further comprises three sub-dimensions, namely benevolence trust, integrity trust and competence trust. For this study, competence trust was selected for further investigation.

Mayer *et al*. (1995:717) conceptualised competence trust as a *"group of skills, competencies, and characteristics that enable a party to have influence within a specific domain".* Thus, the competence dimension of trust is regarded as the practical component of trust, and it relates to the sense of certainty as to whether an organisation can offer what they promised or not (Cullen *et al*., 2000:225). In the online environment, competence trust refers to the "hard" dimension of online trust. The hard dimension is primarily functionality-based and refers to all the elements of trust in the context of e-commerce, for instance the electronic services website, the services that the web site represents, and the underlying technology (Grabner-Kräuter & Faullant, 2008:486). Thus, this study focused on the competence dimension of trust that is more concerned with the reliability performance of the electronic banking service, and that similar to the perceived usefulness construct, also emphasises the functional performance of the technology.

It was also indicated in Chapter 2 that competence trust in the electronic banking environment may relate to the following matters: Electronic banking customers' trust is established in an environment of transparent and meaningful communication with regards to the electronic banking services that include, for example, social interaction with the banking website and the monitoring of contractual performance at any time. Electronic banking customers' risk perceptions may influence their trust levels towards electronic banking services. These risks include performance risks, time loss risks, social risks, financial risks as well as privacy and security aspects within an electronic banking context, which were described in section 2.5.1.1. Electronic banking customers' trust is also concerned with their expectation that the retail bank will perform in a particular manner based on the reputation of the bank. Customers may perceive that a retail bank with a trustworthy reputation would want to assure their customers that every facet of its electronic banking services is designed to generate and maintain customers' beliefs in the structural guarantee of electronic banking and that their services can be trusted.

The following main findings with regards to competence trust can be derived from the literature review:

- Trust is grounded in the relationship marketing theory and is regarded as a core element of relationship quality.
- Relationship marketing entails build of relationships with customers, whereas relationship quality involves customers' general assessment of the relationship with the organisation that is measured on several different but connected levels.
- Competence trust is a sub-dimension of customer trust.

- Competence trust is the practical component of trust, and it comprises the sense of certainty about whether an organisation can offer what they promised or not.
- In the context of this study, competence trust refers to the belief that a customer's (the trustee's) **communication** with the retail bank (the trustor) via the electronic banking system is **transparent and meaningful**. Trust may also entail the expectation that based on the **reputation** of the trustor, interactions with the system **will not require a high level of risk.**

The fourth secondary objective of this study was to assess the extent to which bank customers demonstrate competence trust in the electronic banking services for which they are registered. To address this objective, the main findings of both the empirical and literature review are integrated to assist in reaching the main conclusion and to identify relevant implications and recommendations.

The literature review pointed out that electronic banking customers' competence trust entails that the electronic banking services must be competent and can offer what they promised, in other words, their services are regarded as reliable. The main findings from the empirical research demonstrated that respondents mostly agreed that they can rely on electronic banking technology to execute their transactions reliably (main finding 9, section 6.4.2). Therefore, it is evident that customers have competence trust in electronic banking since they consider the technology as reliable to execute their transactions. Additionally, the respondents agreed the least that given the state of existing electronic banking technology, they believed that technology-related errors are quite rare (main finding 10, section 6.4.2). For this statement, a mean value of 3.74 was obtained. Taking into consideration the lower mean value, it appears that some respondents may have had negative experiences which include technology-related faults when making use of electronic banking services and that they are consequently hesitant to agree that, given the state of existing electronic banking technology, that technology-related errors are quite rare. Overall, however, Table 6-4 represented the mean values of the statements used to measure competence trust, which ranged from 3.74 to 4.09. Hence, even though statement CT2 (main finding 10, section 6.4.2) portrayed a somewhat lower mean value, in general the respondents tended to agree with the statements measured. Thus, the literature review findings concerning competence trust are relevant towards electronic banking services. The respondents agreed that electronic banking services are competent and can offer what they promised, in other words, their services are reliable and can be trusted. However, respondents felt to some degree that, given the state of existing electronic banking technology, they believed that technology-related errors are quite rare.

Therefore, based on the main findings of both the empirical and literature review, the following main conclusion, implication and recommendation were identified:

- **Main conclusion 3**

  The majority of the respondents displayed competence trust in electronic banking services, since they agreed that they could rely on electronic banking technology to execute their transactions reliably. Nevertheless, some doubt was shown in the existing electronic banking technology, since respondents indicated that they agreed the least that technology-related errors are quite rare. In general, however, the respondents tended to agree with the competence trust measurement statements.

- **Implication 3**

  The implication of this finding is that to establish trust among users of electronic banking services, it would be necessary for retail banks to focus on the competence dimension of trust. Perceptions of a reliable service delivery are useful in convincing users that the service can be trusted. A further implication of this finding is then that it seems important for retail banks to ensure superior functional delivery of their electronic banking services that are free of errors and that creates the perception of competent and reliable service delivery.

- **Recommendation 3**

  To create perceptions of a reliable service delivery, retail banks need to further explore why customers think their electronic banking services are reliable and further build on these characteristics to strengthen their position among customers. Retail banks should also focus on the technological design of their electronic banking services and must ensure that these are of the highest standard without out any errors.

7.3.5 Secondary objective 5

Secondary objective 5
To assess the extent to which bank customers exhibit continuance commitment towards the electronic banking services for which they are registered.

In Chapter 2, it was established that commitment entails a customer's desire to maintain a relationship with an organisation that includes mutual long-term advantages for both of the parties (Roberts-Lombard & Du Plessis, 2012:62). Consequently, similar to trust, customer commitment is also grounded in the relationship marketing theory and is regarded as a core relationship quality element (Hennig-Thurau *et al*., 2002:234; Morgan & Hunt, 1994:22; Mukherjee & Nath, 2007:1192; Ulaga & Eggert, 2006:314). Section 2.5.2 indicated that commitment comprises three sub-dimensions, namely affective-, normative- and continuance commitment. For this study, continuance commitment was selected for further investigation. Continuance commitment arises when customers feel obliged to continue the relationship with an organisation (Roxenhall & Andrésen, 2012:88) and relies on the service or product's rewards (Allen & Meyer, 1990:4). Continuance commitment can provide insight into whether customers are prepared to make a continued investment in a relationship in the electronic banking services to avoid the potential costs of defection. Furthermore, like the perceived usefulness and competence trust constructs, an assessment of the perceived cost of ending or continuing the relationship could also involve an evaluation of the functional performance of the technology. Within the electronic banking services context, continuance commitment is based on the fact that it may be difficult for customers to end their transactions on electronic banking channels (for example, Internet banking on a website) for numerous reasons. For instance, a customer who have invested profoundly in its use; a shortage of available substitutes or else the administration of the customer's private finances would be interrupted if electronic banking transactions were to be terminated (Brun *et al.*, 2014:10, 17).

Chapter 2 provided the following additional insights with respect to the application of continuance commitment in the electronic banking environment. Firstly, electronic banking customers may continue the relationship with a retail bank if the electronic banking service provided is regarded as safe or if customers are capable to access the banking services 24 hours a day from any location without any postponement or queue, and the outcomes of the electronic banking transactions can be viewed immediately. Next, electronic banking customers may develop a psychological attachment towards electronic banking services by identifying with the bank and by favouring the electronic banking website. Lastly, electronic banking customers may make sacrifices to use electronic banking services, for instance the lack of physical communication amongst the bank employees and the customers and incurring cost to obtain the mediums to conduct the electronic banking services, such as Internet costs, purchasing the technological equipment (for example a computer, laptop or a mobile phone). Having made all these sacrifices, they may wish to continue with the electronic banking services to ensure that they benefit and avoid incurring new costs when switching to an alternative approach.

The following main findings with regards to continuance commitment can be derived from the literature review:

- Similar to trust, commitment is grounded in the relationship marketing theory and is regarded as a core element of relationship quality.
- Continuance commitment is a sub-dimension of customer commitment.
- Continuance commitment occurs when a customer has a rational reason for continuing the relationship with the organisation, for instance avoiding potential costs of leaving the relationship.
- Within the context of this study, continuance commitment refers to electronic banking customers' **psychological attachment** to their retail banks and their **intention to remain in the relationship** and **make sacrifices to benefit from the electronic banking service over the long term**.

The fifth secondary objective of this study was to assess the extent to which bank customers exhibit continuance commitment towards the electronic banking services for which they are registered. To address this objective, the main findings of both the empirical and literature review are integrated to assist identifying the main conclusion, implication and recommendation.

The literature review indicated that electronic banking customers' continuance commitment entails their psychological attachment to their retail banks and their intention to remain in the relationship and to make sacrifices to benefit from the electronic banking service over the long term. The main findings from the empirical research demonstrated that the respondents mostly agreed that when they consider the convenience of electronic banking services, it makes sense for them to use it (main finding 11, section 6.4.2). Consequently, it is apparent that customers have continuance commitment towards electronic. Furthermore, the respondents agreed least that for the sake of being able to function more efficiently, they felt motivated to use electronic banking services (main finding 12, section 6.4.2). For this statement, a mean value of 4.05 was obtained. Table 6-5 represented the mean values of the statements used to measure continuance commitment which ranged from 4.05 to 4.22. Thus, even though statement CC3 (main finding 12, section 6.4.2) portrayed a slightly lower mean value, overall the respondents tended to agree with the statements. Consequently, the literature review findings concerning continuance commitment are relevant towards electronic banking services. The respondents agreed that they felt continuance commitment towards electronic banking services, because it makes sense to use it and are considered to be convenient.

Consequently, based on the main findings of both the empirical and literature review, the following main conclusion, implication and recommendation can be made:

- **Main conclusion 4**

  The majority of respondents showed continuance commitment towards electronic banking services, since they agreed that when they consider the convenience of electronic banking services, it makes sense for them to use these. However, some doubt was demonstrated towards feeling motivated to use electronic banking service as an enabler to function more efficiently. In general, however, the respondents tended to agree with the continuance commitment measurement statements.

- **Implication 4**

  The implication of this finding is that to establish commitment among users of electronic banking services, it is necessary for retail banks to focus on the continuance commitment dimension. A further important implication for retail banks is that it seems important to ensure that electronic banking users are convinced about the benefits the service provided and that these outweigh the cost involved in obtaining and using the service.

- **Recommendation 4**

  Strategies must be examined that may assist retail banks with the overall continuance commitment of their electronic banking services. For example, banks can make sure that customers fully comprehend the benefits of the services provided to them and that the cost of leaving outweighs the benefits when ending electronic banking services. To accomplish this, it may be necessary for retail banks to conduct a thorough examination into the elements and statements measuring continuance commitment in this study. Implementing the aforementioned will support retail banks by providing them with an advanced understanding regarding the following aspects and to employ strategies to improve performance. Firstly, why is it that when customers consider the convenience of electronic banking services, they feel that it makes sense for them to use it? Banks can also determine why customers feel able to function more efficiently, and why they feel motivated to use electronic banking services. Next, why customers' business transactions would require considerable more time and effort if they were to stop using electronic banking services. Lastly, banks should determine why customers' time management dictates that they make use of electronic banking services to conduct their banking transactions. Additionally, it is also important for retail banks to remain up to date with the latest competitor developments and to make regular improvements to their electronic banking service offering to ensure that customers continuously benefit from the service and that they would perceive the cost of switching to another service provider as being too high.

7.3.6 Secondary objective 6

Secondary objective 6
To determine the positive word of mouth intentions of bank customers pertaining to electronic banking services.

In Chapter 3, it was noted that customer loyalty is perceived as an intention by customers wanting to remain in a relation with an organisation to perform several behaviours, which include engaging in positive word of mouth communication (Sirdeshmukh *et al.*, 2002:20). Behavioural intention relates to whether a customer has an intention to continue or to sever the relationship with the organisation and consequently defect to a competing organisation (Zeithaml *et al*., 1996:33). Behavioural intentions can be constructive, since the customer may be willing to pay a premium for a product or service, remain loyal, buy in larger quantities from the firm or engage in other behaviour, such as recommending the firm (Zeithaml *et al*., 1996:33). Behavioural intention is also a valuable indicator of the future purchase behaviours of customers as well as of those who are influenced by the firm's customers through positive word of mouth (Jani & Han, 2011). This study focused on positive word of mouth intention as a form of behavioural intention. Word of mouth communication is defined as informal communication on products and services amongst those who consumed these products or services and those who are interested in these products or services through the exchange of comments, thoughts and ideas (Arndt, 1967:3; Babin & Harris, 2018:170; Eze *et al*., 2014:126).

Word of mouth is considered to be more honest and sincere compared to communication received from other sources, for instance advertising media (Sivadas & Jindal, 2017). It is also influential regarding consumers' decisions to purchase a product or service (Ng *et al*., 2011). However, word of mouth can be positive or negative and can be spread through online or offline channels (De Matos & Rossi, 2008:580; Gruen *et al.*, 2006:451; Lindberg-Repo & Grönroos, 1999:115; Pokrywka & Gfrerer, 2012:16; Richins, 1984:697). Positive word of mouth relates to a customer's loyalty (De Matos & Rossi, 2008:580). Thus, positive word of mouth intention is regarded as a behavioural intention of loyalty.

It was also evident in Chapter 3 that within the electronic banking environment, customer loyalty is grounded on the fact that the relationships with electronic banking services may be *long-term of nature.* For example, loyal electronic banking customers will remain conducting banking transactions electronically even if close peers were to recommend other banking websites. Customer loyalty in the electronic banking environment is also based on the view of the relevance of *past experiences*; this element is *habitual in nature.* A positive first experience with electronic banking services may lead to an optimistic attitude and improved self-efficacy and thus inspire future use; however, a negative first experience may have the consequence that the customers dislike the services, and experience reduced self-efficacy in addition to hinder further use. For instance, customers who feel electronic banking is useful for their banking desires, who are satisfied with the experience and who feel that they can accomplish their banking requirements using electronic banking services even if there is no help around, will remain with the electronic banking service.

Furthermore, customers in the electronic banking environment may choose to remain loyal towards electronic banking services above alternatives (especially in-branch banking services). This is because of the convenience offered by electronic banking services, the opportunity provided to customers to be more productive; the benefit of conducting electronic banking service at any place and time, and the benefit that the price of electronic banking services is lesser than the substitute offering (traditional in-branch banking services).

It was further established that word of mouth communication within an electronic banking context may relate to customers participating in *face-to-face communication* with other possible customers about the usability of electronic banking services. Consequently, customers may participate in positive exchanges (*exchanges of comments, thoughts and ideas)* about the advantages of the electronic banking service with potential customers. Positive word of mouth communication in the electronic banking context may involve informal sources of information, for example peers and family to whom one makes positive comments, providing references or reassuring potential customers to use electronic banking services (these sources do not represent the retail bank).

With regards to behavioural intention, it was evident that within the electronic banking environment potential customers' perceptions or expectations may be influenced by current electronic banking customers, for example their relatives, who may highlight the key qualities of electronic banking services. Furthermore, customers may participate in favourable or unfavourable behavioural intention. Favourable behaviours may include customers endorsing electronic banking services to other possible customers, for example that the charges of electronic banking services are less than traditional in-branch transactions. On the other hand, unfavourable behaviour may entail that current electronic customers complains to potential customers about feeling that electronic banking is dangerous because their personal data may be violated.

The following main findings with regards to customer loyalty, behavioural intention and positive word of mouth intention can be derived from the literature review:

- Customer loyalty is perceived as an intention by customers wanting to remain in a relationship with an organisation to perform several behaviours, for example word of mouth communication.

- Behavioural intention relates to whether a customer has the intention to continue or to sever his or her relationship with the organisation.

- Behavioural intention is also a valuable indicator of the future purchase behaviours of customers.

- Word of mouth communication is informal communication about products and services amongst those who consumed these products or services and those who are interested in these products or services through the exchange of comments, thoughts and ideas.

- Positive word of mouth intention is regarded as a behavioural intention of loyalty.

- Customer loyalty in this study refers to the decision made by customers, as informed by **past experiences**, to **continue** making use of the electronic banking services for which they are registered, **regardless of the availability of substitutes** in the market.

- In this study, positive word of mouth communication refers to the **interpersonal and informal exchanges of comments, thoughts and ideas** about electronic banking between customers that **do not represent the bank** and where the interaction may occur in a **face-to-face setting**.

- For this study, behavioural intention refers to electronic banking customers' **inclinations** to engage in **favourable or unfavourable** behaviour and is based on their **subjective norms** of the service provided.

- For this study, positive word of mouth intention refers to electronic banking customers' **inclinations** to provide **positive** recommendations about the service provided. Their favourable intended behaviour is likely to be based on **subjective opinions** of the service provided by the bank with whom they want to **continue** having a relationship.

The sixth secondary objective of this study was to determine the positive word of mouth intentions of bank customers pertaining to electronic banking services. To address this objective, the main findings of the empirical and literature review are integrated to identify the main conclusion, implication and recommendation.

The literature review pointed out that positive word of mouth intention of electronic banking customers refers to their inclinations to provide positive recommendations about the service provided. Their favourable intended behaviour is likely to be based on subjective opinions of the service provided by the bank with whom they want to continue having a relationship.

Regarding the respondents' level of positive word of mouth intention towards electronic banking services, they mostly agreed that if asked, they would recommend electronic banking services to other people (main finding 13, section 6.4.3). Consequently, it was found that customers will engage in positive conversations regarding electronic banking services. Furthermore, the respondents agreed least that if asked, they would say positive things about electronic banking services to other people (main finding 14, section 6.4.3). The mean value of this statement was 4.18. Table 6-6 further indicated that the mean values of the statements that were used to measure positive word of mouth intention ranged from 4.18 to 4.28. Hence, even though statement PWOMI1 (main finding 14, section 6.4.3) obtained a somewhat lower mean value, overall the respondents tended to agree with the measurement statements. Therefore, the literature review findings regarding positive word of mouth intention are relevant for electronic banking services. The respondents agreed that they had the intention to engage in positive word of mouth regarding electronic banking services.

Hence, based on the main findings of both the empirical and literature review, the following main conclusion, implication and recommendation were identified:

- **Main conclusion 5**

  The majority of respondents intended to engage in positive word of mouth communication regarding electronic banking services, since they agreed that they would recommend electronic banking services to other people. The respondents tended to agree with the positive word of mouth intention measurement statements. If asked, they agreed that they would encourage and say positive things about electronic banking to others.

- **Implication 5**

  Respondents demonstrated an intention to tell potential customers about electronic banking services. Thus, there is an opportunity for retail banks to make use of these positive word of mouth intentions. Strategies are therefore needed to motivate these current electronic banking customers to move from intent to communicate to actual positive word of mouth communication.

- **Recommendation 5**

  It is advisable for retail banks to use strategies that will provide the necessary encouragement for current electronic customers to actually talk to potential customers about the benefits of the service and recommend the service to them. Current electronic banking customers must believe the advantages of the electronic banking services are superior to other service providers in addition to using traditional in-branch banking services. Current electronic banking customers must understand the usefulness of the electronic banking services. Marketing campaigns, for instance, could be launched to help customers understand the extent to which the bank's offerings would assist them in improving their productivity and in managing their personal lives. Educational videos could also be uploaded on the website to ensure customers buy into the benefits of the service. Also, it is important for banks to ensure that customers believe in the reliability of the electronic banking service and that it is worth recommending to friends and family. Customer trust can be gained by ensuring that technology-related errors are limited and by creating awareness of security measures that aim to prevent fraudulent transactions.

7.3.7 Secondary objective 7

Secondary objective 7
To examine the interrelationships between the constructs of this study, namely perceived usefulness, competence trust, continuance commitment and positive word of mouth intentions.

Insight was obtained in Chapter 4 of the literature review regarding the interrelationships amongst the identified constructs, namely perceived usefulness, competence trust, continuance commitment and positive word of mouth intention.

Based on the literature review in Chapter 4, the following main findings regarding positive word of mouth were determined:

- Perceived usefulness of the service has a positive and significant impact on positive word of mouth intention.
- Competence trust in the service has a positive and significant impact on positive word of mouth intention.
- Continuance commitment towards the service has a positive and significant impact on positive word of mouth intention.

- Competence trust in the service has a positive and significant impact on continuance commitment towards the service.
- Perceived usefulness of the service has a positive and significant impact on continuance commitment towards the service.
- Perceived usefulness of the service has a significant positive indirect effect on positive word of mouth intention, as mediated by continuance commitment towards the service.
- Competence trust in the service has a significant positive indirect effect on positive word of mouth intention, as mediated by continuance commitment towards the service.

Along with the main findings from Chapter 4’s literature, important main findings from the empirical investigation were also determined. Main findings 15 to 34 relate to secondary objective 7.

It was determined that all the measurement scales measuring the constructs of perceived usefulness, competence trust, continuance commitment and positive word of mouth intention can be considered as highly reliable since they all displayed high internal consistency reliability (main finding 15, section 6.5.1).

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) calculated the four-component measurement model, which offered validation that an acceptable model fit was achieved (main finding 16, section 6.5.2 and main finding 27, section 6.6.1). Furthermore, the standardised factor loadings established that all measurement items loaded significantly onto their respective latent variables and could be retained in the measurement model (main finding 17, section 6.5.2). With respect to each latent variable, the composite reliability (CR) values determined offered confirmation of strong internal consistency (main finding 18, section 6.5.2). All four constructs of the measurement model (perceived usefulness, competence trust, continuance commitment and positive word of mouth intention) demonstrated strong reliability and convergent validity (main finding 19, section 6.5.2). The results obtained from the correlation matrix and AVE values provided evidence that the four constructs of the measurement model all have discriminant validity (main finding 20, section 6.5.2.3). Face validity was obtained. Thus, the measurement items measured what they were intended to measure (main finding 21, section 6.5.2.4). Moreover, construct validity was obtained, which provided evidence that the constructs measured were distinct from one another and that for each construct measured, the relevant measurement items associated with the construct had a high portion of variance in common (main finding 22, section 6.5.2.4). The overall mean scores for all the constructs were above the mid-point of the measurement scale, a finding that indicated that the respondents overall agreed and were positive about the statements measured (main finding 23, 24, 25, 26, section 6.5.2).

Considering the fit statistics presented, it can be concluded that the structural model of this study has an acceptable model fit (main finding 27, section 6.6.1).

The empirical findings also indicated that the perceived usefulness of the service does not have a positive and significant impact on positive word of mouth intention. (main finding 28, section 6.6.2), competence trust in the service has a positive and significant impact on positive word of mouth intention (main finding 29, section 6.6.2), continuance commitment towards the service has a positive and significant impact on positive word of mouth intention (main finding 30, section 6.6.2), competence trust in the service has a positive and significant impact on continuance commitment towards the service (main finding 31, section 6.6.2), perceived usefulness of the service has a positive and significant impact on continuance commitment towards the service (main finding 32, section 6.6.2), perceived usefulness of the service has a significant positive indirect effect on positive word of mouth intention, as mediated by continuance commitment towards the service (main finding 33, section 6.6.2), and competence trust in the service has a significant positive indirect effect on positive word of mouth intention, as mediated by continuance commitment towards the service (main finding 34, section 6.6.2).

Therefore, based on the main findings of the empirical and literature review, the following main conclusion, implication and recommendation were identified:

- **Main conclusion 6**

  There is a positive and significant impact on the relationships between all of the constructs identified, except for the relationship amongst perceived usefulness and positive word of mouth intention. Furthermore, continuance customer commitment has a partial mediating effect on the relationship amongst competence trust (another relationship quality factor) and positive word of mouth intention. It was also found that continuance customer commitment (a relationship quality factor) has the potential to strengthen the relationship between perceived usefulness (a customer perceived value factor) and positive word of mouth intention. In fact, full mediation was obtained.

- **Implication 6**

  Four important theoretical implications can be derived from the research findings. These findings are strategically important for relationship marketing researchers interested in furthering knowledge on the impact of relationship marketing practices on word of mouth behaviour. It seems that customers' perceptions of service attributes and the value received must be considered when furthering knowledge on trust and commitment and developing strategic recommendations for enhancing word of mouth communication. The relationship between competence trust and positive word of mouth intention can be further strengthened by adding continuance commitment as a mediator. Continuance commitment also has the potential to strengthen the relationship between perceived usefulness and positive word of mouth intention.

Secondly, little published research exists on the impact of customer perceived value on relationship quality. While marketing research acknowledges this relationship, only a few studies could be found that empirically support this connection (Moliner *et al.,* 2007; Moliner, 2009). The current findings provide further evidence that customers' perceptions of perceived value may contribute towards relationship quality. Specifically, it appears that within the electronic banking environment, customers who perceive the service as useful and as enhancing their productivity may also view the cost associated with leaving the relationship to be too great, and thus want to remain continuingly committed.

Thirdly this study's findings confirm the previously established relationship between trust and commitment (Moreira & Silva, 2015; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Shukla *et al*., 2016). However, in the context of electronic banking services, direct relationships were found between competence trust and continuance commitment. It seems that customers who believe that a service is reliable may feel that the cost of terminating the service would be too high, and therefore would rather remain committed to the current service.

Finally, the significant and positive relationship between competence trust and positive word of mouth intention (that remained significant after the mediating effect of continuance commitment) points to the importance of trusting relationships within the electronic banking environment and customers' inclination to recommend a service that they perceive as reliable to potential customers.

- **Recommendation 6**

In order for retail banks to ensure positive word of mouth intention amongst current electronic banking customers, these banks should invest their funds to enhance customers' beliefs about competence trust and continuance commitment as well as in the usefulness of the electronic banking services. This can be achieved by the strategies recommended in sections 7.3.1 to 7.3.7.

7.4 LINKS BETWEEN THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES, THEORETICAL BACKGROUND, QUESTIONNAIRE SECTIONS, HYPOTHESES, MAIN RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this section is to link the secondary objectives that were formulated in Chapter 1 (section 1.7), to the main findings in Chapter 6 (section 6.7), to determine whether the primary objective was accomplished. Table 7-1 provides a summary of the connections amongst the research objectives, the theoretical investigation, the questionnaire sections, hypotheses, main findings, conclusions and recommendations.

Table 7-1: Summary of the connections amongst the research objectives, theoretical investigation, questionnaire sections, hypotheses, main findings, conclusions and recommendations

	Objective	Theoretical background	Questionnaire section	Hypotheses	Main finding	Main conclusion	Recommendation
Primary objective	1(a)	Chapter 1 (section 1.4), Chapter 2 (sections 2.2, 2.3, 2.4), Chapter 3 (sections 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5)					The conclusions and recommendations formulated for secondary objectives 2 to 7 are supported by the theoretical review as embodied in Chapter 1 to 4.
	1(b)	Chapter 1 (sections 1.4.2, 1.4.3, 1.4.4), Chapter 2 (sections 2.2.3, 2.4), Chapter 3 (sections 3.3, 3.4, 3.5)					
	1(c)	Chapter 1 (section 1.5.1), Chapter 4 (sections 4.2, 4.3)	The theoretical background presented in Chapter 4 served as conformation to formulate H_1 to H_7				
	2		Section 3		Main findings 1 - 6 (section 6.3)	Main conclusion 1	Recommendation 1
	3	Chapter 2	Section 1		Main findings 7 - 8 (section 6.4.1)	Main conclusion 2	Recommendation 2
	4	Chapter 2	Section 1		Main findings 9 - 10 (section 6.4.2)	Main conclusion 3	Recommendation 3
	5	Chapter 2	Section 1		Main findings 11 - 12 (section 6.4.2)	Main conclusion 4	Recommendation 4
	6	Chapter 3	Section 2		Main findings 13 - 14 (section 6.4.3)	Main conclusion 5	Recommendation 5
	7	Chapter 4		H_1 to H_7	Main findings 15 - 34 (sections 6.5 - 6.7)	Main conclusion 6	Recommendation 6

Taking in consideration the information summarised in Table 7-1, it can be concluded that the primary and secondary objectives formulated for this study have been attained.

7.5 LIMITATIONS

Even though this study provided valuable information regarding positive word of mouth intention of electronic banking customers, all studies have limitations. The theoretical and empirical limitations are noted in the sections below.

7.5.1 Limitations of the theoretical background

- No studies, to the best knowledge of the researcher, have been conducted to determine the interrelationships between perceived usefulness, competence trust, continuance commitment and positive word of mouth communication as a form of behavioural intention within the South African electronic banking services context. Therefore, the researcher primarily depended on literature based on other industries.

- In this study, the researcher did not focus on the several dimensions of relationship quality as acknowledged by various scholars (Giovanis *et al.,* 2015: 750; Hennig-Thurau *et al.,* 2002:234; Mukherjee & Nath, 2007:1192; Ulaga & Eggert, 2006:314). For the purpose of this study, only the most relevant core constructs, namely trust and commitment (Hennig-Thurau *et al*., 2002:234; Morgan & Hunt, 1994:22; Mukherjee & Nath, 2007:1192; Ulaga & Eggert, 2006:314) were investigated.

- In this study, the researcher did not focus on the several dimensions of perceived value as acknowledged by various scholars (Gallarza & Gil, 2008:7; Näslund *et al*., 2006:303; Rintamäki *et al*., 1996:10-11; Snoj *et al*., 2004:158; Strydom, 2014:59-87). Only the most relevant core dimension, namely the utilitarian value from the multi-dimensional perspective from Babin *et al*. (1994) and Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) was investigated.

7.5.2 Limitations of the empirical research

- This study was conducted among electronic banking customers in three provinces of South Africa, namely the Free State, the North-West Province and Gauteng. Thus, the findings are not a representation of all of the opinions of electronic banking customers in all of the South African provinces.

- A cross-sectional study was conducted and the findings subsequently do not make provision for the extent to which customer perceptions and behaviour may change over time.

- Due to the convenience sampling method used, the realised sample of this study was skewed towards respondents below the age of 35. The findings are subsequently limited to the views of younger electronic banking users.

7.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- The current model only focused on perceived usefulness as a belief factor that may contribute to commitment. Future studies may consider including other belief factors that may also be relevant within the self-service technology environment and that may have an impact on continuance commitment.

- The model can also be extended by adding more dimensions of relationship quality that may be important and could contribute to positive word of mouth intention.

- It is also recommended that the study should be repeated in different service sectors to verify the relevance and benefits of the proposed model in other research contexts.

- In Chapter 3 (section 3.4.1) the elements of the communication process were investigated. One of the aspects mentioned regarding the element “the receiver and decoding of the message” is miscommunication. Miscommunication can occur because customers do not always give their full attention while reading or listening, thus leading to misinterpretations of a message (Lamb *et al*., 2011:348; Lamb *et al*., 2017:265).

Thus, for future research, these aspects can be further investigated and their impact on customer to customer communication can be identified. The present study did not examine the abovementioned since this was not the focus of this study.

Future research may also consider a longitudinal approach, since it may recognise the variation in levels of competence trust, continuance commitment and positive word of mouth intention over a period of time. It is also recommended that the same study should be extended to other provinces in South Africa and to ensure older respondents (over the age of 35) are also included in the study, to allow for a more representative view of electronic banking users in South Africa.

7.7 SUMMARY

Chapter 7 concluded this study. It commenced with an overview of the research problem of this study, which was followed by the main conclusions, implications and recommendations for the secondary objectives of this study. Thereafter, Table 7-1 summarised the connections identified amongst the research objectives, theoretical background chapters, questionnaire sections, hypotheses, main results, conclusions and recommendations. Subsequent to this discussion, the theoretical background and the empirical research limitations were listed. Recommendations for potential future research concluded this chapter.

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ANNEXURE A

FINAL QUESTIONNAIRE

Kindly note:

The research data collected for this study formed part of a larger project on customer citizenship behaviour within the electronic banking environment.

Only the questions and measurement items relevant to this study are listed in this section.

Customer Citizenship Behaviour in the E-banking Environment

This questionnaire is designed to obtain feedback regarding your experiences and beliefs about e-banking services. (E-banking is a service provided by banks that allows you to use a telephone, cellphone or computer to carry out banking transactions.)

We would appreciate it if you could kindly complete this questionnaire. Taking part in this survey is completely voluntary and anonymous. Your responses will be kept confidential.

The questionnaire consists of six sections and should take no more than 15 minutes of your time to complete. Your co-operation is highly appreciated.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact Prof Estelle van Tonder at the North-West University in South Africa (25621610@nwu.ac.za).

Screening question:

1. Which of the following types of e-banking services do you use to carry out banking transactions? (For example, paying bills.) *(More than one option may be selected.)*

	x
Telephone banking	
Internet banking (using a computer)	
Internet banking (using a mobile banking app)	
Cellphone banking	
I do not use e-banking services	

If you have selected any of the e-banking services listed above, please continue to Question 2 below.

If you do not use e-banking services, thank you for your willingness to participate, but you do not qualify to continue with the questionnaire.

SECTION MEASURING PERCEIVED USEFULNESS, COMPETENCE TRUST AND CONTINUANCE COMMITMENT

The following statements relate to your perceptions and experiences regarding e-banking services. Indicate on a scale of 1-5 the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements.

Statements	Strongly disagree		⇒		Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5
Using e-banking services will improve my performance in managing my personal life.	1	2	3	4	5
Using e-banking services will increase my productivity in managing my personal life.	1	2	3	4	5
Using e-banking services will enhance my effectiveness in managing my personal life.	1	2	3	4	5
My time management dictates that I make use of e-banking services to carry out my banking transactions.	1	2	3	4	5
My business transactions would require considerably more time and effort, if I were to stop using e-banking services.	1	2	3	4	5
For the sake of being able to function more efficiently, I feel motivated to use e-banking services.	1	2	3	4	5
When I consider the convenience of e-banking services, it makes sense for me to use it.	1	2	3	4	5
I can rely on e-banking technology to execute my transactions reliably.	1	2	3	4	5
Given the state of existing e-banking technology, I believe that technology related errors are quite rare.	1	2	3	4	5
In my opinion the e-banking technology I use is very reliable.	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION MEASURING POSITIVE WORD OF MOUTH INTENTION

Again, thinking about your experiences with e-banking services, indicate on a scale of 1-5 the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements:

If asked, I would:

Statements	Strongly disagree		⇨		Strongly agree
	1	2	3	4	5
Say positive things about e-banking services to other people.	1	2	3	4	5
Recommend e-banking services to other people.	1	2	3	4	5
Encourage other people to use e-banking services.	1	2	3	4	5

SECTION MEASURING DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

What is your gender?

	x
Male	
Female	

In which year were you born? ___________________________

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey!

APPENDIX B

ETHICAL APPROVAL

NWU®
NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT
YUNIBESITI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA

Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom,
South Africa, 2520

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Web: http://www.nwu.ac.za

Research Ethics Regulatory Committee
Tel: +27 18 299 4849
Email : Ethics@nwu.ac.za

ETHICS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE OF PROJECT

Based on approval by the **Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EMS-REC) on 31/07/2017** after being reviewed at the meeting held on **21/07/2017**, the North-West University Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (NWU-RERC) hereby **approves** your project as indicated below. This implies that the NWU-RERC grants its permission that, provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the project may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

Project title: **A mediated model for positive word of mouth intention in the electronic banking environment**

Project Leader/Supervisor: Prof E van Tonder
<u>Student</u>: N VAN VUUREN (24062715)

Ethics number: N W U - 0 0 6 0 3 - 1 7 - A 4
(Institution / Project Number / Year / Status)

<u>Status</u>: S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation

Application Type: Single study

Commencement date: 2017-07-21 Expiry date: 2020-07-20 Risk: LOW

***Special conditions of the approval (if applicable):**

Please note that this is not an ethical clearance of the data collection project itself, but for the applicant's use of the data for this specific application.

General conditions:

While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, please note the following:

- *The project leader (principle investigator) must report in the prescribed format to the NWU-RERC via EMS-REC:*
  - *annually (or as otherwise requested) on the progress of the project, and upon completion of the project*
  - *without any delay in case of any adverse event (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the project.*
  - *Annually a number of projects may be randomly selected for an external audit.*
- *The approval applies strictly to the protocol as stipulated in the application form. Would any changes to the protocol be deemed necessary during the course of the project, the project leader must apply for approval of these changes at the EMS-REC. Would there be deviated from the project protocol without the necessary approval of such changes, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.*
- *The date of approval indicates the first date that the project may be started. Would the project have to continue after the expiry date, a new application must be made to the NWU-RERC via EMS-REC and new approval received before or on the expiry date.*
- *In the interest of ethical responsibility the NWU-RERC and EMS-REC retains the right to:*
  - *request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the project;*
  - *to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process.*
  - *withdraw or postpone approval if:*
    - *any unethical principles or practices of the project are revealed or suspected,*
    - *it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the EMS-REC or that information has been false or misrepresented,*
    - *the required annual report and reporting of adverse events was not done timely and accurately,*
    - *new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.*

The RERC would like to remain at your service as scientist and researcher, and wishes you well with your project. Please do not hesitate to contact the RERC or EMS-REC for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely

Prof Refilwe Phaswana-Mafuya
Chair NWU Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (RERC)

APPENDIX C

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS CONFIRMATION

NWU

Privaat sak X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa, 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
Web: http://www.nwu.ac.za

5 April 2018

RE: Statistical Analyses for Naomi van Vuuren (24062715)

To whom it may concern,

This is to confirm that I, the undersigned, acted as a statistical consultant for the above mentioned student's manuscript. A wide variety of techniques were implemented which included: Structural equation modelling methods (measurement and structural models) with latent and observed variables in the Mplus software package.

Kind regards,

Prof. Leon de Beer
Associate Professor
Industrial Psychologist
Research Psychologist
WorkWell Research Unit
DeBeer.Leon@nwu.ac.za

APPENDIX D

LANGUAGE EDITING CONFIRMATION

Declaration

This is to declare that I, L Rathbone

Language editor and translator

have language edited the study

with the title

A MEDIATED MODEL FOR POSITIVE WORD OF MOUTH INTENTION IN THE ELECTRONIC BANKING ENVIROMENT

by

Naomi van Vuuren

LRathbone

Date: 18 April 2018