A service recovery model for the mobile internet service provider industry

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ABSTRACT

Due to the nature of services – being intangible, perishable and requiring the human-element – the service delivery process can be relatively complex, thus posing distinct marketing challenges. This process is even further impeded by customers' subjective assessment of the service experience. As such, irrespective of the service provider's commitment to deliver satisfying and error-free services, it might not always be able to meet customers' expectations, inevitably resulting in service failures. Service failures often result in customer dissatisfaction, disloyalty, or defection. These negative behaviours can be minimised by properly handling customer complaints and having service recovery strategies in place. Successful service recovery is, therefore, essential in sustaining customer satisfaction and loyalty.

As the South African mobile internet service provider (ISP) industry has been experiencing a significant increase in customer complaints (about service failures) and poor complaint resolution, this study set out to investigate the service recovery actions of these providers. As such, the study developed a service recovery model for the South African mobile ISP industry, with a view into the service recovery attributes that influence customers' satisfaction with the recovery effort, as well as the behavioural outcomes that could result from customers who are satisfied with the service recovery.

The study implemented a quantitative descriptive research design. The target population comprised customers (i.e. contract and prepaid) of the main South African mobile ISPs (i.e. Cell C, MTN, Telkom, or Vodacom), who have complained to their mobile ISP. A total of 484 usable responses were obtained through non-probability convenience sampling. The primary data was collected by means of an online survey made available on social networking sites and an online panel (by Consulta).

The empirical data analysis included (a) descriptive statistics, (b) Cronbach's alpha coefficients to test the reliability of the scales, (c) a confirmatory factor analysis to confirm the validity of the scales and (d) structural equation modelling (SEM) to test the conceptual model and hypothesised relationships. The structural model results indicated an acceptable model fit, with statistically significant structural paths supporting H_1, H_2, H_4, H_5, and H_6. As such, it is recommended that South African mobile ISPs focus on the implementation of effective service recovery actions, such as compensation, response speed, apology, and explanation, as these attributes were found to have a positive effect on respondents' satisfaction with service recovery. Mobile ISPs are furthermore advised to ensure that their customers are satisfied with the provided service recovery effort, as this can improve their trust, generate positive eWOM, and encourage repurchases.

Several theoretical and managerial contributions were made from the research findings. From a theoretical perspective, this study introduced service recovery attributes (i.e. compensation, response speed, apology, and explanation) as a multi-dimensional construct. The study further contributes to the service recovery literature, by establishing the relationships between the antecedents of satisfaction with service recovery as well as the behavioural outcomes of service recovery. From a managerial perspective, the service recovery model developed in this study provides a comprehensive tool that South African mobile ISPs can implement to manage service failures, restore customer satisfaction, and encourage positive behavioural responses.

Ultimately, the research findings serve as a basis for identifying the antecedents and behavioural outcomes of satisfaction with service recovery. It is recommended that future research expand these findings by testing the service recovery model in different service industries in order to determine the relevance and viability of the model.

LIST OF KEY TERMS

This section presents the key terms and their related definitions used in this study in alphabetical order:

- **Apology** (as service recovery attribute) refers to the service provider's admission of responsibility and expression of remorse for the service failure that occurred. By apologising and taking responsibility for the service failure incident, the service provider essentially acknowledges and addresses customer complaints, which ultimately results in higher customer satisfaction levels (after the service failure) (Liao, 2007:477).

- **Compensation** (as service recovery attribute) entails the financial resources – in the form of discounts, free product offerings, or refunds – that a service provider offers to the customer for the inconvenience caused to him/her as a result of the service failure (Mostafa *et al*., 2014:302).

- **Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM)** can be viewed as a form of online communication (either positive or negative) about a product or a business, which is shared by potential, current, or previous customers to various people and institutions (Hennig-Thurau *et al*., 2004:39).

- **Explanation** (as service recovery attribute) is defined as the service provider's effort to provide reasons for the occurrence of a problem or service failure in a clear and meaningful manner (Boshoff, 1999:240; Sciarelli *et al*., 2017:27).

- **Mobile internet service provider (ISP)** is a service provider that expands the functionality of the traditional internet service provider via the supplementary elements of mobility in access to the internet (Benn, 2006:2). The main South African mobile ISPs are Cell C, MTN, Telkom, and Vodacom (CCSA, 2019:101).

- **Perceived justice** is a customer's subjective evaluation which relates to whether a service recovery action was fair or unfair (Davidow, 2003:232).

- **Repurchase intention** entails an individual's ultimate decision to re-patronise services of a certain provider while taking his or her present situation and circumstances into account (Hellier *et al*., 2003:1764).

- **Response speed** (as service recovery attribute) refers to the service provider's ability to address a service failure incident in a prompt manner (Liao, 2007:478). This includes reacting to customer complaints and implementing recovery actions without delay (Hübner *et al*., 2018:297).

- **Satisfaction with service recovery** is the customer's subjective evaluation of the favourability of any outcome or experience, which is related to the service provider's service recovery actions (Huang, 2011:511).

- **Service failure** occurs when a service does not fulfil the customer's expectations (Hess *et al*., 2003:126). This could be the actual situation or merely the customer's subjective view (Ngahu, 2019:20).

- **Service recovery** refers to the remedial actions that a service provider might initiate in response to the service failure experienced by the customer in the business' main or supplementary offering (Mattila & Patterson, 2004:337). Service recovery is the remedial actions initiated by the business in order to seek out customer dissatisfaction and also in response service failures (Andreassen, 2000:156).

- **Trust** relates to the willingness of one exchange party to depend on another exchange party in which one has confidence (Moorman *et al*., 1992:315).

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INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXTUALISATION OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

It is undeniable that even excellent service providers encounter service failures (Xu *et al*., 2019:1034). In particular, it is recognised that no internet service provider is perfect (Anwar *et al*., 2018:30). Even though delivering outstanding customer service may be the aim of every service provider, there will always be situations where the service provider fails to fulfil the customer's expectations (Newton *et al*., 2018:390). The basis for this argument is that the heterogeneity of services makes it somewhat difficult to assume that service delivery will be similar in all encounters, as well as elicit same satisfaction levels among customers in various settings (Odoom *et al*., 2019:1). A service failure occurs during the service consumption process when the customer's expectations of the service delivery are unfulfilled (Loo & Leung, 2018:80).

The concept of service failure is a major research topic in the field of services marketing and has been repeatedly proven to negatively affect the relationship between the service provider and its customers (Bougoure *et al*., 2016:63). As a result, customer-oriented service providers with long-term views, commonly endeavour to minimise service failures (Harun *et al*., 2019:621), as service failures can lead to the customer's loss of economic and social resources (Smith *et al*., 1999:358) and can prompt various emotional, cognitive and behavioural responses (Tsarenko *et al*., 2019:139).

Industry reports indicate that South African customers are dissatisfied with their mobile service providers' pricing and customer service, with one in ten customers indicating switching intentions to other mobile network service providers and 44.4% of the complaints made on social media to service providers were not responded to (BrandsEye, 2019). As mentioned by Reis *et al*. (2019:4), it is known that immediately after a service failure occurs, service recovery becomes vital. Statistics indicate that customers tell twice as many people about a bad experience as compared with a good experience; even if they do not directly complain to the service provider, typical dissatisfied customers will tell eight to ten people about the problem encountered (Shooshtari *et al*., 2018:229). If, however, the problem encountered is resolved and the customer is satisfied with the problem resolution, his/her retention rate will increase to 54% (Khan *et al*., 2016:3655). Matikiti, Roberts-Lombard *et al*. (2018:512) aptly recommend that service providers must find ways of winning back dissatisfied customers through service recovery.

Regrettably, most service providers appear to respond poorly to customer complaints and as a result deny themselves an important opportunity to retain and improve the relationship with their customers (Olatunde *et al*., 2020:77). Consequently, to contribute to service recovery theory and practice, this study aims to develop a service recovery model, specifically for South African mobile internet service providers (ISPs). To begin this process, this chapter starts with a discussion of the background of the study, which includes an explanation of the research problem, followed by an overview of the South African mobile ISP industry. The subsequent section provides insight into the relevant literature contributing to the development of the research hypotheses. Next, the conceptual model and purpose of the study is explained. The final sections of the chapter are dedicated to the contribution of the study, the research objectives, research methodology, and an outline of the chapters of the thesis.

1.2 BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH PROBLEM

The marketing discipline is mainly based on the philosophy of the 'marketing concept' (Boshoff, 2005:410). The marketing concept is the idea that a business should aim to satisfy its customers' needs while at the same time attempting to achieve its organisational objectives (Kerin & Hartley, 2017:14). Moreover, based on the marketing concept, in order for the business to accomplish its objectives, it is important that it has an understanding of the target market's needs and wants and also satisfy customers better than what the competitors do (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018:36). Customer satisfaction, thus, forms the primary focus of the marketing concept (Pride & Ferrell, 2019:13). In line with the marketing concept, the main objective of relationship marketing is to create and maintain long-term relationships with satisfied customers (Caliskan, 2019:196). Relationship marketing plays a significant role in establishing intimate relationships between the service provider and the customer to enable the service provider to correctly and adequately determine and satisfy customer needs (Al-Hersh *et al*., 2014:74). When a service is perceived to fulfil a customer's expectations, it is expected that customer satisfaction will be achieved (Mwatsika, 2016:4). For mobile network providers to acquire economic success, it is imperative to satisfy customers and nurture loyal relationships (Nurysh *et al*., 2019:299).

However, South African mobile network providers are frequently dealing with dissatisfied customers who feel that they are treated unfairly (MyBroadband, 2018). Moreover, South African customers threaten to leave their mobile service providers because of no response to nearly half of the complaints made (BrandsEye, 2019). The industry has a complaint incidence rate of 32.6%, which is remarkably high and a real concern, as complaints should be less than 10% (Consulta, 2020). When the service provider remains unresponsive to the customer's complaint, the customer can taint the service provider's reputation through negative word-of-mouth (WOM) and he/she can leave the service provider for better alternatives (Letsa & Asimah, 2018:7).

Research by Consulta (2019) established that the mobile network provider industry had an increase in complaints and a decrease in complaint resolution in 2018. Similarly, the findings by BrandsEye (2019) indicate that about 44% of the complaints made on social media were not responded to by mobile telecommunication providers. Among the complaints that were responded to, 61.0% of customers concluded that they were dissatisfied with the complaint resolution (BrandsEye, 2019). The recent Hellopeter TrustIndex also shows that Telkom has the highest number of dissatisfied customers among the major role players in the mobile telecommunication industry (MyBroadband, 2019a).

If service providers respond to dissatisfied customers' complaints, a new service loop (known as service recovery) is presented to these customers (Andreassen, 2000:157). Failing to restore customer satisfaction after a service failure can result in customers switching to competitors (Ozuem *et al*., 2017:99), but if the service recovery is satisfactory, the negative impact of the service failure will be reduced (Norvell *et al*., 2018:378).

Zeithaml *et al*. (2018:37) posit that a business must be knowledgeable of the significance of service recovery – reasons for customers' complaints, their expectations when they make complaints and how to create effective service recovery strategies – to respond to unavoidable service failures. When customers perceive the service provider's recovery efforts to be just, the possibility exists that satisfaction levels can be enhanced (satisfaction with service recovery), resulting in favourable customer behaviour (Ding & Lii, 2016:882; Petzer *et al*., 2017:242; Smith & Mpinganjira, 2015:35). Thus, customers' behavioural intentions are formed based on the level of satisfaction with the service recovery effort, which could influence their relationships with the service provider (Nadiri, 2016:198).

Many services encompass constant customer interaction with the service provider. Therefore, the service provider can acquire some benefit from relationship marketing through attracting, developing, and retaining customer relationships (McDaniel *et al*., 2013:429). At the core of relationship marketing is the development of long-term relationships with existing customers. Customer-business relationship building efforts aim to decrease customer-switching behaviour as a way of ensuring customer retention (Mahmoud *et al*., 2018:270). The general aim is, therefore, to establish loyalty by creating satisfied customers who will purchase more services from the service provider and are less likely to switch to a competitor (Lamb *et al*., 2018:214). Therefore, in business environments where competition is constantly increasing, service providers must respond to service failures effectively in order to maintain customer relationships (Shin *et al*., 2018:3).

Based on the above discussion, it is evident that the way in which service providers respond to service failures will ultimately influence the customer's choices of the service provider. Hence, response to service failure is a crucial aspect when providing customer service (Letsa & Asimah, 2018:7). Furthermore, the pervasive poor resolution of customer complaints – as evident from existing market reports by BrandsEye (2019) and Consulta (2020) – indicates further customer dissatisfaction with the service recovery provided by South African mobile ISPs. Consequently, this necessitates the development of a service recovery model for South African mobile ISPs, with the aim of identifying those aspects that are vital to the service recovery process and improving complaint resolution. This should allow mobile ISPs to restore customer satisfaction and ultimately encourage positive customer behavioural intentions.

Although various studies have investigated the constructs in this study, it was imperative to conduct a study within the South African mobile ISP industry, as Ahmad and Ahmad (2014:62) argue that customer behaviour tend to differ based on country of origin, industry type and even societies. Moreover, Ayertey (2018:210) argues that customer reactions to service failures and recovery expectations tend to differ based on the level of involvement in a particular service. The research of Smith *et al*. (1999:369), for instance, compared the hotel and restaurant industries and determined that customers' perceived justice differed across these service settings. In addition, the comparative research of Mattila and Patterson (2004:341-342) on service recovery and fairness perceptions (among United States of America, Thailand and Malaysian customers) further supports the claims of customer and industry differences across different countries. Table 1-1 provides further examples of research conducted on service recovery in different industries and countries.

Table 1-1: Service recovery research in different settings

Source	Construct(s)	Industry	Country
Cengiz *et al*. (2007)	Compensation → Distributive justice Reparation → Distributive justice Promptness → Procedural justice Facilitation → Procedural justice Effort → Interactional justice Empathy → Interactional justice Apology → Interactional justice	Banking	Turkey
Varela-Neira *et al*. (2010)	Compensation → Satisfaction with service recovery Apology → Satisfaction with service recovery Quick response → Satisfaction with service recovery	Banking	Spain
Awa *et al*. (2015)	Apology → Post-complaint behaviour Attentiveness → Post-complaint behaviour Credibility → Post-complaint behaviour Demonstration → Post-complaint behaviour	Telecommu-nication	Nigeria

Table 1-1: Service recovery research in different settings (continues)

Source	Construct(s)	Industry	Country
Quy and Lan (2015)	Apology → Complaint satisfaction Attentiveness → Complaint satisfaction Explanation → Complaint satisfaction Facilitation → Complaint satisfaction Promptness → Complaint satisfaction Redress → Complaint satisfaction	Banking	Vietnam
Park and Park (2016)	Tangible compensation → Image → Recovery satisfaction Promptness → Image → Recovery satisfaction Apology/explanation → Image → Recovery satisfaction Attentiveness → Image → Recovery satisfaction	Airline	South Korea
Cheung and To (2017)	Acknowledgement → Perceived justice Prompt action → Perceived justice	Service	Hong Kong
Shin *et al*. (2018)	Compensation → Distributive justice Apology → Interactional justice	Service	United States of America
Sadaghashvili and Correia (2019)	Apology → Customer satisfaction Compensation → Customer satisfaction Explanation → Customer satisfaction	Hospitality	Portugal

Researchers have further noted that service recovery seems to be a neglected aspect of services marketing (Komunda & Osarenkhoe, 2012:85; Nadiri, 2016:194; Olatunde *et al*., 2020:81). It is against this background that it is imperative to develop a service recovery model specifically for South African mobile ISPs (i.e. Cell C, MTN, Telkom, and Vodacom). The telecommunication sector consists of fixed and mobile telecommunication services, as well as the provision of internet access (ICASA, 2020:82). Considering that this study focuses on mobile ISPs, the subsequent section provides an overview of the South African mobile telecommunication industry.

1.3 THE SOUTH AFRICAN MOBILE TELECOMMUNICATION INDUSTRY

South African mobile telecommunication providers are highly concerned with acquisition, infrastructure, and competition, and yet none of the service providers are making a clear value proposition about customer-centricity (Consulta, 2019). An investigation into the health of the industry indicates that the South African telecommunication industry is following global telecommunication trends, where the demand for data (i.e. internet access) is rapidly increasing above the demand for voice (i.e. call time) (Mothobi, 2017:4). Due to technology convergence and fast technological changes, South African mobile network providers have improved their network infrastructural capabilities to meet the increased demand for data and fast internet (Mpwanya & Van Heerden, 2016:2).

To keep abreast of the high increase of connected devices, vehicles and video streaming, the mobile industry is focusing and aiming at the implementation of the fifth-generation (5G) wireless networking technology (Fourie, 2019). Fifth-generation wireless technology is compatible with significantly higher-speed mobile internet and lower latencies than previous generations while at the same time allowing the full potential of the Internet of Things (GSMA, 2020:1). The Internet of Things refers to a network of different devices inter-connected through the internet and are able to receive and exchange data with each other (Mohamed, 2020:30).

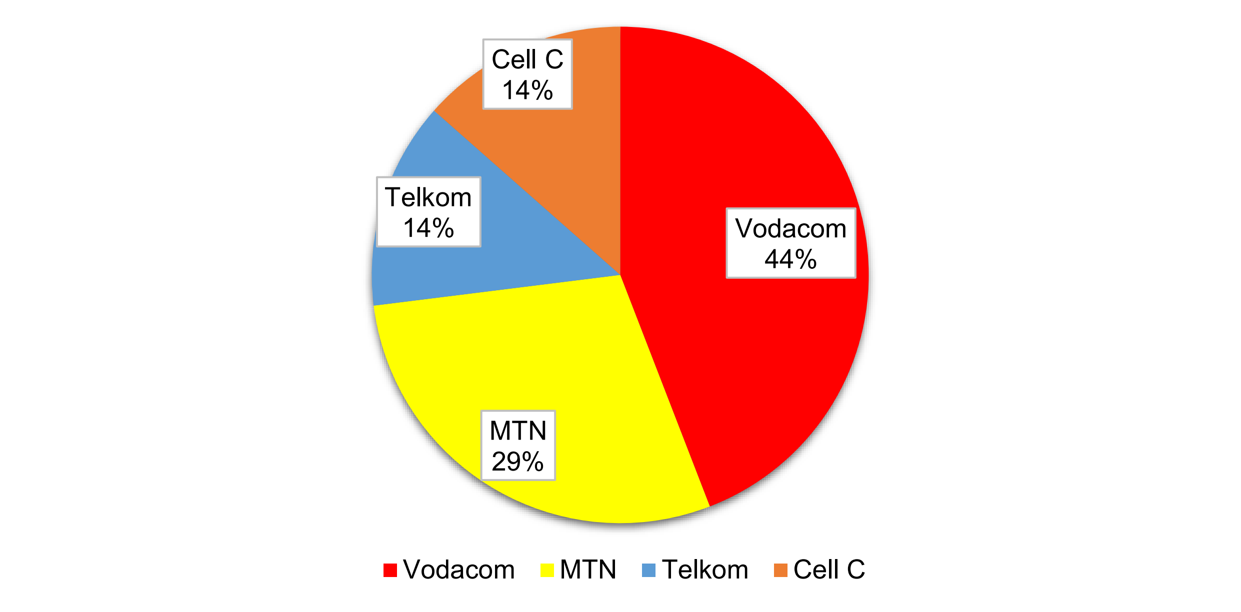
However, mobile data prices limit South African customers to perform tasks such as watching YouTube or transferring files on their smart devices without being connected to a Wi-Fi connection (MyBroadband, 2019b). Even though internet services alternatively provide cheaper means of communication, data services and products remain expensive to almost half of the South African population (Mothobi & Gillwald, 2018:4). This has been witnessed by the development of data must fall strikes that took place in 2016, ignited mainly by the youth on social media after expressing their frustration on high data costs, resulting in the common phrase #DataMustFall (Mzekandaba, 2017; Prior, 2020). Furthermore, South Africa has high data costs as presented from the recent data services market enquiry by the CCSA (2019:17), whereby the commission recommended that mobile data pricing should be addressed to ensure access to affordable data. In response to high data prices, different mobile ISPs have indicated that the efficient allocation of spectrum will result in more affordable data for South Africans (MyBroadband, 2020a).

As customers' preferences change from voice or SMS services to data, service providers no longer focus on price as the main competing factor. Instead, service providers have shifted their focus to network quality and coverage (RIA, 2018:7). The mobile market is characterised by low levels of product differentiation, which leaves rivals competing for quality, reliability, brand awareness, functionality and value pricing in an attempt to acquire new and retain existing customers (MarketLine, 2018:18). Considering the low levels of differentiation between mobile service providers and the ease with which customers can switch between providers, it becomes imperative to pay attention to managing service failures in the South African mobile network service provider industry (Alexander & Mpinganjira, 2017:854).

1.3.1 Major role players in the industry

As indicated in Figure 1-1, the South African mobile telecommunication market is dominated by four main internet service providers, namely Cell C, MTN, Telkom, and Vodacom, with Vodacom and MTN having the largest market shares (CCSA, 2019:101). There are, however, also other mobile internet service providers, such as mobile virtual network operators (MNVOs) and other licensed operators (OLOs) who offer similar services (ICASA, 2018:32).

Figure 1-1: South African mobile telecommunication market share



Source: Adopted from McKane (2020).

The profiles of the four main South African mobile ISPs are as follow:

- **Vodacom** is a leading African mobile communication company, providing different communication services, including mobile voice, messaging, data and converged services to over 110 million (including Safricom) customers (Vodacom, 2019). Vodacom began its operations in 1994, in the same year as MTN, as South Africa's first licenced mobile network provider (BRG, 2017:12). The company offers connectivity in addition to the internet and virtual private network (VPN) services over a range of wireless, fixed-line, satellite, mobile and converged technologies (MarketLine, 2018:35).

- **MTN** – launched in 1994 – is a multinational telecommunication group, operating in 22 countries in Africa and the Middle East (MTN, 2019). The group offers various telecommunication services, including voice and data, business services, mobile money and digital services. Its services include mobile solutions, data connectivity and managed services (MarketLine, 2018:28).

- **Cell C** began its operations in 2001, seven years after Vodacom and MTN (Cell C, 2020). Cell C is South Africa's third largest mobile service provider after the Vodacom and MTN Group. It provides various products and services, including voice, data and messaging, and roaming services to more than 11 million business and individual customers across South Africa. The business operates as a subsidiary of 3C Telecommunications (Pty) Limited (MarketLine, 2018:26).

- **Telkom** was the fixed-line telecommunication monopolist in South Africa until the government decided to follow a process of managed liberalisation in the telecommunication sector (Hawthorne *et al*., 2016:12). According to the BRG (2017:13), Telkom is ranked as the fourth largest mobile network provider in South Africa and it launched its mobile telecommunication services in 2010, originally under the 8ta brand. Telkom provides various products and services to business, residential and payphone customers, including fixed-line retail voice services, fixed-line data services, mobile communication services, data centre operations and interconnection services (Telkom, 2019).

1.3.2 Mobile telecommunication segments

The mobile telecommunication industry consists of two segments, namely prepaid and post-paid (or contract) customers (Alexander & Mpinganjira, 2017:855). Prepaid customers must pay for the services before it may be used (Kau *et al*., 2017:1). With contract services, a customer is involved in a long-term contract with the service provider and the service is charged based on the customer's total usage at the end of every month (Liao *et al*., 2017:2). Whilst usage amongst contract customers in South Africa is growing substantially, usage for prepaid customers is relatively low by comparison. This suggests that pricing is limiting the ability of lower income customers to utilise mobile services, which ultimately restricts the benefits of the digital economy to this respective class of customers (CCSA, 2019:7).

A long-term contract subscription generally offers data and airtime at a cheaper price as compared to a prepaid subscription (Mybroadband, 2020b). As indicated in Table 1-2, it is apparent that contract customers less dominate the South African mobile telecommunication industry as compared to prepaid customers. Even though there are fewer contract customers than prepaid customers, they generate a higher average rate per user for mobile service providers than prepaid customers. Therefore, every contract customer makes a significant contribution to the revenues of his/her mobile service provider (Amani *et al*., 2015:119). In some instances, the contractual plans function as a form of switching cost that prevent contract customers from switching (Guven, 2018:19).

Table 1-2: South African mobile telecommunication customers

Mobile network	Prepaid customers	Contract customers	Total customers
Vodacom	33.3 million	6.1 million	39.4 million
MTN	22.7 million	3.1 million	25.8 million
Cell C	10.9 million	1.1 million	12.0 million
Telkom	9.4 million	2.6 million	12.0 million

Source: Adopted from McKane (2020).

According to RIA (2016:8), despite the flexibility of prepaid products, it is necessary for customers in this dynamic market to be informed about the terms and conditions that apply to all the services provided. By so doing, this will establish the eligibility for a package and the conditions that apply when changing to seemingly more beneficial packages. Considering that prepaid customers can switch more easily, it poses challenges for mobile service providers to be certain of the value that can be acquired from the customer over a specific period of time. This is because the prepaid customer does not need to give notice on when to increase usage, decrease usage, or stop using a certain service (Dairo, 2015:43). Since the launch of the mobile telecommunication sector in South Africa in 1994, the sector has shown substantial growth with the extensive and increasing use of mobile services and devices (CCSA, 2019:101). Concerning mobile services, as indicated in section 1.3.1, mobile telecommunication providers offer a range of services to customers, which include voice, data and messaging, and roaming services.

1.3.3 Mobile ISP services

Various forms of daily transactions and activities are undertaken through mobile communication. Therefore, mobile telecommunication providers have a significant role in strengthening the economy and encouraging productivity among many customers across the country (Sahi *et al*., 2016:156). Demand in the South African mobile telecommunication industry has changed from the traditional voice services and short message services (SMS) to data products. This has been stimulated by high levels of customer preferences for over-the-top services (OTTs) (Mothobi, 2017:2). In addition, findings from MarketLine (2018:25) indicate that the South African mobile ISP market is highly competitive, as the voice service segment is saturated, and service providers are competing through pricing of mobile internet services with the aim to retain customers. All mobile ISPs offer some zero-rated data and customised packages, which include service specific bundles and rewards offers to attract and retain customers (Chair, 2017:13). International comparisons on mobile internet services show that South Africa performs poorly as compared to other countries, with prices generally being significantly higher (CCSA, 2019:3).

1.4 LITERATURE OVERVIEW

This study examines mobile ISP customers’ behavioural responses to service failures and service recovery actions, considering perceived justice as a mediator. Perceived justice has been applied as a solution for restoring customers’ feelings of justice after a loss and improves the customer-service provider relationship (Cheng *et al*., 2019:190). The subsequent sections provide an overview of the discipline of the study (i.e. services marketing) and the key constructs under examination (i.e. service recovery attributes, perceived justice, satisfaction with service recovery, trust, eWOM, and repurchase intention).

1.4.1 Services marketing

The justification for implementing a different marketing approach for services than for physical goods is based on the distinct nature and characteristics of services. As recurrently explained in marketing literature, services are generally intangible, inseparable (in terms of production and consumption), heterogeneous, and perishable (Koti, 2018:407; Zeithaml *et al*., 1985:33). Services were initially perceived as an aid to the production and marketing of physical goods, and were not regarded as having separate relevance of their own (Abbasi & Dahiya, 2016:345). However, managers encountered challenges in the marketing of services, and their previous experiences in packaged goods and manufacturing had not equipped them for the marketing of services. This instigated the need for new concepts and methods for marketing and managing service-oriented businesses (Zeithaml *et al*., 2018:10). Although some aspects of services marketing are the same as those of physical goods marketing, the service sector needs special emphasis on adding customer value, differentiating the service and specialisation (Koti, 2018:408).

Since the customer is usually present during service delivery, the service provider-customer interaction forms a distinct feature of services marketing (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018:259). These unique service characteristics pose challenges for marketers with regard to attracting new customers and retaining existing customers (Vennila & Dinesh, 2017:98). Consequently, in order to establish effectiveness in services marketing, marketers must acknowledge the nature of services and how it can influence the marketing strategy (Yadav, 2017:122). Marshall and Johnston (2015:280) assert that businesses must be proactive for the occurrence of service failures and equip employees with the necessary skills to execute service recovery properly.

1.4.2 Service recovery

The inseparable and intangible characteristics of services make it challenging for providers to avert service failures during service delivery (Ayertey, 2018:3). Although service failure is inevitable, an effective recovery strategy can provide the service provider with an advantage over the situation (Tarofder *et al*., 2016:517). Immediately after the service provider became aware of a dissatisfied customer, it needs to investigate the possible reason(s) for dissatisfaction and consider customers' reactions to negative situations in order to be able to provide effective service recovery strategies (Simon *et al*., 2015a:677). Service recovery is the service provider's response to service failures encountered by customers (Hammami *et al*., 2018:317). Service providers must understand and adapt to customer needs and be able to develop appropriate strategies to deal with customer complaints (Abney *et al*., 2017:283). Therefore, excellent service recovery strategies aim to acquire more insight from service failures, permitting service providers to form a better understanding of customers and their expectations (Zeithaml *et al*., 2018:112).

Offering only one type of service recovery strategy may not adequately fit all customers and also an ineffective service recovery can be costly to the business (Cheng *et al*., 2019:190). While attempting to perform a service recovery, service providers should also evaluate their existing resources and offer customers the most suitable service recovery actions instead of irrationally investing all resources to support the implementation of service recovery, hence ensuring that service providers can maintain sustainable operations (Hsieh & Yeh, 2018:889). In particular, identifying the most effective form of service recovery for a given service failure is a critical issue (Jung & Seock, 2017:23). Thus, comprehending what constitutes a fair service recovery outcome is essential for designing an effective service recovery plan, which needs to be integrated into the service recovery process (Cheng *et al*., 2019:190).

The effect of service recovery strategies on a service provider's revenue and profits can be considerable and maintaining good relationships with existing customers is a key strategy (Ozuem *et al*., 2017:98). If a service failure occurs and customer dissatisfaction remains ignored, customers will probably switch to other service providers and/or spread negative WOM (Rosenmayer *et al*., 2018:271). Therefore, planning for service recovery is one of the main operational steps for service providers (Xu *et al*., 2019:1034), since maintaining excellent services has become an important factor in enhancing customer satisfaction and generating profits for the business (Pai & Yeh, 2017:264). Smith *et al*. (1999:358) recommend different service recovery actions, namely compensation, response speed, apology, and initiation. Furthermore, Wirtz and Mattila (2004:159) identified compensation, apology and response speed as possible service recovery actions. Park and Park (2016:239) classified the main elements of recovery quality elements as tangible compensation, promptness, apology/explanation, and attentiveness. According to Odoom *et al*. (2019:2), the main responses by the service provider to service recovery include compensation, apology, and explanation.

The service recovery attributes investigated **in this study** include compensation, response speed, apology, and explanation (as further discussed comprehensively in Chapter 4); as these elements emerged as the most commonly identified and researched service recovery actions in current literature (Cengiz *et al*., 2007; Liao, 2007; Mostafa *et al*., 2014; Park & Park, 2016; Quy & Lan, 2015; Shin *et al*., 2018; Smith *et al*., 1999; Varela-Neira *et al*., 2010). These service recovery attributes are not only dominant in the service recovery literature, but it also appears that they generate favourable results for either the customer or the business. These favourable consequences may include loyalty (Sciarelli *et al*., 2017:34), perceived justice in service recovery (Bae *et al*., 2020:17; Cheung & To, 2017:777; Smith *et al*., 1999:358), and satisfaction with service recovery (Kim, 2007:83; Sadaghashvili & Correia, 2019:10; Varela-Neira *et al*., 2010:41).

- **Compensation:** Since customers may experience loss of time, effort, and money due to a service failure, Lee (2018:277) emphasises the importance of fairly and adequately compensating these customers. Customers' expectations of compensation from the service provider differ depending on the service failure severity and the context in which the service failure occurred (Goode *et al*., 2017:706). Notably, it can be a challenge to identify the most appropriate service recovery action and the level of compensation required to meet customers' expectations (Kennelly *et al*., 2015:51). If the service provider is to consider compensation as a recovery strategy, the main issue will be to equate the customer's loss to the compensation provided by the service provider (Mandina & Kurwiravamwe, 2016:85).

- **Response speed:** The harmful effects of service failures are manageable by means of timely interventions (response speed) by the service provider (Sreejesh *et al*., 2019:712). The provision of a prompt initial response by the service provider is an important step in the service recovery process (Van Vaerenbergh *et al*., 2019:107). Customers may perceive the service provider's quick response as a valuable outcome and an appropriate manner to communicate and interact with customers (El-Helaly *et al*., 2015:7). Complaints should be promptly responded to and resolved even though they may seem time-consuming and costly, otherwise it can result in the service provider's reputational damage from bad publicity (Ramphal, 2016:1). Unfortunately, many service providers require customers to contact multiple employees before customers' problem can be solved (Zeithaml *et al*., 2018:188).

- **Apology:** An apology is a method of impression management and the offender (the service provider) would often be providing detailed explanations, accepting responsibility of the mistake, expressing regret, showing care, asking for customer forgiveness and promising good future deeds which all points to a willingness by the service provider to reconcile (Radu *et al*., 2019:363). The more detailed an apology is, the higher the likelihood that customer's anger is reduced and the higher the likelihood that an apology will be more effective in leading to reconciliation and favourable customer behavioural intentions (Wang *et al*., 2020:423).

- **Explanation:** The service provider should provide an explanation to the customer about the service failure and try to rectify the problem (Wirtz & Lovelock, 2018:418). Customers perceive an explanation as important information, a valuable means to gain understanding and control their service environment (El-Helaly *et al*., 2015:7). The manner through which the explanation is interpreted can have a significant role in recovering customer's satisfaction (Quy & Lan, 2015:1079). Providing an explanation is a basic service recovery strategy but effective when customers experience service failures (Tarofder *et al*., 2016:518). The service provider's explanations that customers view as honest, sincere and not manipulative are generally the most effective (Zeithaml *et al*., 2018:191).

Based on the above discussion, it becomes apparent that compensation, response speed, apology, and explanation are some of the most basic and conventional actions that service providers take to recover from a service failure. However, even though these actions are all aimed at service recovery, they have only been researched as individual constructs and not yet as a potentially multi-dimensional construct. Subsequently, the following hypothesis is proposed regarding service recovery attributes:

H_1: Service recovery attributes underlies compensation, response speed, apology, and explanation.

1.4.3 Satisfaction with service recovery

Satisfaction with service recovery is the magnitude to which the service provider's service recovery efforts meet or surpass customers' expectations and reduce their dissatisfaction after a service failure (Ateke & Kalu, 2016:19). Thus, it signifies customer satisfaction with the service provider's recovery efforts, including the perception of interaction and solution (Ngahu *et al*., 2016:56).

The effectiveness or ineffectiveness of service recovery after a service failure still has a high impact on customers' satisfaction with the service (Ogbonna & Igbojekwe, 2015:60). When the service recovery efforts from the service provider are equitable to the customer's loss, he/she will be satisfied with the service recovery (Lee, 2018:279) and the more effectively the losses are recovered by the service provider, the more satisfaction the service recovery process generates (Hur & Jang, 2016:726). Customers' feelings of betrayal and their intentions to react against the service provider can be alleviated with the service provider's satisfactory service recovery (Van Vaerenbergh *et al*., 2014:47). Any business can obtain a competitive advantage in a highly competitive environment if it can achieve customer satisfaction (Leninkumar, 2017:451).

The research of Varela-Neira *et al*. (2010:41) within the Spanish banking industry found that compensation, apology, and speed of response have a positive and significant impact on satisfaction with service recovery. An investigation by Suprapto and Hashym (2010:128) within the Indonesian hospitality industry found that compensation, response speed, and explanation significantly influence customers' satisfaction with service recovery. Furthermore, the empirical findings of Sciarelli *et al*. (2017:35) established that compensation, response speed and explanation positively affected satisfaction with service recovery for Egyptian ADSL internet users. Lastly, the research of Ekiz and Arasli (2007:280) in the hospitality industry on hotel customers found that response speed, providing an apology and explanation positively affect customers' satisfaction with service recovery.

Evidently, from the existing literature, the service recovery attributes (i.e. compensation, response speed, apology, and explanation) appear to influence satisfaction with service recovery. It is against this background and from a unified approach, that it is further hypothesised that:

H_2: Service recovery attributes have a positive effect on satisfaction with service recovery.

1.4.4 Perceived justice

Service providers must provide an appropriate service recovery that matches customers' expectations (Bambauer-Sachse & Rabeson, 2015a:331). The perceived justice theory has been applied in different contexts because of its proven benefits of justice in relationships (Oflaç, 2016:232). Three core dimensions underlie the perceived justice theory, namely distributive, procedural, and interactional justice (Smith & Mpinganjira, 2015:36). *Distributive justice* is the perceived justice and equality that a service provider implements to allocate resources to resolve and compensate the customer for the service failure experienced (Lii *et al*., 2018:4). *Procedural justice* entails the justice perceived from the complaint handling process (Bergel & Brock, 2018:463). *Interactional justice* entails the personal treatment received by the customer during the complaint process (Zeithaml *et al*., 2018:193). The perceived inequality in the exchange process is based on the customer's investment in time, money, and effort in comparison to the service provider's failure to meet the customer's expectations or failure to deliver what was promised. Furthermore, the customer's assessment of fairness may be prejudiced to his/her knowledge of how other customers were previously treated in the same situations (Ngahu *et al*., 2016:55). If customers perceive that the three dimensions of justice are not present in the service recovery process, they will likely feel wronged or unfairly treated (Radu *et al*., 2019:360).

Within the framework of this study, perceived justice is added as a mediating variable to analyse the relationship between service recovery attributes and satisfaction with service recovery. Mediation analysis is used to show that the effect of one or more independent variables (service recovery attributes) is passed through a third variable (perceived justice) to a dependent variable (satisfaction with service recovery) (Özdil & Kutlu, 2019:31).

According to the research of Chang *et al*. (2008:72), compensation positively affects perceived justice of high involvement customers in the retail industry. It was further established by the authors that explanation positively impacts perceived justice of low involvement customers in the retail industry of Taiwan. The research of Cheung and To (2017:777) found that response speed is positively associated with perceived justice of customers within the Hong Kong service sector. The findings of Smith *et al*. (1999:368) confirm a positive relationship between apology and the interactional justice dimension of perceived justice.

According to Mattila and Cranage (2006:274), providing an apology has a positive impact on the distributive justice dimension of perceived justice. Therefore, taking a unified approach, it can be argued that the service recovery attributes (i.e. compensation, response speed, apology, and explanation) positively impact perceived justice. Research conducted by Ellyawati *et al*. (2013:518) on Indonesian customers found that perceived justice is positively associated with customers' satisfaction with service recovery. A further investigation on Wi-Fi rental services among Chinese tourists established that perceived justice positively results in satisfaction with service recovery (Zhang & Shao, 2018:13). Based on the above overview, it is evident that the service recovery attributes positively influence perceived justice and satisfaction with service recovery.

Having established the aforementioned relationships, it is further suggested for this study that a mediated relationship exists between service recovery attributes and satisfaction with service recovery through perceived justice. Although there are limited studies that have investigated this relationship, Liao (2007:482) found that making an apology, providing an explanation and prompt handling (response speed) have a significant impact on satisfaction with service recovery as mediated by perceived justice. Furthermore, Roschk and Gelbrich (2017:401) established that perceived justice mediates the relationship between compensation and satisfaction with service recovery. Therefore, based on the above discussion, it can be derived that perceived justice has an indirect effect on the relationship between service recovery attributes and satisfaction with service recovery. Subsequently, it is hypothesised for this study that:

H_3: Service recovery attributes have a positive indirect effect on satisfaction with service recovery, as mediated by perceived justice.

1.4.5 Trust as a response to service recovery

Customer trust refers to the reliability of the service provider in keeping its promises and not being opportunistic to customers in an exchange relationship (Lii *et al*., 2018:6). As customers perceive risk in an exchange, this necessitates the development of trust in order to establish on-going relationships between the exchange parties (Luca & Ciobanu, 2016:348). Trust may provide customer assurance about future interactions with the same provider, regardless of potentially encountering problems with its products or services (Carnevale *et al*., 2018:5). Thus, trust can be regarded as a mechanism to effectively lessen uncertainty that influences customers' reciprocity expectations (Yang, 2019:871). According to Kishada and Wahab (2015:112), trust is established when the service provider has the objective of satisfying customers' needs and delivers products and services that create customer value. Moreover, fair treatment of the customer in the service recovery process can restore his/her trust in the service provider (Lii *et al*., 2018:6).

Mohd-Any *et al*. (2019:663) further posit that during a service recovery encounter, customer trust is built when he/she is satisfied with the service recovery. According to Tax *et al*. (1998:71), satisfaction with service recovery results in customer trust. A further investigation into the telecommunication industry – specifically a mobile phone service provider in Asia – established that satisfaction with service recovery results in a high level of customer trust (Kau & Loh, 2006:108). La and Choi (2012:116) conducted research in the South Korean service industry (including hotels, restaurants and internet providers) and established that satisfaction with service recovery positively influenced customer trust. A study in the Malaysian airline industry by Mohd-Any *et al.* (2019:675) also found that satisfaction with service recovery is positively associated to customer trust. Based on the preceding discussion, it is hypothesised for this study that:

H_4: Satisfaction with service recovery has a positive effect on trust.

1.4.6 eWOM as a response to service recovery

With the evolution of information technology, WOM has converted to an electronic form of communication, commonly known as electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). eWOM can have a significant impact on a business, as it can be dispersed to a broad audience with limited geographic and time constraints (Yen & Tang, 2019:10).

eWOM refers to any positive or negative opinions raised by an existing or former customer concerning a product, service, or service provider, which is made available to a group of people and institutions through the internet (Hennig-Thurau *et al*., 2004:39). Whereas traditional WOM is limited to one-on-one interactions, eWOM has a wider reach and impact due to its persuasive and omnipresent nature (Mishra *et al*., 2018:472). Customers can collaborate and disperse eWOM through different internet platforms including blogs, electronic bulletin board systems, forums, online communities, and review websites (Yang, 2017:94). Customers may depend on and search for eWOM communication to obtain information in order to make informed decisions (Mao & Lyu, 2017:2468). Hence, marketers should be highly attentive to this form of user-generated content (i.e. eWOM), as people depend on third-party's views or experiences to shape their attitudes towards products or services, brands and service providers (Bi *et al*., 2019:79).

The research of Ding and Lii (2016:888) established that satisfaction with service recovery influences eWOM. It was further established by Abid *et al*. (2017:1407) that satisfaction with service recovery positively affects eWOM, as evident from their cross-sectional study in the educational sector among university students in Gujranwala (Pakistan). Recent empirical findings by Kussusanti *et al*. (2019:133) on Indonesian online customers also established that satisfaction with service recovery has a positive effect on customers' positive eWOM intentions.

It is against this background that the following hypothesis is proposed regarding the relationship between satisfaction with service recovery and eWOM:

H_5: Satisfaction with service recovery has a positive effect on eWOM.

1.4.7 Repurchase intention as a response to service recovery

Repurchase intention refers to the probability of a customer to reuse the service provider's offering again in the future (Oman *et al*., 2016:26). Repurchase intention has emerged as strategically important for services marketing with the understanding that the cost of retaining customers is arguably less than the cost of attracting new customers, thus resulting in more long-term profits (Saleem *et al*., 2017:1137).

The customer's repurchase intention is highly significant to a business because it indicates business continuity, future income generation projections, and therefore business profitability (Fungai, 2017:122). A customer will be willing to purchase the same product or service again if he/she had a good experience or if his/her expectations were fulfilled (Goh *et al*., 2016:994). Typically, customers base future purchase intentions on the value acquired from previous interactions with the service provider, with relationship benefits serving as a proxy for expectations of future benefits (Lalaram *et al*., 2016:21).

According to the research of Wen and Geng-ging Chi (2013:315), which was conducted among airline passengers, it was found that satisfaction with service recovery influenced repurchase intention. An investigation among Balkan bank customers who had complained about banking service delivered found that there is a positive relationship between satisfaction with service recovery and customer repurchase intention (Duygun & Menteş, 2015:118). Ding and Lii (2016:888) also found that satisfaction with service recovery positively influences repurchase intention. Against this background, it is hypothesised that:

H_6: Satisfaction with service recovery has a positive effect on repurchase intention.

1.5 CONCEPTUAL MODEL AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Based on the above theory and formulated hypotheses (H_1 to H_6), the following conceptual model is proposed (see Figure 1-2), indicating the hypothesised relationships of this study.

Figure 1-2: Proposed conceptual model

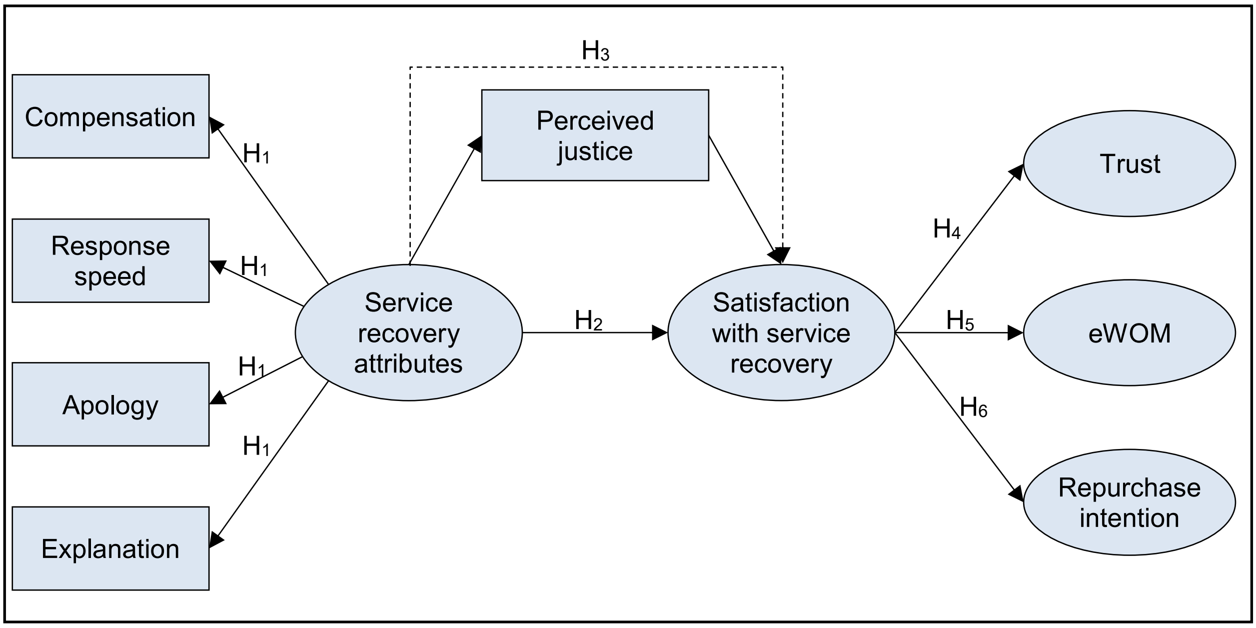


Figure 1-2 depicts the hypothesised relationships between the constructs of the study. It that service recovery by mobile ISPs attributed to four actions, including compensation, response speed, apology, and explanation. Furthermore, it is suggested that the identified service recovery attributes have a positive effect on customers' satisfaction with their mobile ISP's service recovery and that this relationship is mediated by customers' perceived justice of the service recovery effort. Lastly, it is proposed that customers' satisfaction with their mobile ISP's service recovery efforts are likely to result in trust, positive eWOM and repurchase intention.

The purpose of this study therefore is to contribute to literature on service recovery, more specifically in the context of mobile ISPs, by identifying the actions that customers consider as attributes of service recovery. Furthermore, the study seeks to develop a better understanding of how customers assess their mobile ISP's service recovery justice following a service failure. Lastly, the study elaborates on how the service recovery attributes and the mediating effect of perceived justice affect customers' satisfaction with service recovery and their behavioural intentions (i.e. trust, eWOM, and repurchase intention) in the South African mobile ISP industry.

Based on the literature and proposed relationships in Figure 1-2, these relationships require further testing and verification, since the testing and verification has not been conducted in the context of South African mobile ISPs. Consequently, the objective of this study is to develop a service recovery model for South African mobile ISPs based on the hypothesised relationships (H_1 to H_6), with the view to contribute to knowledge on what actions mobile ISPs should perform during service recovery, how to fairly provide service recovery and restore customers' satisfaction. The following section elaborates on the research objectives of the study.

1.6 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This section provides the primary and secondary objectives for this study based on the above literature discussion and the identified research problem (in section 1.2).

1.6.1 Primary objective

The primary objective of this study is to develop a service recovery model for the South African mobile ISP industry.

1.6.2 Secondary objectives

The following secondary objectives were formulated to achieve the primary objective:

1) Provide an overview of existing literature pertaining to the constructs of this study, namely service recovery attributes, perceived justice, satisfaction with service recovery, trust, eWOM, and repurchase intention.
2) Compile a sample profile of the respondents who participated in this study.
3) Measure respondents' perceptions of the service recovery attributes of their mobile ISP.
4) Measure the justice that respondents perceive they obtain from their mobile ISP.
5) Measure respondents' satisfaction with the service recovery of their mobile ISP.
6) Measure respondents' trust in their mobile ISP.
7) Measure respondents' eWOM intentions towards their mobile ISP.
8) Measure respondents' repurchase intention towards their mobile ISP.
9) Examine the interrelationships between the constructs of the study.

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section provides an overview of the research methodology implemented in this study (discussed in detail in Chapter 5). Consequently, the main sources from which the secondary data were obtained are indicated, followed by an outline of the primary data collection process.

1.7.1 Secondary data

Secondary data sources were obtained from marketing websites, theses, scholarly journals, conference reports, industry reports, academic textbooks, and business reports. Furthermore, the researcher used different electronic databases, including *inter alia* EBSCOhost (for international journals on Academic Search Premier, Business Source Premier, etc.), Emerald (for international journals), ProQuest (for international dissertations), SA ePublications (for South African journals), ScienceDirect (for international journals), Tandfonline (for international journals), and the internet (Google and Google Scholar) in order to obtain extant literature on services marketing, service recovery, perceived justice, satisfaction with service recovery, trust, eWOM, repurchase intention, and marketing research.

1.7.2 Primary data

Primary data is acquired by the researcher for a particular purpose of addressing a research problem (Malhotra *et al*., 2017a:46). A general rule of thumb among marketers is to first acquire secondary data then gather primary data (Kerin & Hartley, 2017:211). However, in some instances, secondary data are not available, inadequate, or obsolete. Under such circumstances, primary data must be gathered (Burns *et al*., 2017:72). **For this study**, secondary data was acquired first to identify the research problem and then primary data was collected by following the marketing research process outlined in Chapter 5 (section 5.3). The following sections provide an overview of the methodology implemented to gather the primary data for this study.

1.7.2.1 Research design

A research design is a comprehensive process utilised to gather and analyse primary data in order to increase the understanding of a given research matter (Abutabenjeh & Jaradat, 2018:238). The three most commonly known research designs are exploratory research, descriptive research and causal research (Burns *et al*., 2017:72).

For this study, a descriptive research design was used, as it assists marketers in obtaining an understanding of the characteristics of a specific phenomenon to solve a problem (Pride & Ferrell, 2019:85). In most situations, descriptive research uses numbers, which permits the researcher to examine the relationships between the constructs statistically (Clow & James, 2014:28). The study was cross-sectional in nature, which entails the investigation of a phenomenon at a specific point in time (Saunders *et al*., 2019:212) and is widely used with a descriptive research design (Malhotra *et al*., 2017:74). A cross-sectional study is generally designed to be representative of the target population and uses relatively large sample sizes (Burns *et al*., 2017:99).

1.7.2.2 Sample plan

Sampling is the process of choosing elements representative of the target population (Pride & Ferrell, 2019:88). According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016:240), the sample plan includes the following steps: (a) Define the target population; (b) Identify the sampling frame; (c) Select the sampling design; (d) Determine the appropriate sample size; and (e) Execute the sample plan. Table 1-3 provides a summary of the sample plan **for this study**, which is followed by a brief discussion of each element.

Table 1-3: Sample plan summary for this study

Sampling aspect	Sample description
Target population	Customers (i.e. individuals) of the main South African mobile ISPs (i.e. Cell C, MTN, Telkom, or Vodacom), who have complained to their mobile ISP (between 2017 and 2019).
Sampling frame	No sampling frame was available.
Sampling design	Convenience sampling.
Sample size	400 respondents.
Sample elements	Customers (i.e. individuals) of the main South African mobile ISPs (i.e. Cell C, MTN, Telkom, or Vodacom), who have complained to their mobile ISP and who were accessible to the researcher (from June 2018 to May 2019).

- **Target population**

  The target population refers to the elements or objects that possess the information sought by the researcher and about which inferences are to be made (Malhotra *et al*., 2017:160). The sample should be representative of the target population to enable the researcher to make accurate estimates of the views and behaviours of the population (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018:138).

  For this study, the target population included individual customers of the main South African mobile ISPs (i.e. Cell C, MTN, Telkom, or Vodacom), who have recently (between 2017 and 2019) complained to their mobile ISP.

- **Sampling frame**

  A sampling frame is a complete list of population elements from which the sample can be drawn (Taherdoost, 2016:20). Due to South Africa's Protection of Personal Information Act 4 of 2013, the researcher was unable to obtain complete and accurate customer information from the mobile ISPs to use as a sampling frame.

- **Sampling design**

  Sampling designs can be categorised into probability or non-probability sampling (Burns *et al.*, 2017:241). Without the availability of a sampling frame, the researcher cannot use probability sampling and therefore must make use of non-probability sampling (Saunders *et al.*, 2019:297). With non-probability sampling, the sample elements do not have a known probability of being included as part of the sample (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016:240).

  For the purpose of this study, non-probability sampling was conducted. Convenience sampling was used, as it allows the researcher to randomly select sample elements who are most convenient to acquire (Saunders *et al.*, 2019:324).

- **Sample size**

  Sample size refers to the total number of sample elements to be included in the study to ensure that it is representative of the target population (Malhotra *et al.*, 2017:417). Various aspects can influence sample size decisions, including (a) the aim of the research, (b) the level of precision needed, (c) the acceptable risk in predicting the degree of precision (confidence level), (d) the amount of inconsistency in the target population, (e) financial and time constraints and in certain situations, (f) the population size itself (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016:241). Malhotra *et al.* (2017:805) suggest a minimum sample size of 400 sample elements when conducting structural equation modelling with five constructs or more.

  Thus, since the conceptual model **for this study** comprises six factors, the researcher aimed to obtain a sample of 400 respondents. In the end, 484 responses were obtained, resulting in a sample realisation rate of 121%.

- **Data collection**

  Data collection encompasses the distribution of the data collection form to the sample, recording the respondents' responses and presenting the data for analysis (Marshall & Johnston, 2015:81). The method of data collection chosen must consider the costs, timing and sampling methods (Bradley, 2013:206).

  For this study, the primary data was collected by means of an online self-administered questionnaire. The researcher collected some of the data through Google Forms and at a later stage, Consulta (a marketing research agency) was outsourced to complete the data collection process.

1.7.2.3 Data collection form

Due to the descriptive nature of this study, the data was collected by means of a structured questionnaire, distributed online. However, prior to commencing the data collection process, the questionnaire first needs to be pre-tested to identify words, phrases, instructions, questions or other aspects of the questionnaire that seem confusing, or problematic (Burns *et al.*, 2017:230).

For this study, an online survey (designed in Google Forms) was shared via residential online activity Facebook groups and Twitter. Furthermore, Consulta used the same online survey, by sharing the link to the questionnaire on an online panel of customers to collect the rest of the data. Prior to launching the online survey, the questionnaire was first pre-tested among 30 respondents from the target population of the study. After the pre-test, the feedback provided by the respondents was integrated into the design of the final questionnaire. The final questionnaire comprised eight parts, as indicated and described in Table 1-4.

Table 1-4: Questionnaire content

Part	Description
Cover letter	The purpose of the study was explained, confidentiality and anonymity were explained, and the contact details of the researcher as well as the ethics number of the research were provided.
Screening questions	The respondent had to indicate his/her main mobile ISP. The respondent had to indicate if he/she had made any recent complaint to his/her service provider (between 2017 and 2019).
Patronage habits	This compulsory part assisted in addressing secondary objective 2, and included statements determining respondents' duration of using their mobile ISP, the average amount of time spent on the internet, the main purposes for using mobile internet, and the service failure experienced from their mobile ISP.
Service recovery attributes	This compulsory part assisted in addressing secondary objective 3, and included statements measuring respondents' perceptions of their mobile ISPs' service recovery attributes.
Perceived justice	This compulsory part assisted in addressing secondary objective 4, included statements measuring the justice that respondents perceive they obtain from their mobile ISP.
Satisfaction with service recovery	This compulsory part assisted in addressing secondary objective 4, and included statements measuring respondents' satisfaction with service recovery of their mobile ISP.
Behavioural intentions	This compulsory part assisted in addressing secondary objectives 6 to 8, and included statements measuring respondents' trust, eWOM intentions, and repurchase intention towards their mobile ISP.
Socio-demographic information	This optional part assisted in addressing secondary objective 2, and included questions to obtain information regarding respondents' socio-demographics. The purpose of this part was only to acquire data that indicate the characteristics of respondents, and did not affect the primary objective of this study.

As indicated in Table 1-5 , the constructs of this study were measured with existing (i.e. previously established as reliable and valid) scales.

Table 1-5: Scale sources

Construct		Source(s)
Service recovery attributes		Liao (2007:480); Mostafa *et al*. (2014:305)
Perceived justice		Huang (2011:514); Ozkan-Tektas and Basgoze (2017:394)
Satisfaction with service recovery		Huang (2011:514)
Behavioural intentions	Trust	Crosby *et al*. (1990:79); Ding and Lii (2016:893)
	eWOM	Ding and Lii (2016:893)
	Repurchase intention	Ding and Lii (2016:893)

1.7.2.4 Data analysis strategy of this study

The aim of data analysis is to interpret the empirical results and draw conclusions from the collected data (Lamb *et al*., 2018:167). Considerations of data analysis does not happen after the data has been gathered. Rather, it is a fundamental part of the development of an approach, the development of a research design and the application of quantitative or qualitative methods (Malhotra *et al*., 2017:12). The data was initially captured in Excel, as it was obtained from two sources (i.e. Google Forms and Consulta). Thereafter, the data was coded and the two data sets were combined. Lastly, the data was extracted from Excel and exported to the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 25) with AMOS for analysis. The data was analysed by the North-West University's Statistical Consultation Services.

The data analysis included the calculation of descriptive statistics (in the form of frequencies and percentages) to compile a sample profile. Means were calculated to measure central tendency (Hair, Wolfinbarger *et al*., 2017:274) and standard deviations were calculated to measure dispersion (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016:284). Means and standard deviations were calculated for each statement and the overall constructs that measured service recovery attributes (compensation, response speed, apology, and explanation), perceived justice, satisfaction with service recovery, trust, eWOM, and repurchase intention.

The reliability of the scales measuring the constructs (i.e. service recovery attributes, perceived justice, satisfaction with service recovery, trust, eWOM, and repurchase intention) were determined by calculating the Cronbach's alpha coefficients, which determines the inter-item correlation between the items in a scale, which is consecutively used to establish the internal reliability of the scale (Malhotra *et al*., 2017:360). A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to confirm the construct validity of the scales used to measure constructs of the study. Construct validity was established by means of convergent and discriminant validity. Finally, structural equation modelling (SEM) – which involves making estimations of the relationships between the constructs (Mooi *et al*., 2018:289) – was implemented to test the conceptual model and related hypotheses.

1.8 CHAPTER OUTLINE

The structure and outline of this study is as follows in chronological order:

- **Chapter 1: Introduction and contextualisation of the study**

  This chapter provided an introduction to the study. The chapter started with a discussion on the background of the study and research problem under investigation. Furthermore, the chapter provided insight into the South African mobile telecommunication industry, indicating the major role players, market segments and services provided in the sector. The chapter further provided a literature overview on services marketing and the constructs of the study (i.e. service recovery attributes, perceived justice, satisfaction with service recovery, trust, eWOM and repurchase intention).

  Based on the literature overview, the conceptual model for this study was provided, followed by an explanation of the purpose of the study. Furthermore, the research objectives of the study were provided, followed by the research methodology and concluding with an outline of the chapters of the remainder of the document.

- **Chapter 2: Services marketing and service recovery**

  This chapter provides a comprehensive discussion from extant literature on the discipline of the study (i.e. services marketing). This chapter also discusses the concept of service recovery, including literature on the service recovery attributes and the theory of perceived justice.

- **Chapter 3: Responses following service recovery**

  This chapter provides a comprehensive discussion on customers' responses following service recovery, which include satisfaction with service recovery, trust, eWOM, and repurchase intention.

- **Chapter 4: Model conceptualisation**

  This chapter provides insight into the conceptual model of the study and the associated hypotheses formulated.

- **Chapter 5: Research methodology**

  This chapter presents the different research methods that the researcher can implement when conducting research and the specific research methodology used in this study. As such, the chapter provides a discussion on the marketing research process and each of the related steps of the process.

- **Chapter 6: Discussion and interpretation of results**

  This chapter presents the findings from the data analysis and includes a discussion and interpretation of the results.

- **Chapter 7: Conclusion and recommendations**

  The concluding chapter provides a discussion on the recommendations to mobile ISPs based on the existing literature and empirical results of the study. This chapter also discusses the theoretical and practical contributions of the study, as well as the limitations of the study and the future research suggestions.

1.9 CONCLUSION

The aim of this chapter was to provide an introduction to the study. As such, the background and research problem of the study were provided, followed by insight into the South African mobile telecommunication industry. The chapter further provided a literature overview of the discipline of the study and the constructs under investigation, thus forming the basis for the development of the hypotheses and conceptual model. Moreover, the chapter presented the research objectives of the study and an overview of the research methodology adopted for the study. The chapter concluded by an outline of the chapters of the study. The subsequent chapter discusses the concept of services marketing and service recovery.

CHAPTER 2

SERVICES MARKETING AND SERVICE RECOVERY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of this study (as indicated in Chapter 1) is to develop a service recovery model for mobile ISPs after customers have experienced a service failure. The study further seeks to narrow the gap in current literature by broadening the understanding of customers' level of satisfaction with service recovery of South African mobile ISPs and customers' behavioural intentions (i.e. specifically trust, eWOM, and repurchase intention) towards these ISPs when service failures occur. Gaining insight into the aforementioned aspects will assist mobile ISPs in developing effective marketing strategies to shape customer attitudes and behaviours towards their providers. This study, therefore, seeks to identify appropriate service recovery strategies on how satisfaction can be effectively restored and ultimately ensure value to assist mobile ISPs in retaining their customers.

Since ISPs' main product offering entails the provision of internet connection services to customers, this chapter specifically focuses on the discipline of services marketing. Consequently, this chapter commences with an explanation of the importance of studying services, followed by definitions of the concept of services and services marketing. In addition, the services marketing mix is discussed, followed by an explanation of various profitable services marketing strategies. The chapter concludes with an investigation into service recovery specifically (one of the services marketing strategies), as it forms the essence of this study.

2.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF STUDYING SERVICES

The service sector's significant role and contribution to the global economy has been increasing and it is regarded as the main area of economic growth in most countries (Le & Ho, 2020:84). According to Wirtz and Lovelock (2018:6), the reason for studying services emanates from the dominance of services in the global economy. Ironically, the supposed industrialised countries of the world are realising that their gross domestic product (GDP) is mainly produced from the service sector (Hoffman & Bateson, 2017:3). An estimated two-thirds of South Africa's GDP is derived from the services sector, ranging from banking, insurance, tourism, hospitality, and personal services (The Conversation, 2018). In 2018, the South African service sector contributed to more than 60% of the country's GDP (Plecher, 2020a) and in 2019, it also contributed approximately 71.73% towards the country's employment (Plecher, 2020b).

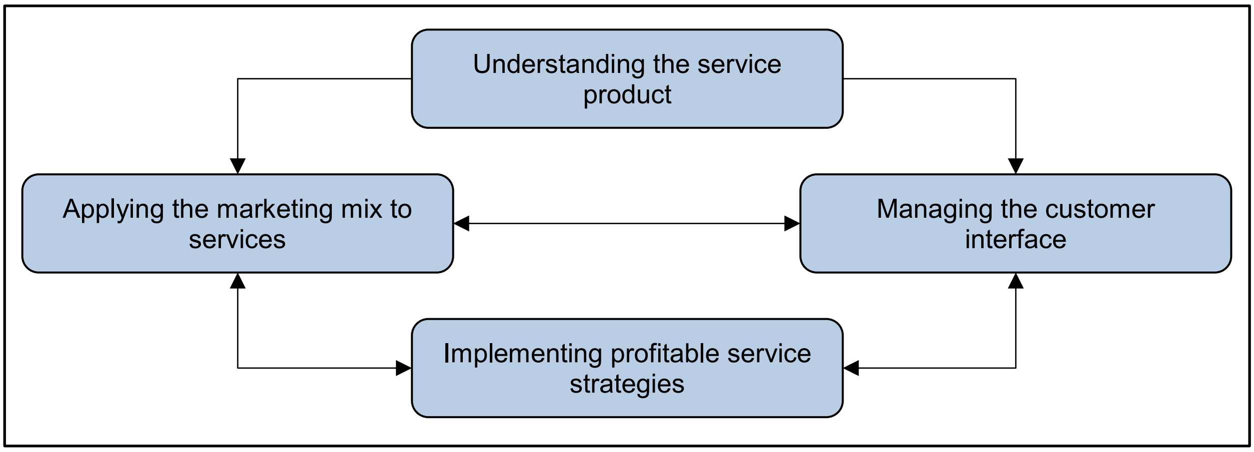
Globally, the growth and shift of employment from agriculture to manufacturing and ultimately to services is evident (Hoffman & Bateson, 2017:15). Owing to the quick expansion of the service sector in almost all countries around the world, the generation of new employment emanates predominantly from services (Wirtz & Lovelock, 2018:7). The service sector is extensive and diverse (Sivakumar, 2016:5) and service offerings vary within the different industries, including airlines, banks, hotels, insurance providers, consultancy businesses, medical practitioners, legal practitioners, entertainment providers, telecommunication providers, real estate businesses, and retailers (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018:259). In 2019, the contribution from the South African service sector to the country's employment was 71.73% in contrast to 5.09% from agriculture and 23.18% from manufacturing (Plecher, 2020b).

Globally, the telecommunication industry is ranked the fifth-largest industry (Aslam & Frooghi, 2018:636) and its economic contribution can, therefore, not be overemphasised (Sahi *et al*., 2016:156). In 2018, it was established that the mobile telecommunication industry had contributed over US$2.4 trillion to the global GDP, hence making it key to the global economy (Ofori *et al*., 2018:580). The telecommunication industry is also regarded as a key to economic growth and has a crucial role in the countries' economies and it is an index of social prosperity (Tas *et al*., 2019:1582). Lastly, the telecommunication industry is valuable to the economy as it can improve the development and functioning of other economic sectors (Asiaktewen & Ibrahim, 2019:111).

Services are also important because it can assist businesses in customising their offerings in order to add value to customers (Zeithaml *et al*., 2018:10). Service providers need to prove that customers will receive additional value (beyond the services offered) (Koti, 2018:408), since customers' perceptions of value increase their likelihood to make a purchase, thus reducing their search intentions for competitors' offerings, which ultimately fosters a long-term relationship with the business (Akroush & Mahadin, 2019:775). Customer value can therefore reduce customer uncertainty, assist in establishing trust, and influence the customer's willingness to commit to a long-term relationship (Asgarpour *et al*., 2015:29). In the process of delivering superior customer value, businesses must create experiences that satisfy and exceed the customer's expectations (Smith, 2016:887).

According to Lovelock and Wirtz (2011:28), services marketing can be organised as a four-part framework, as illustrated in Figure 2-1. This chapter, therefore, commences its discussion of services marketing by first defining and describing the characteristics of services in order to form a clear understanding of the service product (i.e. the first part of this framework).

Figure 2-1: Organising framework for services marketing



Source: Adopted from Lovelock and Wirtz (2011:28).

2.3 DEFINING SERVICES AND SERVICES MARKETING

Over time, businesses have become aware that the marketing and management of services pose issues and challenges that are not similarly encountered in the marketing of products (Wilson *et al.*, 2016:13). Baines *et al.* (2017:26) state that in the late 1970s and early 1980s, it was acknowledged that the tangible goods marketing approach was inappropriate and lacking for the marketing of services. Hence, the birth of service-oriented concepts and models started with Shostack's (1977) seminal research, which justified services marketing to be a field of research different from product-oriented marketing (Baker & Magnini, 2016:1511). Considering this, it is imperative to define the concepts of services and services marketing.

2.3.1 Defining services

According to Wirtz and Lovelock (2018:12), it could become rather challenging to define services, since every service delivery process can involve a variety of intricate activities. As a result, different definitions from different sources and researchers are presented in Table 2-1.

Table 2-1: Definitions of services

Source	Definition
Quinn *et al*. (1987:50)	Services refer to those economic activities of which the outputs are not tangible to the buyer, are usually simultaneously produced and consumed, and offer additional value (i.e. convenience, pleasure, timeliness, comfort, or health).
Grönroos (2000:46)	A service is a process that involves a sequence of intangible activities that are offered as solutions to customer problems. It usually, but not necessarily always, occurs during the contact between the customer and service provider's employees and/or physical resources or goods and/or systems of the service provider.

Table 2-1: Definitions of services (continues)

Source	Definition
Ferrell and Hartline (2011:12)	Services are intangible products that include acts or performances that are focused on people or their possessions.
Kurtz (2015:381)	Services are intangible tasks that satisfy the needs of customers.
Lovelock *et al*. (2015:7)	A service includes any deed, performance, or experience that an exchange partner can offer to another. In essence, it is intangible and does not result in any ownership but creates value for the recipient.
Vennila and Dinesh (2017:97)	Services refer to the activities or benefits that one exchange party can provide to another party and mainly, these are intangible and do not result in the transfer of any ownership.
Kotler and Armstrong (2018:244)	Services are any form of product that comprise deeds, benefits or satisfaction offered for sale to the customer that are fundamentally intangible and do not result in the transfer of ownership.

Considering the definitions from Table 2-1, the following noticeable generic elements of the services concept have been identified.

- **Intangible offering**

  Since a service is intangible and is inseparable from production and consumption, it cannot be standardised (Pamela *et al*., 2019:9). It is impossible to display a service and it cannot be easily communicated to customers, making it difficult for customers to evaluate the quality before the purchase (Pomerai, 2017:13). In order to reduce uncertainty when purchasing services, customers look for signals of service quality and they may make conclusions concerning quality based on the place, people, price, equipment, and communications that are visible to them (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018:258). Normally, symbols and cues are used to present intangible products as tangible to the customer (Pride & Ferrell, 2019:244). It is a challenge for marketers to communicate the benefits associated with services due to the intangibility aspect, unlike it is for tangible product offerings (Lamb *et al*., 2018:207).

- **An exchange of value between the buyer and seller**

  To maintain a relationship, customers must be satisfied with the product offering and the business must be financially satisfied (Pride & Ferrell, 2019:11). For an exchange to occur, the following five conditions must exist: (a) at least two exchange parties must be available, (b) each exchange party must possess something of value to the other party, (c) all exchange parties must be able to communicate and deliver, (d) each exchange party can freely accept or reject the offer, and (e) each exchange party trusts that it is advantageous to engage with the other party (Marshall & Johnston, 2015:8). Customers expect value from their purchase in exchange for their money, time, and effort, which can be realised by access to value-creating elements rather than a transfer of ownership (Wirtz & Lovelock, 2018:14).

- **No transfer of ownership**

  The consumption of a service does not necessarily result in any transfer of ownership, even if the service process may be attached to a tangible product (Baines *et al*., 2017:569). Therefore, service customers will only receive an experience yet acquiring no ownership of the service (Sabat *et al*., 2017:108). However, customers receiving a service may obtain ownership of other aspects, such as (a) tangible items that demonstrate the service, and (b) benefits accruing from the service rather than the service itself (Jha *et al*., 2016:11).

From the definitions (provided in Table 2-1) and generic elements discussed above, the following definition of services has been formulated for the purpose of this study:

Services are the intangible offerings exchanged between the mobile ISP and its customers to provide value, which does not necessarily result in any transfer of ownership.

Consistent with the research of Armstrong and Kotler (2018:258), Ferrell and Hartline (2011:197), and Marshall and Johnston (2015:266), some generic features can be observed from the abovementioned definitions of services presented in Table 2-1, namely intangibility, simultaneous production and consumption, time-bound delivery and lack of ownership. Accordingly, the following section indicates what constitutes a service, by discussing each of these characteristics.

2.3.1.1 Characteristics of services

Services mainly comprise deeds and performances executed by people or equipment to customers at a certain fee (Cunningham, 2018:205). The services offered may complement tangible goods and in some circumstances, tangible goods may complement services (Czinkota & Ronkainen, 2013:397). The issues concerning the marketing of services are not exactly similar to those related to the marketing of physical goods. To gain an understanding of these differences, it is crucial to understand the distinct characteristics of services (Pride & Ferrell, 2019:288).

- **Intangibility**

  The main distinguishing characteristic between a physical good and a service is the intangible nature of services (Pride & Ferrell, 2019:288). Due to the intangibility of services, it cannot be seen, felt, tasted, or physically touched in the same manner as tangible goods (Hoffman & Bateson, 2017:63). Therefore, within the service industry, relationship-building efforts are critical, since services are intangible offerings and the longevity of the relationship is crucial for the business' sustainability (Tariq *et al*., 2014:681). According to McDaniel *et al*. (2013:418), it is a challenge to evaluate the quality of a service prior to or even after buying it, since a service tends to show fewer search qualities as compared to physical goods.

A search quality is a feature that can be easily evaluated prior to purchasing, for example, the colour of an appliance or automobile. Due to the intangible characteristics of services, it poses various marketing challenges that are not usually encountered when marketing physical goods (Hoffman & Bateson, 2017:63).

- **Inseparability**

  Another key characteristic of services that presents a challenge for marketers is inseparability. This characteristic refers to the simultaneous production and consumption of a service when being consumed by customers (Hult *et al*., 2014:385). Since the customer is involved in the consumption and service delivery process, potential customer dissatisfaction must be dealt with immediately (Dissart *et al*., 2015:124). According to McDaniel *et al*. (2013:418), inseparability also implies that customers can contribute to the input into their service experience and service outcome. That is, customers can co-create individual value by their experiences during participation in service delivery (Flores & Vasquez-Parraga, 2015:16). Inseparability also implies regular interaction between customers during the service delivery and can hence possibly affect each other's service experiences (Wilson *et al*., 2016:19).

- **Perishability**

  Perishability relates to the fact that services not consumed at a certain time cannot be kept for future consumption (Burrow & Fowler, 2016:314). The challenges in attempting to create an inventory for services makes it difficult to provide service backup in case of an increase in demand (Czinkota & Ronkainen, 2013:399) and when demand for services increases it causes challenges for service providers. Therefore, service providers often organise a better supply and demand (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018:259). Marketers of tangible goods can easily deal with the supply-demand problem by means of production scheduling and inventory techniques. On the contrary, services marketers are deprived of similar benefits and experience several challenges when attempting to create a balance between supply and demand (Pride & Ferrell, 2019:289).

- **Heterogeneity**

  Heterogeneity is a differentiating characteristic of services that shows the inconsistency of one service transaction from another (Hoffman & Bateson, 2017:74). Since services are inseparable and individuals are part of the service offering, every service encounter is likely to be unique; it only happens once and cannot be repeated (Mensah & Mensah, 2013:27). In addition, Burrow and Fowler (2016:315) emphasise that due to the dissimilarities in employees' expertise or even in their enthusiasm for the job, the service is frequently inconsistent. Lastly, heterogeneity results because customers are different. Thus, every customer will present unique demands or experience the service encounter uniquely. For this reason, the heterogeneity related to services is mainly a result of human interaction that occurs between employees and customers and all the vagaries that accompany it (Wilson *et al*., 2016:18).

- **Client-based relationships**

  The success of most services hinges on establishing and maintaining client-based relationships, which refer to the interactions that produce satisfied customers who continuously use a service over time (Hult *et al*., 2014:387). Establishing customer relationships goes beyond the marketing function; it is a business philosophy that affects the activities and processes, employees, customer service and service quality (Myftaraj & Nexhipi, 2014:1). As suggested by Ferrell *et al*. (2015:309), to promote client-based relationships, the service provider must initiate necessary steps in order to develop trust and exhibit customer commitment. Furthermore, the service provider must satisfy its customers to ensure that they become loyal and less likely to switch to other service providers. Since services are simultaneously produced and consumed, its production can be positively or negatively influenced by certain factors (e.g. human interaction). Thus, creating strong customer-business relationships is the key to business profitability (Căruntu, 2015:182).

- **Lack of ownership**

  Service ownership is impossible because nothing is transferred during the service encounter (Baines *et al*., 2017:574). When a customer purchases a service, ownership rights cannot be transferred from the service provider to the customer, rather only the right of use (Paulišić *et al*., 2016:235). An exclusion to the limitation of lack of ownership of services occurs when the service is embedded in a tangible product (Haksever & Render, 2013:21). Lack of ownership of services in some cases can pose a challenge for a customer to evaluate and appreciate the benefits of buying the service (Lancaster & Massingham, 2018:445). Therefore, it is necessary for service providers to emphasise the service experience the customer is purchasing and distinguish it from that of other service providers (Cunningham, 2018:207).

The characteristics of services pose difficulties for marketers and require specific strategies. By applying specific strategies to the distinct characteristics of services, marketers should be able to promote service offerings to their target market more effectively (Sivakumar, 2016:9). Table 2-2 further presents some of the marketing challenges emanating from the aforementioned service characteristics.

Table 2-2: Characteristics of services and associated marketing challenges

Service characteristics	Marketing challenges
Intangibility	• It is difficult for customers to evaluate quality, especially before purchase and consumption. • It is difficult to convey service characteristics and benefits in promotion. As a result, the service provider is forced to sell a promise. • Many services have few standardised units of measurement. Therefore, service prices are difficult to set and justify. • Customers cannot take possession of a service.
Inseparability (simultaneous production and consumption)	• Customers and/or their possessions must be present during service delivery. • Other customers can affect service outcomes, including service quality and customer satisfaction. • Service employees are critical because they must interact with customers to deliver service. • Converting high-contact services to low-contact services will lower costs but may reduce service quality. • Services are often difficult to distribute.
Perishability	• Services cannot be inventoried for later use. Therefore, unused service capacity is lost forever. • Service demand is time and place sensitive. As a result, it is difficult to balance supply and demand, especially during periods of peak demand. • Service facilities and equipment sit idle during periods of off-peak demand.
Heterogeneity	• Service quality varies across people, time, and place, making it difficult to deliver good service consistently. • There are limited opportunities to standardise service delivery. • Many services are customisable by nature. However, customisation can dramatically increase the costs of providing the service.
Client-based relationships	• The success of most services depends on maintaining a satisfied customer base over the long-term. • Generating repeat business is crucial for the service provider's success.

Source: Adopted from Ferrell and Hartline (2011:197).

2.3.1.2 Classification of services

There are numerous industries within the service sector and several efforts have been made to classify services into distinct categories (Wilson *et al.*, 2016:6). According to Abbasi and Dahiya (2016:345), services can be differentiated based on the service delivery process, recipient of the service and whether the presence of the customer is necessary during the service delivery. As indicated by Chowdhary and Prakash (2007:495), various service taxonomies have been developed since the early 1980s and different researchers have proposed different classifications based on different criteria.

Berkowitz *et al*. (1992:638) classified services based on whether they are delivered by people or equipment, profit generating and whether they are government sponsored or not. Pride and Ferrell (1989:747) noted that services could be classified by type of market, degree of labour intensiveness, level of customer contact, skill of the service provider and aim of the service provider. More recently, Wirtz and Lovelock (2018:15) classified services based on a process framework, distinguishing between *services performed on people* versus *services performed on possessions*, as well as the extent to which the performed service is tangible. These four categories are subsequently presented in Table 2-3 and further explained below.

Table 2-3: Classification of services

	People as recipients	**Possessions as recipients**
Tangible actions	Services directed at people's bodies: • Spa treatments • Passenger transportation • Healthcare	Services directed at people's tangible possessions: • Courier services • Laundry and dry cleaning • Car repair and maintenance
Intangible actions	Services directed at people's minds: • Education • Entertainment • Psychotherapy	Services directed at people's intangible possessions: • Accounting • Banking • Legal services • Mobile internet services

Source: Adopted from Wirtz and Lovelock (2018:16).

- **Services directed at people's bodies**

  This involves the customer spending different durations of time actively interacting with the service operation (Baines *et al*., 2017:575). In order to receive these services, the customer must be physically present at the service provider's facilities, where people or machines (or both) create and deliver service benefits to customers (Wirtz & Lovelock, 2018:15).

- **Services directed at people's tangible possessions**

  This requires the customer to either take an item to the service provider, or to invite the service provider to undertake the required work (Baines *et al*., 2017:575). Hence, services in this category do not need the customer's presence during the service delivery, even though the customer may be required to be present at the beginning and completion of the service delivery process (Wilson *et al*., 2016:7). Evidently, these services do not need the customer's participation during the service delivery process; hence, from a marketing point of view, possession-processing services are less complex as compared to people-processing services (Sivakumar, 2016:6).

- **Services directed at people's minds (mental stimulus processing services)**

  Mental stimulus processing services attempt to shape the customer's attitudes and behaviour. To attain this, these services need to be focused on peoples' minds – thus the expression, mental stimulus processing (Baines *et al*., 2017:575). With mental stimulus processing services, customers are required to invest time and mental effort to acquire the total benefits of the service offered. However, customers do not necessarily need to be physically present at the service provider to receive the service (Wirtz & Lovelock, 2018:18).

- **Services directed at people's intangible possessions (information processing services)**

  This entails services that make use of technology or intellect focused on a customer's assets (Lamb *et al*., 2018:211). Regardless of being a highly intangible form of service output, information processing services can be changed into more tangible forms such as reports, books, letters, CDs, or DVDs (Du Plessis *et al*., 2012:208). As the customer can rarely see the tangibility of the offer, it is usually difficult to distinguish information processing services and to communicate their actual value (Wilson *et al*., 2016:7). Services directed at intangible possessions may include data processing and data transmission (Czinkota & Ronkainen, 2013:418).

In exchange for money, time, and effort, service customers expect to receive value from access of goods, labour, professional skills, facilities, networks and systems although they do not necessarily take ownership of any of the physical elements involved (Koti, 2018:407). In the context of mobile ISPs, data is transmitted (i.e. transmission of mobile internet services) through networks, implying that mobile internet services are services directed at people's intangible possessions. Mobile internet permits wireless connectivity to the internet via radio waves instead of wires on a person's computer or mobile device (Islam, 2017:39).

As noted in section 2.3.1.1, the marketing of physical goods differs from the marketing of services, due to the nature of service offerings. The following section, therefore, provides different definitions of services marketing from the extant literature.

2.3.2 Defining services marketing

The justification for the distinct treatment of services marketing is premised on the characteristics of services, including intangibility, inseparability of production and consumption, heterogeneity, and perishability (Koti, 2018:407). The various services marketing definitions from extant literature are presented in Table 2-4.

Table 2-4: Definitions of services marketing

Source	Definition
Dibb *et al*. (1995:4)	Services marketing is the process whereby the production of services is planned and undertaken, determining the services' pricing, promotion, and distribution in order to accomplish an exchange that would meet the objectives of customers (both individuals and businesses).
Bhattacharjee (2006:116)	Services marketing is concerned with analysing the customer, his/her needs, wants and desires and using the acquired information to develop service products that can satisfy the customer.
Dann (2008:335)	Services marketing includes the service provider's communication, management, and delivery of any act, performance, or effort that results in an intangible product to the customer.
Awara and Anyadighibe (2014:32)	Services marketing involves building public relations, improving customer loyalty, developing the quality of the service, managing business-customer relationships, as well as complaint management.
Bangre *et al*. (2015:45)	Services marketing is an integrated system of business actions designed to plan, price, promote, and distribute the appropriate services for the benefit of current and prospective customers to attain the organisational objectives.
Varma *et al*. (2016:14339)	Services marketing is a business function and entails a combination of processes for identifying or creating, communicating and delivering customer value, as well as managing business-customer relationships in the manner that benefit both the business and its stakeholders.

Considering the definitions from Table 2-4, the following noticeable generic elements of the services marketing concept have been identified.

- **Planning the service**

  According to Zeithaml *et al*. (2018:25), in order to be effective in the marketing of services, the service offering should be carefully planned. In essence, this entails the improvement of managerial decisions with regard to the marketing mix elements (i.e. the 4Ps), namely the product offering, the price, the place, and the promotion of the service. However, within the context of services marketing, and as further discussed (in section 2.4) below, in order to enhance the effectiveness of the marketing of services, three more elements supplemented the 4Ps. If a business manages to provide a combination of superior product, place or promotion benefits and lower prices than the competitors, it can attain a competitive advantage (Keegan & Green, 2017:26).

- **Communicating the service offering**

  Communication is critical, particularly in the initial stages when a business wants to create awareness in order for customers to buy (Roberts-Lombard, 2011:3488). Communication is also essential in marketing relationships; it has a fundamental role in providing an understanding of the exchange parties' intentions and abilities, thus establishing a foundation for building trust among these parties (Al-Hersh *et al*., 2014:80). When a business properly communicates with the customer, it should result in an increase in the customer's sense of receiving personal attention and care (Jain *et al*., 2014:6). Furthermore, customers' perceptions or evaluations of the business' communications enable meaningful reception of the communication created and results in mutually shared benefits and the formation of a long-term relationship (Balaji *et al*., 2016:187).

- **Managing the business-customer relationship**

  Managing customer relationships commences by taking into consideration the meaning of relationships between the customer and business (Peelen & Beltman, 2013:26). Businesses should realise the necessity to maintain established customer relationships (Wirtz & Lovelock, 2018:289). The customers are the core of all businesses and the capability of a business to be successful in a competitive environment is mainly based on its ability to manage its relationships with customers and improve customers' satisfaction through relationship building (Oduro *et al*., 2018:101). Kotler and Armstrong (2018:542) further posit that to be competitive in the marketplace, businesses should not only be proficient in managing products but should also be adept in managing customer relationships.

- **Satisfying customers**

  Customers' needs and wants are met through market offerings (i.e. some combination of products, services, information, or experiences) (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018:31). As such, when attempting to satisfy customers, service providers must have an understanding of their customers' expectations, manage them carefully, try to fulfil them, and even exceed them when possible (and profitable) (Fornell *et al*., 2020:35). The business' failure to meet customers' needs and expectations leads to dissatisfaction (Lamb *et al*., 2018:7).

From the definitions (provided in Table 2-4) and generic elements discussed above, the following definition of services marketing has been formulated for the purpose of this study:

Services marketing is a management orientation that focuses on satisfying mobile ISPs' customers, with the aim of developing long-term relationships with these customers through careful and effective planning, as well as proper communication of the service offering.

As mentioned, services marketing developed because of the ineffectiveness of marketing service offerings by means of traditional physical goods marketing strategies (Paulišić *et al*., 2016:236). As a result, the marketing mix was supplemented with three additional elements in order to improve the effectiveness of the marketing of services, resulting in the services marketing mix. The subsequent section further discusses the elements of the services marketing mix.

2.4 SERVICES MARKETING MIX

Based on the selected marketing strategy, a business can develop an integrated marketing programme comprising a mixture of the four marketing mix elements (the 4Ps) that can transform the marketing strategy into actual value for customers (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018:54). In other words, the notion of the marketing mix implies that all the elements are interrelated and subsequently depend on each other to some extent. Borden's (1965) original marketing mix comprised 12 elements, which included product planning, pricing, branding, distribution channels, personal selling, advertising, promotions, packaging, display, servicing, physical handling, and fact finding and analysis (Pour *et al*., 2013:3275). This model was later modified and simplified to the 4Ps, namely product, price, place, and promotion (Felicia, 2014:253). The marketer's role therefore includes (a) creating a product that matches the customer's needs or wants, (b) establishing the product's price, (c) promoting the product in order to assist the customer in obtaining an understanding of the benefits and value of the offering, and (d) making the product accessible for purchase to the customer through proper distribution channels (Iacobucci, 2015:5). This combination of marketing elements is generally known as the traditional marketing mix, which is typically used to design marketing strategies for physical goods (Singh, 2012:40).

2.4.1 Traditional marketing mix

The marketing mix comprises a set of strategic tools for the business in order to develop a strong position within its target market (Salazar, 2017:78). When developing the marketing mix, it is necessary to evaluate the characteristics of each element to ensure that there is a relationship between the respective marketing mix elements (Išoraitė, 2016:25-26). The subsequent sections discuss each element of the traditional marketing mix (i.e. the 4Ps).

2.4.1.1 Product

A business gains direction about the products or services it should offer when it evaluates the target market (Rollins & Perri, 2014:7). The product is the key element in the marketing mix (Pour *et al*., 2013:3275). Within the context of service providers, the product offering is intangible and mostly consists of a process or a sequence of processes (Lamb *et al*., 2018:211). A service offering consists of all the elements of the service act, both tangible and intangible, that can generate value for customers (Wirtz & Lovelock, 2018:92). In some instances, service providers add extra tangible benefits to distinguish themselves from competitors (Cunningham, 2018:209).

According to Kovačević *et al*. (2017:162), mobile ISPs offer a variety of services to their customers, including voice, image, data and video transfer services. Therefore, for this study, the product can be described as the data services (i.e. internet services) provided by mobile ISPs.

Although mobile telecommunication service providers are part of the service sector, they integrate handsets and starter packs (i.e. additional products) with their main offering of network connectivity (i.e. service) (Mpwanya & Van Heerden, 2016:3). Mobile internet services entails accessing wireless internet connection through mobile devices (such as smartphones and tablets) that allows people to access information, product, and services available on the internet without temporal or spatial limitations (Giovanis, 2016:568). In general, it can therefore be concluded that mobile ISPs provide internet connection through mobile devices.

2.4.1.2 Price

Price is the most flexible element of the marketing mix and can be adapted rapidly within a short period of time; significantly more so than any of the other marketing mix elements (Al Badi, 2015:137). Price is perceived as revenue-oriented, since it is the only marketing mix element that actively generates revenue (Mohammad, 2015:73). Subsequently, a pricing strategy is of paramount importance, as it could affect the revenue of the provider, as well as the perceptions and behaviours of customers (Gameti & Preko, 2014:372). Hence, the ultimate pricing decision encountered by most businesses is setting a price that sells the product offering and at the same time warrants profitability (Hoffman & Bateson, 2017:150). Price furthermore advocates the quality of the service offering and if price promotions are communicated to the customer, the quality status of the service is not compromised (Cunningham, 2018:210). Naturally, customers seek to pay a reasonable price, which refers to the perceived reasonable value during the business transaction (Supaartagorn, 2017:51). Price is a sensitive aspect for business' revenue and it is influenced by the cost of production, inventory availability, time, customers' willingness to pay, government regulations, as well as competitors' prices (Zhou & Gupta, 2019:4).

Concerning mobile ISPs, price not only includes the call rate, but also the price of airtime, text-messaging charges, and internet usage charges (data) (Nwakanma *et al*., 2018:4). For this study, price is conceptualised as the cost of data associated with accessing the internet by mobile ISP customers on their mobile devices.

2.4.1.3 Place

Place refers to the location at which the service encounter occurs (Cunningham, 2018:211). These locations can include any physical or virtual outlets (Maheswari & Nagamuthu, 2014:20). To deliver the service to customers, service providers must choose where and when these services should be delivered, as well as the suitable methods and channels of delivery (Wirtz & Lovelock, 2016:29). The implementation of marketing strategies is related to an effective distribution process that enables the business to achieve the availability goal of providing the product at the appropriate place and appropriate time (Al Badi, 2018:4). Distribution strategies for service providers must be focused on certain aspects such as convenience, the number of stores, direct versus indirect distribution, location, and scheduling. According to Lamb *et al*. (2018:212), convenience influences the customer's choice of a service provider.

In the mobile ISP industry, customers want service providers to move from only providing internet connection to having the network available and accessible everywhere (Oghojafor *et al*., 2014:72). To ensure frequent access to mobile services, a reliable network infrastructure should be in place (Mpwanya & Van Heerden, 2016:3).

2.4.1.4 Promotion

Promotion is a marketing mix element that assists in communicating information, encouraging purchases and influencing purchase decisions (Išoraitė, 2016:33). Promotion aims to generate and stimulate demand in both the short-term and long-term (Thwala & Slabbert, 2018:4). Promotion affects the customer or potential customer's knowledge, attitudes and behaviour (Kuwu & Gakure, 2014:107). It is challenging to promote services because of its nature and generic features. Consequently, service providers must be creative in the way they communicate their services (Cunningham, 2018:211). Considering the intangible nature of services, the role of service communications is to improve customers' confidence in the service provider's capabilities and to decrease the perceived risk of the purchase (Johann, 2015:15).

Mobile ISPs use promotional strategies by offering small top-ups, free credit, text messaging, and internet packages to be successful and retain customers (Aslam & Frooghi, 2018:636). For this study, promotional strategies can therefore include mobile ISPs offering free data or certain internet packages to its customers.

2.4.2 Extended (services) marketing mix

Taking into consideration the unique characteristics of services, the 4Ps of the traditional marketing mix were deemed insufficient in developing a comprehensive services marketing strategy (Cunningham, 2018:208). Various academics and researchers have suggested alternative frameworks and the addition of some parameters with respect to the notable deficiencies inherent in the original marketing mix (Sanghvi, 2014:36). From the alternative frameworks developed, the most influential framework was developed by Booms and Bitner (1981) in the form of the 7Ps marketing mix, where the authors proposed three additional Ps, namely people, physical evidence and process; hence extending the 4Ps of the traditional marketing mix (Hollensen, 2015:360).

The additional three Ps essentially consider the intangible characteristics of services, as well as the human element that takes part in the service delivery process (Bangre *et al*., 2015:45). Mobile ISPs must therefore take all of the seven Ps of the services marketing mix into consideration when designing their marketing strategy (Singh & Satsangi, 2015:47). The additional three Ps of the extended services marketing mix are further discussed in the subsequent sections.

2.4.2.1 People

People refers to the human elements – including employees, customers, or other customers in the service environment – who participate in the service delivery process and who could influence the buyer's perceptions (Zeithaml *et al*., 2018:26). Services are inseparable from the human element (Cunningham, 2018:212). Thus, regardless of the different technological advances, many services will always necessitate direct interaction between the customer and the service provider's employees (Lovelock *et al*., 2015:26). According to Johann (2015:15), the presentation, attitudes, behaviours, and expertise of the service provider's employees could have a significant impact on the customer's perception of the service offering. Thus, employing, training, motivating, and rewarding employees should not be limited to the human resources department, but should also include insight from the marketing department.

For this study, it is conceptualised that the people element includes mobile ISPs' employees who are responsible for responding to customer queries on available internet packages, handling customer complaints on billing issues, network connectivity, or any other queries.

2.4.2.2 Physical evidence

Physical evidence – also referred to as the servicescape – entails the environment in which the service is delivered, where the interaction between the service provider and customer takes place, and any tangible elements that enable performing or communicating the service (Valenzuela-Abaca, 2014:29; Wilson *et al*., 2016:22). If the physical elements of the service do not meet or exceed what the customer expected, there is a high probability for service failure (West *et al*., 2015:295). The physical environment can have a significant impact on the impressions formed by customers concerning the service quality they receive (Lovelock *et al*., 2015:27). Physical evidence, therefore, functions as a visual representation of what the business stands for and facilitates the activities between customers and employees (Sivakumar, 2016:7). Mobile ISPs can, for example, use the same colour for furniture and fittings, and the same decorations in all customer service centres so that a strong brand image is established (Sarbabidya, 2017:53). For this study, physical evidence can be described as the mobile ISP customer service centres and websites where customers can interact with their respective service provider.

2.4.2.3 Process

Process is fundamental to service delivery and involves the procedures, methods, techniques, and flow of activities through which the service is delivered (Du Plessis *et al*., 2012:25). Process is related to the service delivery and can influence customers' satisfaction, thus process management is vital for service quality optimisation (Johann, 2015:29). A poorly designed process could result in a slow and ineffective service delivery process, and a dissatisfying service encounter for customers (Wirtz & Lovelock, 2018:22). Therefore, it is crucial that service providers deliver an excellent service to their customers because a poor delivery process may influence the total effectiveness of the process (Chiguvi & Dube, 2018:2). The service process is inseparable from the service experience; thus, service providers must equip their employees to deliver the service correctly in the first place and at the required level of quality (Cunningham, 2018:215).

For this study, it is conceptualised that processes may include the service recovery process undertaken by mobile ISPs after customers make complaints to the service provider on issues such as poor customer service, internet downtime, or billing issues.

2.5 SERVICES MARKETING STRATEGIES

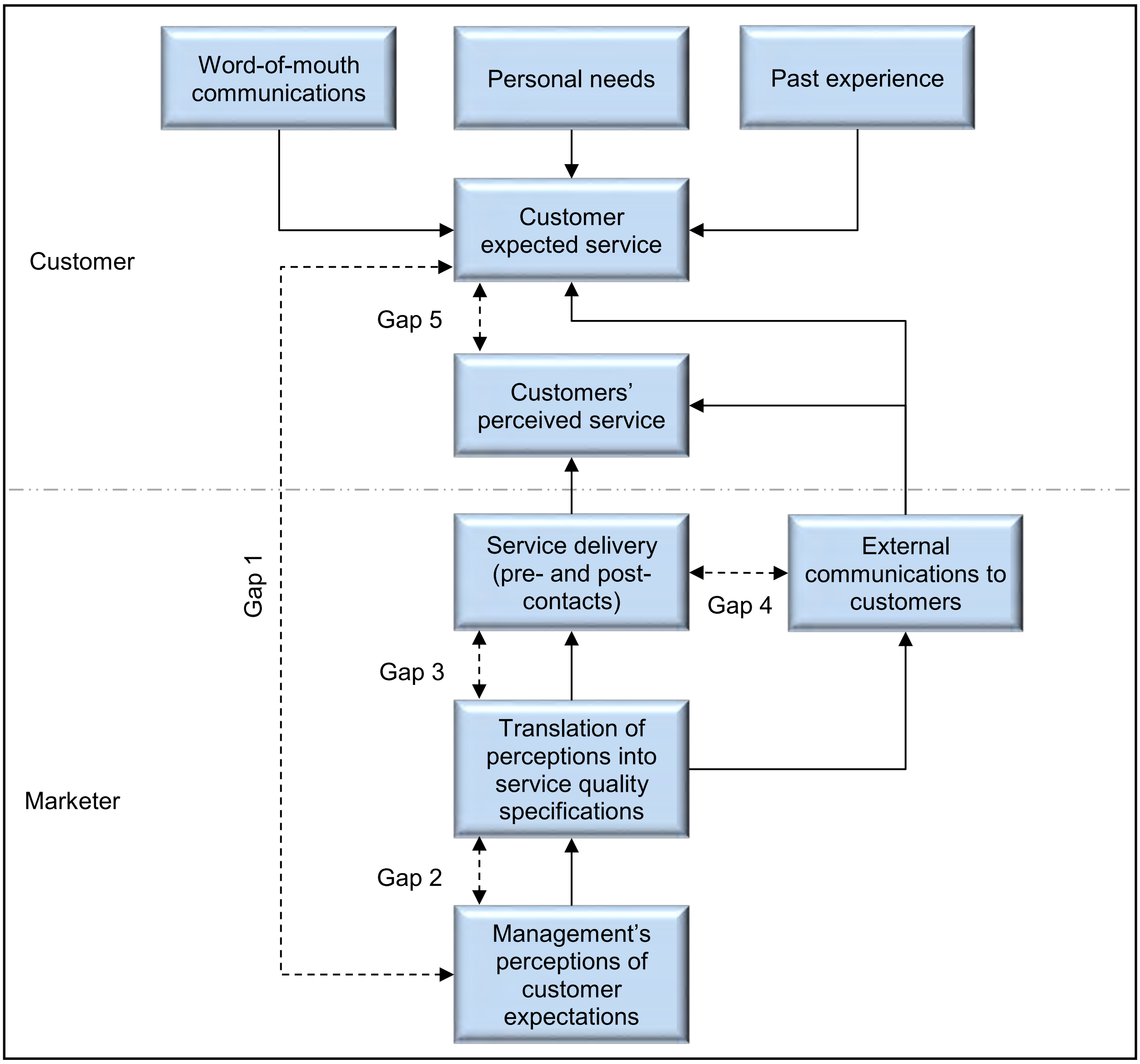
The establishment of services marketing strategies entails obtaining an understanding of the frequency and the way in which customers interact with service providers. Hence, a services marketing strategy depends on developing insight into how customers interact with a service (Baines *et al*., 2017:576). The subsequent sections therefore discuss strategies that can be implemented to ensure profitable services, namely improving service quality, relationship management, striving for service leadership and complaint handling and service recovery.

2.5.1 Improving service quality

Over the past decades, quality and excellence in services has been the main focus of professionals, managers and researchers due to its significant impact on business performance, costs, profitability, as well as customers' satisfaction and loyalty (Periañez-Cristobal *et al.*, 2020:45). The quality of service can also influence customers' intention to repurchase the service (Ismail & Yunan, 2016:271). The concept of service quality is concerned with fulfilling customers' needs and requirements and the extent to which customers' expectations compare with the service delivered (Ismail & Jiang, 2019:655). The maintenance of service quality optimisation is critical (Fauzi & Suryani, 2019:269), as it has been recognised as the primary differentiator for service offerings and is regarded as a significant source of competitive advantage, as businesses perpetually compete based on quality (Anabila, 2019:136).

Measuring the level of customers' service quality expectations and perceptions assist businesses in identifying problems in existing business systems to manage them effectively and ultimately attract and retain customers (Kumarasinghe *et al.*, 2019:46). According to Blair *et al.* (2019:1497), the differences between the customer's expectations, perceptions, and actual service experienced present gaps in managing service quality. Gaps within the service design and delivery can damage the customer-business (i.e. customer-service provider) relationship (Wirtz & Lovelock, 2018:454). Therefore, closing the gap between customers' expectations and perceptions is of paramount importance in order to deliver quality service; forming the foundation for the gaps model (Zeithaml *et al.*, 2018:35). The Gaps model of service quality – developed by Parasuraman *et al.* (1985) – comprises five gaps, each of which are shown in Figure 2-2 and further explained below.

Figure 2-2: Gaps model of service quality



Source: Adopted from Parasuraman *et al.* (1985:44).

- **Gap 1: The knowledge gap**

  The gap exists because of the deviation between what customers need and what the business assumes they need. The main reason for the failure of businesses to meet customers' expectations is that businesses do not have a thorough understanding of what those expectations entail (Zeithaml *et al*., 2018:36). It is therefore necessary for managers to have knowledge of customers' expectations to enable them to deliver what customers will deem as excellent services (Makambe, 2016:905). In order to close Gap 1, service providers must acquire information about customers' needs and satisfaction (Lamb *et al*., 2018:205).

- **Gap 2: The design gap**

  This gap is a result of the service provider's failure to design the appropriate service standards (Huang, Tseng *et al*., 2016:88) and is frequently caused by the manager's lack of commitment towards service quality (Makambe, 2016:905). Although managers may correctly interpret customers' needs, they may fail to establish performance standards (Marathe, 2017:83). To close Gap 2, Nargunde (2016:128) suggests that managers must be equipped with the necessary skills required to lead employees in delivering service quality.

- **Gap 3: The delivery gap**

  This gap refers to the discrepancy between the set service standards and the employees' actual performance on those standards (Wirtz & Lovelock, 2018:451). The existence and the extent of the delivery gap depends on the willingness and ability of employees to deliver the service based on the standards set by managers (Johann, 2015:92). Accordingly, managers must ensure that employees are well-equipped and have the appropriate tools to execute their tasks. Gap 3 can be closed by encouraging teamwork and training employees so that they have knowledge of what is expected from them by managers (Lamb *et al*., 2018:205).

- **Gap 4: The communication gap**

  This gap refers to the discrepancy between the service delivered and what is communicated to customers about the service (Franceschini & Mastrogiacomo, 2018:86). Promises made by the service provider – through advertisements, employees and other communications – may raise customers' expectations, which ultimately form the basis against which they assess service quality (Zeithaml *et al*., 2018:44). To close Gap 4, Makambe (2016:905) recommends that appropriate and effective communication about service quality must be developed. Furthermore, attention should be given to the service quality dimensions and features that are essential to customers, accurately showing what customers actually receive in the service encounter and assisting customers in understanding their roles in service delivery.

- **Gap 5: The customer gap**

  This gap measures the satisfaction derived by the customer from the quality of the service (Usanga & Murairwa, 2016:3). An analysis of Gap 5 is vital for managers in order to monitor service delivery by means of comparing customers' expectations and perceptions and this, in turn, will enable managers to acquire information on whether they are fulfilling, exceeding, or not meeting customers' expectations (Gebremichael & Singh, 2019:6). To close this gap, the service provider must create realistic customer expectations, by providing correct and honest communication about what it can deliver (Lamb *et al.*, 2018:205). Gaps 1 to 4 influence the overall gap between customers' expectations and perceptions of service quality (Gap 5) (Datta & Vardhan, 2017:3). This implies, the smaller the difference observed in Gaps 1 to 4, the more probable customers will positively assess service quality (Pomerai, 2017:17).

2.5.2 Managing relationships and building loyalty

Customer loyalty has developed into the cornerstone of successful marketing, since it forms the basis for a long-term customer-business relationship (Anabila, 2019:142). Marshall and Johnston (2015:185) define customer loyalty as the level to which an individual will refrain from switching from one provider to a competing provider. Customer loyalty normally results from the customer's overall positive evaluation of his/her experiences with the business and is not limited to only one encounter (Zeithaml *et al.*, 2018:80). According to Carranza *et al*. (2018:383), the operational and financial success of businesses is mainly based on the degree to which customers express loyalty or return intentions towards them. Loyalty is a function of both the customer's unwillingness to switch and his/her ability to voice out, hence managers should give attention to loyalty by reducing the customer's likelihood to defect and providing opportunities to make complaints (Hollensen, 2015:596).

The significance of customer loyalty emanates from its positive outcomes to businesses, as it directly and positively affects the business by establishing a source of loyal customers (Servera-Francés & Piqueras-Tomás, 2019:73). However, customers possess different levels of loyalty towards different brands, stores, or businesses (Kotler & Keller, 2016:153); hence, maintaining customer loyalty becomes a challenge for any business (Nguyen *et al.*, 2018:3). According to Lamb *et al*. (2018:50), a business must acquire an understanding of the factors that result in customer loyalty and then initiate strategic steps to make sure that those factors are maintained and improved within the business. Service providers can implement different strategies to create close loyalty bonds with their customers, including (a) expanding the relationship by cross-selling and bundling, (b) developing customer loyalty rewards and (c) building social, customisation, or structural bonds (Wirtz & Lovelock, 2018:387).

Although customer loyalty can be realised through a variety of ways, marketing scholars emphasise the influence of relationship marketing as a key strategic tool for gaining customer loyalty (Ngoma & Ntale, 2019:3). According to Ogungbade (2015:9), relationship marketing strategies are perceived to be important in establishing long-term relationships with customers to attain mutual benefits for all exchange partners. Maintaining long-term relationships with the customer is a way to remain competitive in the contemporary business environment (Aka *et al*., 2016:185). Relationship marketing is also regarded as the most appropriate strategy for service providers as services are intangible and it is important to gain customer trust and convince them about the quality of service (Harun, Mohd Noor *et al*., 2018:193).

2.5.3 Striving for service leadership

Marketing managers can strive to differentiate their market offerings in different ways, and service leadership is one of the common bases of differentiation. Service leadership implies having a commitment to service delivery (Marshall & Johnston, 2015:183). According to Grönfeldt and Strother (2006:8), service leadership is defined as a culture that allows the business to manage its promises, plan its processes, and involve its employees in a proactive search for a competitive advantage. A well-established service culture originates from leaders in the business who exhibit the desire for service excellence (Zeithaml *et al*., 2018:317). Accordingly, service leaders utilise various tools to establish service culture, which range from internal marketing and training to core principles and business events and celebrations (Wirtz & Lovelock, 2018:345). Furthermore, service leaders are oriented towards establishing performance standards, identification of high-quality service and training employees to handle customer needs (Zheng *et al*., 2020:47).

Service leadership can assist in developing a culture that emphasises service quality (Jiang *et al*., 2015:1093). Therefore, business leaders are advised to exhibit strong service values throughout the business as the initial step to quality customer service (Wong *et al*., 2015:124). When the entire business is service leadership oriented, all the employee-customer interactions are considered as helpful opportunities to optimise customer service and generate customer loyalty. Under such circumstances, each employee takes responsibility and pride in creating or protecting the business' leading position in service quality or in selected markets by observing and communicating customer needs through the business (Grönfeldt & Strother, 2006:5). Service leadership is not merely established on exceptional performance within one dimension. Instead, it signifies excellence across several dimensions. Within the efforts to capture the performance spectrum, the business can be evaluated within three functional areas, namely marketing, operations, and human resources. The purpose of a service performance framework is to develop insights into how service leaders perform and what can be changed in the business. Service performers are classified into four levels, as presented in Table 2-5 (Wirtz & Lovelock, 2018:491).

Table 2-5: Four levels of service performance

	(1) Loser	(2) Non-entity
Marketing function		
Role of marketing	• Tactical role only. • Advertising and promotions lack focus. • No involvement in product or pricing decision.	• Uses a mix of selling and mass communication, simple segmentation. • Makes selective use of price discounts and promotions. • Conducts and tabulates basic satisfaction surveys.
Competitive appeal	• Customers patronise a business for reasons other than performance.	• Customers neither seek nor avoid the business.
Customer profile	• Mass market to be served at minimum cost.	• One or more segments whose basic needs are understood.
Service quality	• Highly variable, usually unsatisfactory. • Subservient to operations priorities.	• Meets some customer expectations. • Consistent on one or two key dimensions, but not all.
Operations function		
Role of operations	• Reactive. • Cost oriented.	• The principal line management function creates and delivers a product, focuses on standardisation as key to productivity and defines quality from an internal perspective.
Service delivery (front-stage)	• Locations and schedules are unrelated to the preferences of customers, who are routinely ignored.	• Sticklers for tradition. • “If it’s not broke, do not fix it”. • Strict rules for customers. • Each step in delivery runs independently.
Back-stage operations	• Separated from front-stage operations. • Cogs in a machine.	• Contributes to individual front-stage delivery steps; organised separately. • Unfamiliar with customers.
Productivity	• Undefined. • Managers are punished for failing to stick within the budget.	• Based on standardisation. • Rewarded for keeping costs below budget.
Introduction of new technology	• Late adopter. • Under duress. • When necessary for survival.	• Follows the crowd when justified by cost savings.
Human resources function		
Role of human resources	• Supplies low-cost employees who meet minimum skill requirements for the job.	• Recruits and trains employees who can perform competently.
Workforce	• Negative constraint. • Poor performers who do not care and are disloyal.	• Adequate resource, follows procedures but uninspired. • Turnover is often high.
Frontline management	• Controls workers.	• Controls the process.

Table 2-5: Four levels of service performance (continues)

	(3) Professional	(4) Leader
Marketing function		
Role of marketing	• Clear positioning strategy. • Focused communications with distinctive appeals. • Pricing based on value. • Monitors customer usage and operates loyalty programmes. • Variety of research techniques to measure satisfaction and obtain ideas • Works with operations to introduce new delivery systems.	• Innovative leader in chosen segments, known for marketing skills. • Brands at product/process level. • Sophisticated analysis of relational databases as inputs to one-to-one marketing. • State-of-the-art research techniques. • Uses concept testing, observation and customers for product development. • Close to operations/human resources.
Competitive appeal	• Customers seek out the business based on its sustained reputation for meeting customer expectations.	• Business' name is synonymous with service excellence. • Raises expectations to levels that competitors cannot meet.
Customer profile	• Groups of individuals whose variation in needs and value are understood.	• Individuals are selected and retained based on their future value.
Service quality	• Consistently meets or exceeds customer expectations across multiple dimensions.	• Raises customer expectations to new levels. • Improves continuously.
Operations function		
Role of operations	• Plays a role in competitive strategy. • Recognises a trade-off between productivity and quality. • Willing to outsource. • Monitors competing operations for ideas and threats.	• Innovative, focused and excellence. • An equal partner with marketing and human resource management. • Has in-house research capability and academic contacts. • Continually experimenting.
Service delivery (front-stage)	• Driven by customer satisfaction. • Willing to customise and embrace new approaches. • Emphasis on speed, convenience and comfort.	• Delivery is a seamless process organised around the customer. • Employees know whom they are serving. • Focuses on continuous improvement.
Back-stage operations	• Process is explicitly linked to front-stage activities. • Role is to serve "internal customers," who then serve external customers.	• Integrated with front-stage delivery. • Understands role in serving customers. • Continuing dialogue.
Productivity	• Focuses on reengineering backstage processes. • Avoids improvements that may harm the customer service experience. • Continually refining processes.	• Understands return on quality concept. • Actively seeks customer involvement in productivity improvement. • Ongoing testing of new processes and technologies.
Introduction of new technology	• Early adopter when information technology promises to enhance service for customers and provide a competitive edge.	• Works with technology leaders to develop new applications. • Seeks to perform at levels competitors cannot match.

Table 2-5: Four levels of service performance (continues)

	(3) Professional	(4) Leader
Human resource function		
Role of human resources	• Selective recruiting and training. • Keeps close to employees and promotes upward mobility. • Strives to enhance the quality of working life.	• Quality of employees is advantage. • The business is recognised as an outstanding place to work at. • Human resources help top management to nurture culture.
Workforce	• Motivated and hard-working. • Allowed some discretion in the choice of procedures. • Offers suggestions.	• Innovative and empowered. • Very loyal and committed to the business' values and goals. • Creates procedures.
Frontline management	• Listens to customers. • Coaches and facilitates workers.	• Source of new ideas. • Mentors workers to enhance career. • Value to the business.

Source: Adopted from Wirtz and Lovelock (2018:492-493).

2.5.4 Complaint handling and service recovery

The fourth strategy that can be used to ensure profitable services marketing includes complaint handling and service recovery in response to customer complaints or service failures. A service failure occurs when there is unmet expectations of a service or product delivery during the service consumption process (Loo & Leung, 2018:80). Considering the prevalence and severe consequences of service failures, finding effective service recovery methods that are cost effective and easy to use is crucial with the view to reinstate customer satisfaction and increase retention (You *et al.*, 2020:133). Thus, establishing interactive communication between the service provider and the customer is an important aspect of the service recovery process. It will assist both exchange parties to design a seamless way of managing the service recovery process and ultimately attaining satisfaction with service recovery (Msosa & Fuyane, 2020:349). However, taking into consideration that the service provider may fail to recognise a service failure, a customer complaint is the only source that leads to the execution of a service recovery (Nuansi & Ngamcharoenmongkol, 2019:26).

A complaint is the customer's expression of dissatisfaction that is addressed to a service provider, third parties, or customer protection agencies in the event of a service failure (Ateke & Kalu, 2016:17). According to ICASA (2020), complaints against telecommunication service providers that can be lodged to the board include quality-of-service complaints (i.e. network coverage, dropped calls, line installation, activation, transfer, or suspension, ADSL, mobile-number portability, or suspension of service complaints) and complaints concerning the billing of data services, voice services and international roaming.

Komunda *et al*. (2015:528) recommend that businesses should encourage customers to complain so they can give relevant information to resolve the problem and retain the customer. Businesses can encourage customer complaints through activities such as toll-free numbers, availability of feedback cards, service guarantees, and easy complaint procedures (Ofori-Okyere & Kumadey, 2015:34). Although direct complaints provide the service provider valuable opportunities to review and resolve the mistakes, customers are less likely to make complaints concerning the dissatisfying experiences if it requires them to exert a significant amount of effort to complain (Cai & Chi, 2018:1096). Complaint handling therefore addresses the responsive actions of a service provider to customer complaints (Davidow, 2020:87). Effective complaint handling and excellent service recovery are essential for retaining dissatisfied customers (Wirtz & Lovelock, 2018:394). According to Shaw *et al*. (2017:90), effective complaint handling can be advantageous to the service provider for the following reasons:

- it prevents the loss of customers;
- it exposes the existing problems associated with the product or service;
- it provides an opportunity for optimising the product or service and marketing programmes;
- it provides essential information to enhance customer satisfaction;
- it can be a source of new product or service concepts;
- it protects the business' trademark; and
- it prevents negative WOM communication about the product or service to other customers and prospects.

In services marketing, customer complaints are seen as useful data to assess service quality, brand positioning, loyalty, and enhancing the service design (Ranjan, 2016:1). Complaints reveal problems that are significant and require the attention of the business (Preko & Agbanu, 2015:49). Unfortunately, businesses that do not make an effort to respond to customer complaints deny themselves a chance of regaining and improving a relationship (Chikosha & Vutete, 2016:21).

2.5.4.1 Service failures

Service failures are unavoidable in-service encounters, necessitating service providers to respond with recovery actions to eliminate disconfirmation and restore customer satisfaction (Gazley & Simmonds, 2018:24). A service failure entails a scenario where customers perceive that the core service delivery failed to meet their expectations (Voorhees *et al*., 2017:276). It is inevitable for mistakes and service failures to occur in the service delivery process. This is due to the complex characteristics of services, such as simultaneous production and consumption, many service encounters and customers' subjective evaluation of service quality (Park *et al*., 2014:256). Service failures can occur at any time, any place, with or without the service provider's knowledge and customers' responses to that will differ (Tojib & Khajehzadeh, 2014:1536). Whether a customer perceives inconsistency from the service design as a service failure, it is based on his/her expectations of what the service process should entail. Therefore, not all service failures are regarded or perceived as failures by customers (Michel, 2001:22).

Service failures occur because of different reasons, such as the unavailability of the service when promised, the late or slow delivery of the service, inappropriate or poorly performed services, or impolite and unsympathetic employees (Zeithaml *et al*., 2018:179). It is improbable that service providers can eliminate all service failures. At most, they can learn to respond to service failures more effectively once they occur (Assefa, 2014:49, 50). A business can learn from its service failures and use such knowledge to improve its existing systems and build information that can be used for future innovation and transformational changes (Wamuyu *et al*., 2015a:850). However, the service provider's response to a service failure is usually prompted by the customer's reaction (Bousnina & Zaiem, 2019:68).

According to Cheung and To (2017:769), due to the information and communication technologies improvements, communication concerning a service failure may reach many people through social networking sites (such as Facebook or Twitter) within a short space of time. The resulting damages from service failures can be significant (Radu *et al*., 2019:358) and could weaken the customer-service provider relationship if it is not properly handled (Ruiz-Molina *et al*., 2019:330). Understanding where service failure is emanating from, will assist the business to determine the most appropriate response (Quy & Lan, 2015:1077), as the more a customer is dissatisfied with a service failure, the less likely he/she will believe in the service provider's reliability (Hur & Jang, 2016:726).

When employees are dealing with service failures or complaints, they should manage the problem in such a professional manner that the customers perceive the service provider to be genuinely concerned about their problem. This may involve attentively listening to customers, being polite during interactions with the customer, quickly understanding the main problem and following the appropriate procedures when dealing with the complaint (Matikiti, Roberts-Lombard *et al*., 2019:411). However, when dealing with dissatisfied non-complaining customers, a service provider has less of a chance to recover from the service failure and restore justice or protect itself through learning from the failure (Lervik-Olsen *et al*., 2016:407).

2.5.4.2 Types of service failures

Having knowledge about the types of service failures is important in order to obtain an understanding of the service failure context and to create systems for service recovery (Dimitriou, 2017:13). Literature identifies two types of service failures, namely outcome failure and process failure (Kruger *et al*., 2015:609). *Outcome failures* entail the problems related to the actual outcome that customers receive from the service, whereas *process failures* entail the way in which the service provider delivers the service to customers (Jin *et al*., 2020:66). An outcome failure occurs when the core service is not delivered or performed, resulting in an economic or financial loss to the customer in the form of money or time (Villi & Koc, 2018:43). An outcome failure has a significant negative impact on the business as it is the core failure and it involves a high risk to the business of losing the customer when compared to a process failure (Özaydin, 2016:491). Furthermore, an outcome failure is associated with loss of economic resources, whereas a process failure is associated with the customer's psychological or social resources loss (Gunarathne *et al*., 2017:323). Process failures that are associated with the symbolic exchange can damage customers' status or dignity (Chang & Chang, 2017:923). Israeli *et al*. (2019:947) posit that customers tend to be less forgiving after a process service failure, unlike when an outcome service failure occurs.

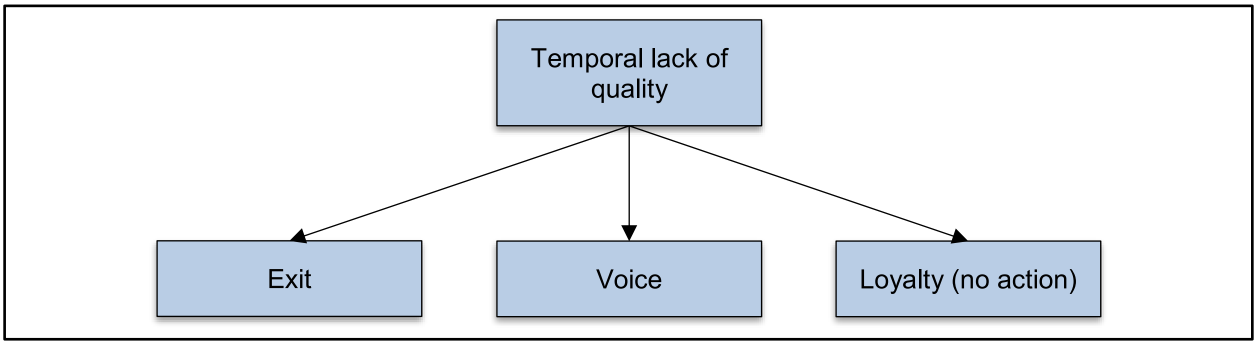
2.5.4.3 Customer responses to service failures

Complainants can be categorised according to their response style to service failures (Badghish *et al*., 2015:52) and the difference in the type of responses may be explained by (a) the cause and magnitude of dissatisfaction and (b) the kind and importance of the service (Isac *et al*., 2015:236). Consequently, several models of customer complaint behaviour have been developed by various researchers – such as Day and Landon (1977), Hirschman (1970), Singh (1988) and Tronvoll (2012) – and are briefly discussed in the following sections.

2.5.4.3.1 Hirschman's theory of exit, voice, and loyalty

Hirschman's (1970) theory of exit, voice, and loyalty (illustrated in Figure 2-3) was one of the first models to be coined concerning customer complaint behaviour (Charsetad *et al*., 2016:567). According to Hirschman (1970:90), a customer has three choices when complaining, namely (a) voice the complaint to the business selling the product or service, (b) exit the relationship with the business by switching to another business, or (c) take no action. A brief discussion of these choices are subsequently provided.

Figure 2-3: Hirschman's model of customer complaint behaviour



Source: Adopted from Tronvoll (2012:287).

- **Voice** involves the customer directly expressing his/her dissatisfaction to the service provider (Kitapci *et al*., 2019:142). Given that problems are more likely to be identified and resolved after customers voicing it, it is peculiar that customers do not more often voice their dissatisfaction after experiencing a service failure (Bolkan, 2018:841). Voicing does not prevent the customer from exiting. However, a customer can voice his/her concerns and, when the business fails to respond appropriately, he/she can eventually exit (Chisholm *et al*., 2016:383).

- **Exit** is somewhat less passive and encompasses the customer actively refusing a brand or business. Hence, frequently purchasing competitor's products as an alternative or possibly purchasing less of the product stated (Ekinci *et al*., 2016:35). Exit is detrimental to businesses, since no feedback will be provided by the customer (Istanbulluoglu *et al*., 2017:1112). If service providers are keen on retaining customers after a service failure, it is vital for them to promote customer complaints in order to get a second opportunity to deal with customers and addressing the complaints properly (Garín-Muñoz *et al*., 2016:805).

- For Hirschman's (1970) model, **loyalty** means the customer takes no action, regardless of the disappointment with a product. Generally, these customers are very loyal to the extent that they believe the problem will improve with time and on its own (Ekinci *et al*., 2016:35).

Based on Hirschman's (1970) model, a rational individual would respond to a service failure by initiating a thorough cognitive process that encompasses assessing the costs and benefits of each action and its likelihood of success (Patwary & Omar, 2016:314). For instance, a loyal customer would choose not to switch to another service provider, believing that the costs of complaining or searching for another service provider would be more than the likelihood of an improvement (Garín-Muñoz *et al*., 2016:805).

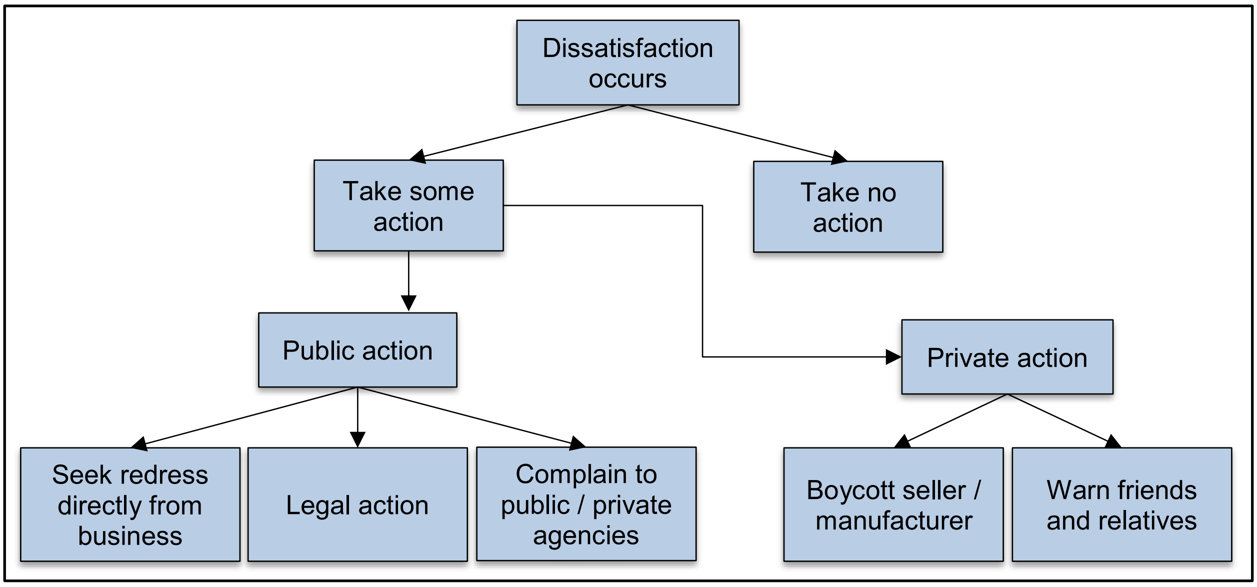
2.5.4.3.2 Day and Landon's model of customer complaining behaviour

Day and Landon (1977) also developed a customer complaining behaviour model (illustrated in Figure 2-4), which indicates various response actions of customers upon experiencing dissatisfaction (Mei *et al.*, 2019:65). The model was conceptualised into a two-level ordered classification of customer complaint behaviour (Kumar, 2016:215). According to Janjua (2017:25), the first level classifies behavioural and non-behavioural responses where customers after experiencing service failures may choose either to take action or no action against the service provider. If the customers choose to take action (behavioural response), they will decide whether it would be private action or public action (Ellyawati, 2017a:20) as further discussed below.

- **Private action** entails the customer's efforts to share his/her dissatisfying experience with friends and family members through WOM (Yoke, 2018:14). Private actions are not directly noticeable to the business (Istanbulluoglu *et al.*, 2017:1112). Normally, private actions do not get the direct attention of the service provider, resulting in a significant negative impact on sales and profitability (Harudin *et al.*, 2013:12750). Therefore, when managing customer complaints, it is imperative that the service provider understands customers' complaint behaviour and the reason for customers choosing certain complaint behaviours, especially behaviours that do not involve the direct voicing of complaints (Osarenkhoe *et al.*, 2017:200).

- **Public action** is the direct complaints to the business or a third party (e.g. consumer agency or government), which include seeking compensation directly from the business or manufacturer, and litigation by the customer (Garín-Muñoz *et al.*, 2016:805).

Figure 2-4: Day and Landon's model of customer complaining behaviour



Source: Adopted from Singh (1988:95).

2.5.4.3.3 Singh's model of customer complaining behaviour

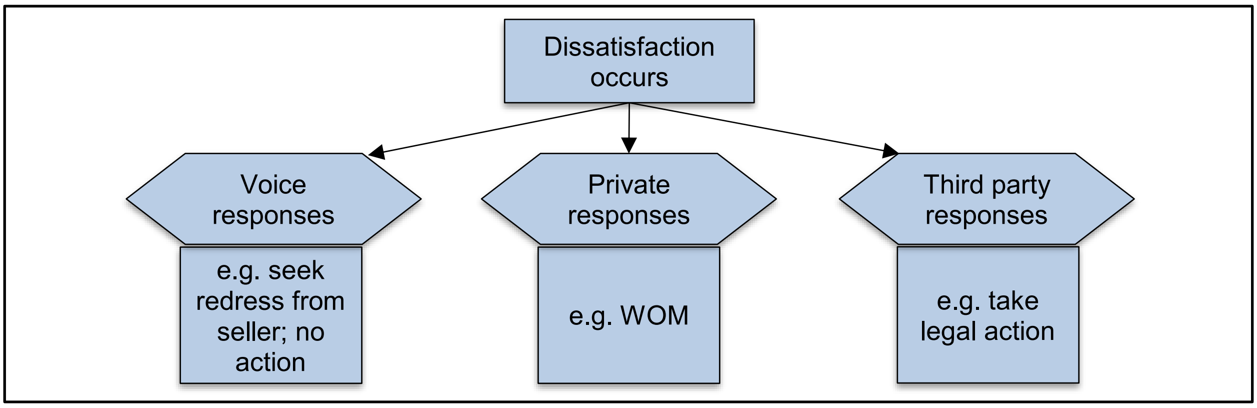
Singh's (1988:101) model of customer complaint behaviour (illustrated in Figure 2-5) comprise voice responses, private responses, and third party responses. Notably, a customer can also take any one of the actions or a combination of actions when exhibiting complaint behaviour.

- **Voice** is structured on communication; it provides the service provider an opportunity to recover and maintain the relationship, since the customer communicates his/her dissatisfaction to the service provider (Yilmaz, 2016:165). Chan *et al.* (2017:63) assert that the customer's intention to voice his/her dissatisfaction indicates that he/she believes the service provider can rectify the problem. The complaining behaviour towards the business can be through personal interaction, a phone call, or by e-mail (Ekinci *et al*., 2016:36). Loyal customers may be more likely to voice their complaints, as they would expect and seek improvement rather than exiting the business (Istanbulluoglu *et al*., 2017:1115).

- **Private responses** refer to negative WOM communication to friends and/or relatives (Ishar & Roslin, 2016:976). Technological development has expanded the domain of third party complaining from spreading negative WOM to family and friends to eWOM, such as posting online product or service reviews (Min *et al*., 2019:94). It is essential to minimise negative WOM and compensate service failures, as the impact of negative WOM may be severe and the service provider has limited control over it (Joe & Choi, 2019:3127).

- **Third party actions** entail matters directed at parties that are indirectly associated with causing the customer's dissatisfaction (i.e. the media or legal representatives) (Istanbulluoglu *et al*., 2017:1113). The main reason customers complain to public or private agencies is to seek solutions to the problem (Kitapci *et al*., 2019:147). Mousavi and Esfidani (2013:552) note that, even though few customers may take third party actions, these complaints can cause extensive legal costs, regulatory intervention, and harm the business' reputation.

Figure 2-5: Singh's model of customer complaining behaviour



Source: Adopted from Singh (1988:102).

2.5.4.3.4 Tronvoll's model of customer complaining behaviour

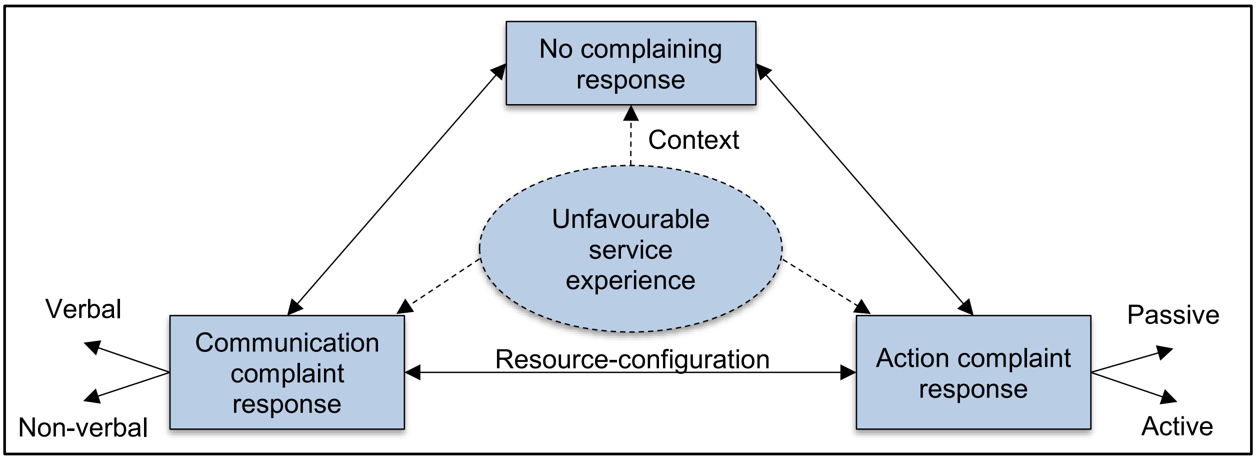
Tronvoll (2012:297) developed a customer complaining behaviour model (Figure 2-6), consisting of no complaining response, communication complaint response, and action complaint response.

- Customers respond differently to service failures, as some customers may choose to complain, while others will not (Ro & Mattila, 2015:95). **No complaining response** means customers do not voice their dissatisfaction. Some customers do not complain because they are uncertain of the pay-off and believe that no one will care and be willing to address the problem (Wirtz & Lovelock, 2018:417). Furthermore, some customers do not complain only because they are not aware of where and how to complain (Uniyal & Uniyal, 2019:5).

- The **communication complaint response** can be verbal or non-verbal communication (Tronvoll, 2012:294). Verbal communication refers to either written or spoken communication (Nwabueze & Mileski, 2018:54), whereas non-verbal communication includes any form of communication that occurs without the use of spoken or written words (Ezaka & Emechebe, 2018:10). Shonubi and Akintaro (2016:1907) note that non-verbal communication includes the use of facial expressions, body language, and appearance to communicate. Although non-verbal communication does not apply words, it communicates information on human feelings more accurately than verbal communication (Ezaka & Emechebe, 2018:11).

- **Action complaint responses** comprise various activities, ranging from relatively passive activities (e.g. reduced purchasing behaviour, exit, or switching to a different provider), to more active and aggressive behaviour (Tronvoll, 2012:296). Aggressive behaviours may include verbal abuse (e.g. raised voices, sarcasm, intimidation, or physical threats), and non-verbal signals (e.g. angry facial expressions and staring) (Akkawanitcha *et al.*, 2015:269).

Figure 2-6: Tronvoll's model of customer complaining behaviour



Source: Adopted from Tronvoll (2012:293).

2.5.5 Customer complaining behaviour

According to Osarenkhoe *et al*. (2017:200), when managing complaints, it is crucial that the business has knowledge about its customers' complaint behaviour as well as the reasons for customers choosing particular complaint behaviours, specifically behaviours that do not involve direct complaint to the business. Thus, the marketing approach to complaint management stresses an in-depth understanding of the complainant and being oriented towards effective resolution of complaints (Agu *et al*., 2017:88).

Jacoby and Jaccard (1981:6) define customer complaint behaviour as an action initiated by an individual that encompasses communicating negative information about a product or service, either directly to the business producing or marketing that product or service, or to a third party organisation. Having knowledge of customers' complaining behaviour necessitates a continuous evaluation of negative feedback and criticism from customers (Ateke & Kalu, 2016:17). When businesses and customers change their perceptions of complaint behaviour, the business will be able to enhance its products and services, whereas the customer will be able to attain a higher level of satisfaction (Burucuoğlu & Bulut, 2016:26). Furthermore, customer complaint behaviour can assist businesses to redesign its service or product that can fulfil customer expectations (Chan *et al*., 2016:2).

Consequently, customer complaints have evolved from being a cost or burden to being a valuable learning opportunity for the business, and it is recommended that customers are encouraged to complain (Min *et al*., 2019:94). Research on customer complaint behaviour established the following main reasons for complaining:

- After experiencing a service failure, customers may choose to complain to the service provider in order to solve their problems and obtain compensation (Norvell *et al*., 2018:378). When the customer directly complains to the service provider, he/she is not mainly concerned about revenge or warning other customers, but mainly seeks a satisfactory service recovery from the service failure (Grégoire *et al*., 2015:179). Customers expect a satisfactory resolution and adequate compensation in a fair manner (Agu *et al*., 2017:87). If the corresponding service recovery is satisfactory, the negative impact of the initial service failure will be minimised (Norvell *et al*., 2018:378). A comprehensive review of services marketing literature acknowledged complaint resolution as one of the methods through which a business can turn a complaining customer into a delighted and a loyal one (Stakhovych & Tamaddoni, 2020:3).

- Service failures are the common cause of customers expressing anger to show their dissatisfaction (Jerger & Wirtz, 2017:362). Customers may have strong intentions to take revenge with the business by sharing their dissatisfying experience with others (Whiting *et al*., 2019:140). Anger is a negative emotion elicited by the perception of unfairness committed by another person (Sung & Yih, 2019:1347). It is argued that anger towards the service provider can occur as vengeful anger or problem-focused anger. While vengeful anger leads to the intention to directly or indirectly cause damage to the business, problem-focused anger is related to the intention to correct the problem (Antonetti, 2016:1616).

- Customers that are highly involved with a service can provide feedback in an attempt to contribute towards service improvements (Wirtz & Lovelock, 2018:416). Customer feedback provides an ideal platform for service providers to engage with customers and promote loyalty (Bone *et al*., 2017:157). Most business aspects, such as business performance, service delivery process design, and implementation, depend mainly on customer feedback. The effective capturing of customer feedback can assist service providers to act quickly in optimising the quality of their service procedures and delivery systems (Hu *et al*., 2016:21). However, although some service providers realise the importance of complaints in identifying customer needs and in turn, provide better customer service, they avoid dealing with customer complaints (Ellyawati, 2017a:19).

- Some customers complain because of altruistic reasons (Wirtz & Lovelock, 2018:416). Altruism is the performance of an act for others without expecting any compensation (Luarn *et al*., 2016:1257). Customers want to prevent other customers from experiencing the similar problems and they may feel bad if they fail to address the problem that will cause difficulties for others (Wirtz & Lovelock, 2018:416). More precisely, altruistic customers spread negative WOM and, to a lesser extent, complain to the service provider (Souiden *et al*., 2019:364).

Singh (1990:88) classified people according to how they respond to failures, which include *passives, voicers, irates*, and *activists*. Even though the proportion of the types of complainers is different across industries and contexts, it is possible that these four types of complainers will be relatively prevalent and that each type can be found in all businesses and industries (Zeithaml *et al*., 2018:186).

- **Passives** refer to the customer who does not execute any action when he/she is dissatisfied with a product (Prasetyo *et al*., 2016:104). High levels of passive customer complaint behaviour are harmful to the business (Chinedu *et al*., 2017:125). These customers often doubt the value of complaining because they think the consequences will not pay-off their time and effort (Meharajan & Rao, 2017:85).

- **Voicers** are actively involved in the complaint process, exhibit less interest in seeking support from third parties, and avoid spreading negative WOM (Janjua, 2017:26). When customers voice their complaint, they do so directly to the business (Ekinci *et al*., 2016:35). They actively complain and therefore provide the business with another chance to rectify the problem. They tend to believe that making a complain results in some social benefits and consequently do not hesitate to voice their opinions (Zeithaml *et al*., 2018:187).

- **Irates** refer to angry customers that are most likely to spread negative WOM, stop patronage, or make complaints to the service provider, but do not complain further to any third party (Agu *et al*., 2017:88). Irates are the most likely to express their anger towards the business and will complain to family and friends. They will switch to another business and will seldom provide the business with another chance to rectify the problem (Ayertey, 2018:31). When the service provider deals with an irate customer, it is important to have empathy in order to understand the facts and feelings related to the problem (Karambelkar, 2014:146).

- **Activists** are customers who express their complaint on all possible channels and platforms, and in some instances they become terrorists against business performances (Shode, 2017:112). Two main activist reactions to dissatisfaction can be distinguished, namely (a) to voice their complaints while continuing patronising the service provider with the expectation of improvement in the situation, or (b) switching to a different provider (Hirschman, 1978:90). An activist makes collective complaints exhibited by voicers and irates, which also include encouraging other customers to complain (Prasetyo *et al*., 2016:104).

This study specifically focuses on building relationships, striving for service leadership, complaint handling, and service recovery as strategies and not on service quality, since the improvement of service quality as a marketing strategy has already been extensively researched. Service recovery was the main focus of this study and the concept is further comprehensively discussed in the subsequent section. Reis *et al*. (2019:4) suggest that it is important to perform a service recovery immediately after a service failure occurs.

2.6 SERVICE RECOVERY

It has been debated that a service failure is associated with customer dissatisfaction that may result in behavioural outcomes such as switching to another service provider, negative WOM, or complaining to the service provider. In an effort to avoid these negative behavioural outcomes and re-establish a successful relationship with the customer, service providers should focus on service recovery (Ruiz-Molina *et al*., 2019:329). Supposing that businesses respond to dissatisfied customers' complaints, these customers will be introduced to a new service loop, called service recovery (Andreassen, 2000:157). Hence, the service recovery process begins when initial contact is established and it ends either when a satisfactory recovery occurs or when a customer stops seeking a service recovery because of the service provider's inability to respond appropriately (Van Vaerenbergh *et al*., 2019:104). Miller *et al*. (2000:388) define service recovery as the designated actions to rectify problems, change unfavourable attitudes of dissatisfied customers, and eventually retain those customers.

Service recovery has held a prominent role in the services marketing literature (Migacz *et al*., 2018:84). Service recovery goes beyond complaint handling and involves a service provider reacting to a loss in service delivery to a customer and performing actions to rectify and restore the loss experienced by the customer (Gazley & Simmonds, 2018:24). The main goal of service recovery is to restore customers' satisfaction with service encounters and to identify and correct weaknesses in the service delivery processes, hence averting similar occurrences in the future (Wamuyu *et al*., 2015a:850). Thus, effective service recovery should not be overlooked and necessitates significant investments in both training the frontline employees and empowering them to make immediate decisions about the recovery strategies (Räikkönen & Honkanen, 2016:345). Service recovery attempts by the service provider provide an opportunity either to strengthen a strong customer bond or to intensify the situation and possibly drive customers to competitors (Wahid & Ismail, 2013:60). Service recovery therefore has a significant role in shaping customers' attitudes and behaviours toward service providers (Guchait *et al*., 2019:931).

A satisfactory service recovery can have a positive impact on customer retention, loyalty, commitment, and other positive outcomes, such as positive WOM communication, trust, improved customer perceptions of the business' competence and a positive image concerning the perceived quality and value (Boshoff, 2005:411). When the service provider's recovery attempt matches the customer's expectation, positive disconfirmation happens, consequently resulting in customer satisfaction (Jha & Balaji, 2015:135). However, Hazée *et al*. (2017:102) argue that, in some cases, even if the outcome of the service recovery initiative might be perceived to be fair, the outcome might still not signify a positive outcome in the complainant's perspective. This can result in a loss of confidence in the business and possible defection, together with the dispersal of negative WOM (Komunda & Osarenkhoe, 2012:82).

According to Wirtz and Lovelock (2018:422), contingency plans must be established for service failures, especially for those that recur frequently and cannot be removed from the system. When these principles of service recovery are observed, a service recovery paradox may be experienced (further explained in section 3.3.6).

2.6.1 Importance of service recovery

Service recovery is of paramount importance for the survival of any type of business, whether profit-making or non-profit making (Mandina & Kurwiravamwe, 2016:77). The subsequent discussions therefore highlight the importance of service recovery.

- Successful service recovery actions can retain the customer and even make the customer more loyal than before the dissatisfying experience, thus reflecting the service recovery paradox back (Bijmolt *et al*., 2014:609). Customer loyalty is regarded as a crucial aspect, as it could establish a competitive advantage above other businesses in an intensely competitive and dynamic environment (Leninkumar, 2017:451). Loyal customers will ultimately increase the business' profitability (Farida & Ardyan, 2015:193).

- The business' reputation can be enhanced when customers experience an excellent service recovery process (Mandina & Kurwiravamwe, 2016:81). Service performance is somehow difficult to assess. Therefore, business reputation can be used as a representation for the level of quality of the product or service offering, which leads the customer to have trust that the received utilitarian and hedonic benefits are reasonably fair (Pool *et al*., 2016:1426). Favourable business reputation strengthens the positive customer-business identification that is the cognitive overlap between a customer's self-image and perceptions of the business (Ma & Osiyevskyy, 2017:25).

- Effective service recovery can deter customers from switching to other businesses and can restore confidence in the service provider (Anamali *et al*., 2014:11). Customer switching leads to a decline in the customer base, which ultimately leads to a decrease in the business' revenues (Mandal, 2017:835).

- Service recovery is a key opportunity to retain a valuable customer (Anamali *et al*., 2014:11). Retained customers are less sensitive to promotional offers used to attract new customers and they can easily pay higher prices when buying a business' products or services as compared to new customers (Hanaysha, 2018:4). The significance of retaining customers is explained by the long-term value of loyal customers, the high costs of new customer acquisition and the impact of negative WOM on current customers (Ngacha & Onyango, 2017:3). In general, it is recognised that customer retention leads to business profitability (Parawansa, 2018:64).

- A successful service recovery can positively influence the customer's overall satisfaction with the business, which eventually results in positive WOM and repeat purchasing behaviour (Pradhan, 2015:82). Simply by negative WOM, a business' image can be tarnished (Liat *et al*., 2017:43). Therefore, WOM is an effective way for businesses to capture potential customers' attention, as this will mainly depend on what existing customers communicate about the business and its services (Ngoma & Ntale, 2019:7).

Given the above, service recovery is important as it can result in loyal customers, enhance the business' reputation, deter customers from switching, retain customers, and improve customer satisfaction, which in turn results in positive WOM. Considering the importance of service recovery following service failures, it is crucial for service providers to be acquainted with customers' expectations of service recovery for an effective and satisfactory service recovery process. The subsequent section accordingly discusses customers' recovery expectations.

2.6.2 Customers' recovery expectations

The main determining factor of whether customers feel satisfied or dissatisfied following a service failure and service recovery depends on the gap between what service providers do to resolve the problem and the customers' recovery expectations (Matikiti, Mpinganjira *et al*., 2019:93). When customers experience service failures, they form beliefs about what to expect of service recovery actions by the service provider (Chatterjee, 2018:633). According to Wilson *et al*. (2016:333), when customers take their time and effort to complain, they generally have high expectations of service recovery, expect the service provider to be accountable, and expect to be assisted quickly. Customers also expect to be compensated for their grief and the inconvenience caused. Lastly, they expect to be treated in a reasonable manner in the service recovery process.

2.6.2.1 Understanding and accountability

When a customer experiences a service failure, the service provider's response can strengthen the customer-service provider relationship or change a seemingly small problem into a major incident (Hoffman & Bateson, 2017:352). In most service failure scenarios, customers are not seeking for the service provider to perform extreme service recovery actions. Rather, customers seek to understand what happened and for service providers to be accountable for their actions (or no actions) (Zeithaml *et al*., 2018:190). Understanding and accountability are crucial to many customers following a service failure for if any form of injustice is perceived to have happened, someone must take the blame (Wilson *et al*., 2016:334).

2.6.2.2 Fair treatment

In many situations, customers feel angry and unfairly treated because they fail to receive the promised rewards, misunderstand the procedures, or perceive an unfair employee interactional behaviour (Bahri-Ammari & Bilgihan, 2019:84). Customers who complain give the service provider a chance to rectify problems (even those problems the service provider was unaware of), restore relationships with the customer who has complained and improve future satisfaction of customers (Wirtz & Lovelock, 2018:418). Customers therefore require justice and fairness from the service provider in handling their complaints (Zeithaml *et al*., 2018:192). Customers generally know when they have experienced unfairness, but it is a challenge to articulate what is fair during the recovery process (Nguyen *et al*., 2015:1185). Adams' (1965) Justice Theory is regarded as an invaluable instrument for evaluating customers' satisfaction after experiencing a service failure (Chao & Cheng, 2019:1355) and it is based on the notion that exchange parties (i.e. customers) feel justly treated and satisfied if their amount of input into the exchange is somewhat in balance with their output of the exchange (Cantor & Li, 2019:904).

The argument behind the justice theory is that the level of customer satisfaction and future behavioural intentions are influenced by customers' perceptions of the service recovery justice (Chao & Cheng, 2019:1351). According to Cheng *et al*. (2017:397), customer perceived justice is the evaluation of whether the business has performed its duty in delivering the promised benefits and results. Perceived justice has a significant role in long-term relationships because two exchange parties must collaborate, leveraging each other's capabilities and resources in order to attain mutual goals (Chao & Cheng, 2019:1351). In fact, customers care about justice because they are concerned about the long-term benefits guaranteed by the fair methods and processes through which conflicts are resolved (Guo *et al*., 2016:44). It is a crucial task for service providers to create positive justice perceptions within customers' minds (Bahri-Ammari & Bilgihan, 2017:90) since the perceived justice can create an increased sense of perceived value and utility, which can affect a customer's state of mind (Harun, Rokonuzzaman *et al*., 2018:116).

Customers' satisfaction with a service will be improved when a recovery to a service failure is performed in a just manner by the service provider (Huang, 2011:510). According to Yani-de-Soriano *et al*. (2019:724), managers should understand that customers value highly motivated employees whom they perceive as exerting a significant level of effort to resolve a service failure and this perceived effort is necessary in improving customers' perceived justice in the service recovery process. A fair and satisfying recovery experience is proof to the dissatisfied customer about the service provider's willingness to properly compensate for the service failure in order to re-establish a positive service provider-customer relationship (Lee *et al*., 2020:72).

Many customers, however, remain unhappy with how service providers respond to service failures (Van Vaerenbergh *et al*., 2019:103). A double deviation can occur when the service provider fails to respond to a customer's complaint in an appropriate manner (i.e. initial service failure followed by a service recovery) (Kazi & Prabhu, 2016:40). Customers judge the fairness of a service recovery based on distributive justice, procedural justice and interactional justice, which are discussed in the subsequent sections (Smith & Mpinganjira, 2015:36).

- **Procedural justice**

  When a service failure occurs, the reaction of frontline employees influences the initial procedural justice perception (Gohary *et al*., 2016:131). In a service recovery encounter, procedural justice refers to the customer's views on whether the processes initiated by the business in solving the service failure were fair or not (Singh & Crisafulli, 2016:767) and it also deals with the policies and rules that every customer has to go through in order to seek justice (Cheng *et al*., 2019:191). Customers expect the business to take responsibility for the service failure, which is the key to begin a fair procedure, followed by a timely and responsive recovery procedure (Wirtz, 2017:494). Choi and Choi (2014:114) indicate that timing and quick handling of complaints are essential components of procedural justice. The handling and speed of response to problems and complaints is specifically considered an essential element of procedural justice (Smith *et al*., 1999:359). Customers need to be able to access the complaint process easily and they want a prompt response, preferably with the first person whom they contact (Zeithaml *et al*., 2018:195).

  According to Ghalandari (2013:1024), from the perspective of customers who experienced a service failure, procedural justice of a recovery action can be noticed when the business responsible for the failure acknowledges the failure, makes an effort to solve the mistake in time, and adapts its recovery strategy based on customers' demands. Tax *et al*. (1998:62) established that procedural justice is important since it seeks to resolve conflict in ways that foster the continuance of a beneficial relationship between the parties in the dispute, even though the results may be unsatisfactory to any or all the parties. Usually, the procedure is standardised within the business system, which implies that the customer is often powerless against poor procedures (Ellyawati, 2017b:1265). Flexible procedures and easy-to-invoke policies result in the timely fixing of the service failure (Singh & Crisafulli, 2016:767). According to Wirtz and Lovelock (2018:422), service recovery efforts should show flexibility and the employees should be empowered to exercise own judgement and use their communication skills to create solutions that will satisfy the customers who have complained. Empowerment will involve giving employees the authority, expertise, tools and desire to determine the best way in which they may serve the customer (Zeithaml *et al*., 2018:335).

- **Distributive justice**

  Concerning service recovery, distributive justice perceptions entail the provision of compensation (in the form of discounts, free merchandise, reimbursements, or coupons) by the business in response to the equity resulting from a service failure (Smith *et al*., 1999:359). Sampaio *et al*. (2017:1138) further posit that distributive justice is understood as a tangible offering by the service provider to satisfy the customer when he/she complains. The concept of distributive justice emanates from the social exchange theory and accentuates the equity principle for the exchange partners within a transactional relationship (Ortiz *et al*., 2017:439). According to Choi *et al*. (2016:909), it hinges on the concept of equity, which is the result of a mental evaluation of inputs and outputs. Tax *et al*. (1998:62) suggest that the customer can evaluate the fairness of compensation differently based on the following: (a) his/her previous experience with the related business or other businesses, (b) his/her consciousness of resolutions given to fellow customers and (c) his/her perceived loss.

  A business must therefore deliver equal service recovery to each respective customer and match his/her assumed compensation (Lin *et al*., 2016:64). The compensation is not only related to the service failure but also includes for the time, effort and energy exerted by the customer during the service recovery process (Wirtz & Lovelock, 2018:418). During the service recovery process, distributive justice addresses certain outcomes of recovery attempts, such as what the service provider did to restore customer satisfaction and whether the subsequent outcomes of service recovery more than offset the damages suffered by customers (Kim & Tang, 2016:900).

- **Interactional justice**

  Interactional justice refers to the relational component of service exchanges between a service provider and customer by focusing on the human aspect of distributional practices and addresses aspects of communication in the service encounter (Um & Kim, 2018:194). Interactional justice signifies the interpersonal way in which the service recovery process is carried out and how the recovery outcomes are presented. Customers get irritated by service failures, thus the interpersonal way in which the service failure is handled has a high influence on how the business' service recovery attempts are viewed (Hoffman & Bateson, 2017:360). Ozgen and Duman Kurt (2012:596) posit that customers' perceptions of interactional justice are directly related to employees' empathy, politeness, sensitivity, treatment and the attempt to resolve the service failure. According to Chen *et al*. (2014:5), interactional justice is crucial because a service failure prompts a higher expectation of interpersonal treatment within the customer.

Therefore, central to interactional justice is the assessment of the level of such interpersonal relationship that a customer encounters during the service recovery process that gives the customer a strong feeling that justice has been done (Abbas *et al*., 2015:259). Smith *et al*. (1999:360) posit that interactional justice perceptions will be improved by recovery attributes such as an apology or recovery initiation, which communicate respect and empathy (social resources) to the customer. Even though customers perceive that the outcomes and procedures are fair, they might still feel mistreated if they perceive an unfair treatment in the way that the business delivers the value proposition (Bahri-Ammari & Bilgihan, 2017:91).

It is noteworthy to mention that although the dimensions of perceived justice affect satisfaction with service recovery, extant literature reveals differences in the extent to which these dimensions influence satisfaction with the recovery of the customer (Jha & Balaji, 2015:133). In other words, the impact of the perceived justice dimensions on satisfaction with service recovery tends to differ across industries as further presented in Table 2-6. Arguably, the differences in the impact of perceived justice dimensions on satisfaction with service recovery indicate what customers perceive as more important during the service recovery process in order to restore satisfaction across industries.

Table 2-6: Extant research on perceived justice of service recovery

Source	Setting	Notable findings
Tax *et al*. (1998:69)	Telecommunication Health Banking	Interactional justice, distributive justice and procedural justice influenced satisfaction with service recovery. Interactional justice had the strongest impact.
Jha and Balaji (2015:139)	Telecommunication	Procedural justice and interactional justice had a larger effect on satisfaction with service recovery than distributive justice did.
Ding and Lii (2016:889)	Online gaming	Distributive justice showed the strongest effect on satisfaction with service recovery, followed by interactional justice and procedural justice.
Singh and Crisafulli (2016:777)	Online retail	Interactional justice had a larger effect on satisfaction with service recovery than procedural justice did.
Matikiti, Roberts-Lombard *et al.* (2018:523)	Airline	Distributive, procedural, and interactional justice had a significant positive relationship with satisfaction with service recovery. Interactional justice had the strongest impact.
Mohd-Any *et al*. (2019:676)	Airline	Interactional justice and procedural justice had a positive relationship with satisfaction with service recovery. Distributive justice did not have a positive relationship with satisfaction with service recovery.
Msosa and Fuyane (2020:347)	Higher education	Interactional justice and distributive justice had a positive relationship with satisfaction with service recovery. Procedural justice did not have a positive relationship with satisfaction with service recovery.

As noted above, customers' perceptions about the justice from a service recovery effort can influence their satisfaction with service recovery. It is therefore crucial for the service provider to ensure it appropriately addresses and manages these perceived dimensions of service recovery when responding to service failures in order to reinstate customer satisfaction. The next section therefore discusses the strategies that can be adopted by the service provider to restore customer satisfaction.

2.6.3 Service recovery strategies

Based on the perceived quality of the service recovery attempt, extant research established that service recovery could strongly influence the customer-service provider relationship. From the findings, satisfaction after service recovery is a key predictor of positive WOM communication and customer loyalty (Migacz *et al*., 2018:84). Therefore, a good service recovery strategy can have various positive outcomes (Assefa, 2014:49). Service recovery strategies are defined by Nwokorie (2016:3) as actions executed by service providers as a direct response to faults, inconsistencies, or failures during service delivery. The impact of service recovery strategies on the business' revenue and returns can be significant and keeping meaningful relationships with existing customers is a key strategy (Ozuem *et al*., 2017:98).

Businesses should customise their service recovery efforts, concentrating on those resources in the bundle that will have a great positive influence and generate best customer response (Huang & Lin, 2011:203). A service recovery that lacks proper initiatives and customers' expected standards will possibly be an ineffective remedy for rectifying the service failure (Shahriar *et al*., 2016:260). Although service failures are inevitable, effective service recovery strategies can reduce the negative outcomes of the service failure (Msosa & Govender, 2019:485). The following sections therefore focus on the different strategies that can be implemented for service recovery.

2.6.3.1 Make the service fail-safe – do it right the first time

The first rule of service quality is to deliver the service correctly during the first encounter with the customer (Meharajan & Rao, 2017:86). In this manner, service recovery becomes unnecessary, as customers received what they expected and the costs related to repeating the service and compensating for failures are avoided (Zeithaml *et al*., 2018:201). The failure by businesses to observe the principle of doing things right the first time will culminate into problems and disrupt service delivery which can negatively influence customer behaviour (Mandina & Kurwiravamwe, 2016:88). An effective strategy to maintain customer satisfaction is to provide error-free services, although such an objective is not always realistic (Soares *et al*., 2017:524).

However, although it might be a difficult task to prevent and identify sources of problems, the Poka Yoke technique can be used as a solution to problem identification and prevention (Lazarevic *et al*., 2019:454). The primary objective of the Poka Yoke concept is to design an error-proof system, implying that no one can make mistakes (Kurhade, 2015:652). Wirtz and Lovelock (2018:249) suggest that service providers can implement poka-yokes to eliminate frequent service failures and to ensure that specific service standards are followed. Therefore, service providers can adopt Poka-Yoke techniques to ensure service reliability (Zeithaml *et al*., 2018:202).

2.6.3.2 Encourage and track complaints

An important aspect of a service recovery strategy is to encourage and track customer complaints (Zeithaml *et al*., 2018:201). However, in several instances, it is challenging for the business to be aware that a service failure has occurred unless the customer communicates with the business accordingly (Wilson *et al*., 2016:340). As such, since most customers do not complain to the business, facilitating the expression of their dissatisfaction is the foremost important step in including them in the service recovery process (Van Vaerenbergh *et al*., 2019:105). A business can therefore use different methods to encourage and track customer complaints, such as using toll-free numbers, call centres and e-mails to track complaints (Meharajan & Rao, 2017:86). Businesses that seek to facilitate customers to voice their complaints should ensure that customers are aware of the business' willingness to handle complaints (Karatepe, 2006:73).

2.6.3.3 Act quickly

The service recovery literature affirms that a service failure is more likely to be successfully rectified if the problem is dealt with promptly (Xie *et al*., 2017:102). Response speed refers to the employees' quick reaction to a customer's complaint (El-Helaly *et al*., 2015:7). Atuo and Kalu (2017:37) note that customers develop perceptions about the service provider based on its response speed to their complaints. Considering the varying industries, product categories and customer perceptions, the response speed is a critical aspect when delayed beyond expectations (Awa *et al*., 2015:57). Although service failure is inevitable, its harmful effects are controllable through timely responses by the service provider (Sreejesh *et al*., 2019:712). The speed at which a service provider responds to a service failure is as critical as what the ultimate resolution should be like (Ogbonna & Igbojekwe, 2015:60). When resolving problems encountered by the customer, the service provider should not delay, as this may aggravate their problems and ultimately affect customer patronage (Mandina & Kurwiravamwe, 2016:85). Hence, when a service failure occurs, or a customer complains, the service provider should be prepared to act and respond in a prompt manner (Zeithaml *et al*., 2018:188).

Complaints or problems can be promptly handled by developing systems that permit customers to solve their own service needs and resolve their own problems. Typically, this can be done through technology where customers use the service provider's technology to perform self-services, which will provide them with quick responses (Zeithaml *et al*., 2018:189). The service provider thus develops self-service technology that can be used by customers without delay. For instance, customers having internet problems may use a self-service mobile application and a 'frequently asked questions' page on the provider's website in an attempt to address the problem on their own and in a prompt manner (Vaerenbergh *et al*., 2019:115). In order to process complaints, service providers should reduce their response time by having policies, procedures and employees to receive, process, investigate, and handle complaints (Hübner *et al*., 2018:293).

According to Wirtz and Lovelock (2018:425), when there are no immediate solutions available to rectify a problem, it is important to notify customers how the service provider plans to resolve the problem. This in turn will set expectations about the response time involved; therefore, service providers should be careful not to over-promise. Mohd-Any *et al*. (2019:681) note that continuous systematic service training workshops should be enforced in order to encourage and strengthen the employees' capability in swiftly managing service failures, thus resulting in timely service recovery and continuous improvement of the customer service. A business that promptly delivers and responds to its customers will perform better than its competitors (Atuo & Kalu, 2017:37).

There is an incentive to deal with problems before the cost involved in dealing with the problem rises due to complying with externally imposed regulations (Wilson *et al*., 2016:345). Considering that service failures are pervasive regardless how the service provider attempts to prevent it from occurring, it is recommended that managers shift from traditional training approaches (i.e. "error avoidance" or "errorless") to "error management" training (Yao *et al*., 2019:85). Error management means employees should be equipped on how to identify and manage errors. For instance, departments should provide employees with a list of potential problems and detailed procedures to address these problems (Guchait *et al*., 2016:136). In so doing, this will increase response speed, as employees are already equipped and know how to respond to a service failure.

2.6.3.4 Provide adequate explanations

Customers always attempt to understand the reason for the occurrence of service failures. Although it may be crucial for the service provider to offer compensation, it is essential first to provide an explanation concerning the cause of the service failure because customers need to know why the failure occurred (Msosa & Govender, 2019:480). Explanation entails that the service provider provides the customer with an understandable and rational reason for the service failure they have experienced (El-Helaly *et al*., 2015:7). How the customer interprets the explanation made by the service provider can play a significant role in recovering the complainant's satisfaction (Quy & Lan, 2015:1079). Previous research established that providing a proper explanation could reduce customers' dissatisfaction with the encountered service failure (Jugwanth & Vigar-Ellis, 2013:148). El-Helaly *et al*. (2015:7) further explain that customers perceive an explanation as an essential source of information, a valuable outcome, and a mode to understand and manage their service environment.

For an explanation to be seen as a sufficient explanation, it must have two main features. First, the *content* of the explanation must be appropriate; relevant facts and valid information are essential in assisting the customer in understanding what happened. Second, the *style* of the provision of the explanation, or way in which the explanation is provided, can also minimise customer dissatisfaction (Zeithaml *et al*., 2018:191). Although some customers may perceive an explanation as an essential aspect for valuable and favourable outcomes, it may bear negative consequences from those customers who may think it is just the service provider's effort to justify the service failures without taking the blame (Sciarelli *et al*., 2017:27).

2.6.3.5 Treat customers fairly

As previously indicated (in section 2.6.2.2), customers expect to be treated fairly following a service failure. The service provider is expected to treat them fairly in terms of the outcome they receive, the manner in which the service recovery process takes place and the interpersonal treatment they receive from the employees who respond to the service failure (Wilson *et al*., 2016:343). To gain a better understanding of their customers and how to retain them, service providers must acquire knowledge of their customers' expectations when service failures occur (Zeithaml *et al*., 2018:179). Customers that are satisfied with an effective service recovery are inclined to rate the quality of the service higher than those not experiencing the service failure in the first place (Park & Park, 2016:237).

2.6.3.6 Learn from recovery experiences

Service providers can recover from a service failure through learning from a service failure encounter (Lervik-Olsen *et al*., 2016:420). Service recovery situations do not only provide the chance to resolve the service failures and to strengthen relationships with customers, but it also provides invaluable information for improving service delivery (Zeithaml *et al*., 2018:199). A business should therefore search for more information on other aspects that could have caused the service failure (Mandina & Kurwiravamwe, 2016:87). Managers must learn about problems and take suitable remedial action to ensure mistakes do not recur; therefore, customer complaints are a good opportunity to attain this objective (Simon *et al*., 2015a:676). In essence, customer complaints are important feedback that enables managers to perform a root-cause analysis and identify areas within system that cause failures (Lervik-Olsen *et al*., 2016:420). Unresolved service failures can cause customers to switch, spread negative WOM, and even challenge the business through customer rights bodies or legal channels (Zeithaml *et al*., 2018:179).

2.6.3.7 Learn from lost customers

A lost customer is one who previously had an established relationship with a business but has terminated the relationship (Xu & Shao, 2015:3). Conducting research to identify reasons for customers who have defected from the business can help in preventing more service failures occurring in the future (Zeithaml *et al*., 2018:200). Accordingly, a business makes contact with customers who defected in order to know the reasons why they switched, then work towards fixing the problem and ensuring other customers do not defect because of a similar problem (Palmatier & Sridhar, 2017:92). Through searching for the root causes for customers switching, a business with the desire and capacity to learn can detect business practices that must be refined, win the customer back, and re-establish stable customer relationships (Piha & Avlonitis, 2015:305).

2.6.3.8 Cultivate relationships with customers

Relationship marketing is beneficial to the business in the sense that customers with a relationship with the business are often more forgiving when service failures occur and more receptive to the service recovery (Wilson *et al*., 2016:344). Relationship marketing is the continuous process of engaging in cooperative activities and programs with immediate and end-user customers to establish or improve mutually profitable economic, social, and psychological value (Sheth *et al*., 2015:123). According to Paliwal and Indu (2013:407), relationship marketing encompasses understanding customers' needs and wants through their lifecycle and offering a variety of products or services accordingly. Relationship marketing has a major influence on the service industry. The service provider-customer interaction in the service industry is more regular, more intimate, and therefore more impactful on the relationship (Ahn *et al*., 2014:207).

2.6.3.9 Fairly compensate customers

Compensation refers to the provision of monetary or physical resources by the service provider from which the customer experienced a service failure (Hübner *et al*., 2018:297). Research on service recovery indicates that compensation can be used as an effective response by service providers to rectify service failures (Kude *et al*., 2017:57). It is recommended that compensation be provided after a service failure in order to retain existing customers (Hamzelu *et al*., 2017:283). Customers have expectations about the compensation they should receive and the compensation offered by the service provider can influence their perceptions of the successfulness of the service recovery process (Bambauer-Sachse & Rabeson, 2015b:119). By understanding customers' expectations could help a business to provide a solution that facilitates service recovery by compensating the failed customers in a manner that accords with their preferences (Matikiti, Mpinganjira *et al*., 2019:103). This will allow customers to be involved in the decision-making process and the provision of outcomes that they can perceive as fair (Setyawati, 2018:236). According to Rini and Hemamala (2018:2), customers are generally more concerned about the type of compensation offered by the service provider, whether it is monetary or psychological compensation.

Using compensation strategies enable the service provider to appease dissatisfied customers, enhance customer retention rates and even develop long-term relationships with dissatisfied customers, eventually transforming them into loyal customers (Farzianpour *et al*., 2016:1). During the service recovery process, a certain level or form of compensation can be effective to encourage favourable outcomes (Fu *et al*., 2015:56). A reasonable assumption is that the compensation required by the customer should equate to the intensity of the loss resulting from the service failure (Sembada *et al*., 2016:340). According to Albrecht *et al*. (2019:62), a high level of compensation signifies a better result, which should result in higher customer satisfaction levels.

2.6.3.10 Make an apology to the customer

An apology is a statement that acknowledges both responsibility and regret for the service failure, and may convey the intention to reconcile and continue the relationship (Cui *et al*., 2018:38). The main reason for service providers to apologise and provide information about the service failure is to appease dissatisfied customers (Goode *et al*., 2017:706), and when a service provider makes an apology, it admits responsibility for the service failure and expresses regret for what had happened (Rasoulian *et al*., 2017:784). An apology indicates the quality of interpersonal treatment and communication by the service provider during the service recovery process and is related to customers' perceptions of interactional justice (Smith *et al*., 1999:359). Importantly, service providers need to improve efforts in their response than merely apologising, such as providing proper compensation if they need to recover from a severe service failure (Zeithaml *et al*., 2018:191). An apology requires low effort and less time to be implemented than other recovery strategies (Pacheco *et al*., 2019:4). Apologies can range in form, from a simple statement to the customer expressing regret, to the willingness to solve the problem, to actual compensation (Walgren, 2016:305).

A sincere and professional apology made to the customer serves two purposes, namely to notify the customer that the business takes responsibility for the service failure, and to express sincere regret (Ofori-Okyere & Kumadey, 2015:34). The service provider must be polite when making an apology (Atuo & Kalu, 2017:36). When apologising, the verbal and non-verbal aspects of communication influence the customer's evaluation of the sincerity of an apology and determines whether the customer accepts or rejects the apology (Song *et al*., 2018:31). The service provider should be polite when making an apology to the customer (Atuo & Kalu, 2017:36). The act of apologising can be perceived as representing a caring attitude and shows empathy for the negative experience encountered by the customer (Mate *et al*., 2019:639). As such, employees could also benefit from interpersonal accuracy training where people can accurately perceive others' characteristics because of the exposure to their behaviour or appearance (Schlegel *et al*., 2017:104). When employees are trained in such a manner, they can better express how the customer is feeling and empathise with the customer's state (Cummings & Seitchik, 2020:657).

Furthermore, when making an apology, employees should not be defensive, as it may suggest to the customer that the service provider is hiding something or is unwilling to address the problem (Wirtz & Lovelock, 2018:425). By accepting responsibility for the service failure (i.e. justification through an apology) leads to higher levels of customer behavioural outcomes than when the service provider makes excuses (Van Vaerenbergh *et al*., 2019:113). However, although all employees may be properly trained to listen and apologise to dissatisfied customers, non-supervisory employees should refer more serious problems they encounter to managers or supervisors (Hewagama *et al*., 2019:80). When the manager apologises, customers feel that their complaints have been heard by important employees and are justified (Hoffman & Bateson, 2017:359). Although making a sincere apology for the service failure may suggest to customers that the service provider was at fault, it may also be beneficial for the service provider and its employees to communicate to its customers that they did not desire for the negative event to occur even though it would take the blame (i.e. "I apologise that you had to experience that, I will assist you any way I can") (Radu *et al*., 2019:367). However, although offering an apology can reduce customers' anger caused by the service failure, businesses often do not make an apology to dissatisfied customers (Phabmixay *et al*., 2018:8).

2.6.3.11 Facilitation of complaints

Facilitation refers to the different rules, policies, and procedures established within a business to enable customer complaints (Muralidharan *et al*., 2019:3). Facilitation represents the service providers' intentions and willingness to listen to the customer (Mostafa *et al*., 2014:302). In addition, customers can perceive facilitation as evidence of the business' support and willingness to fix any problem that occurs in the business relationship between both exchange parties

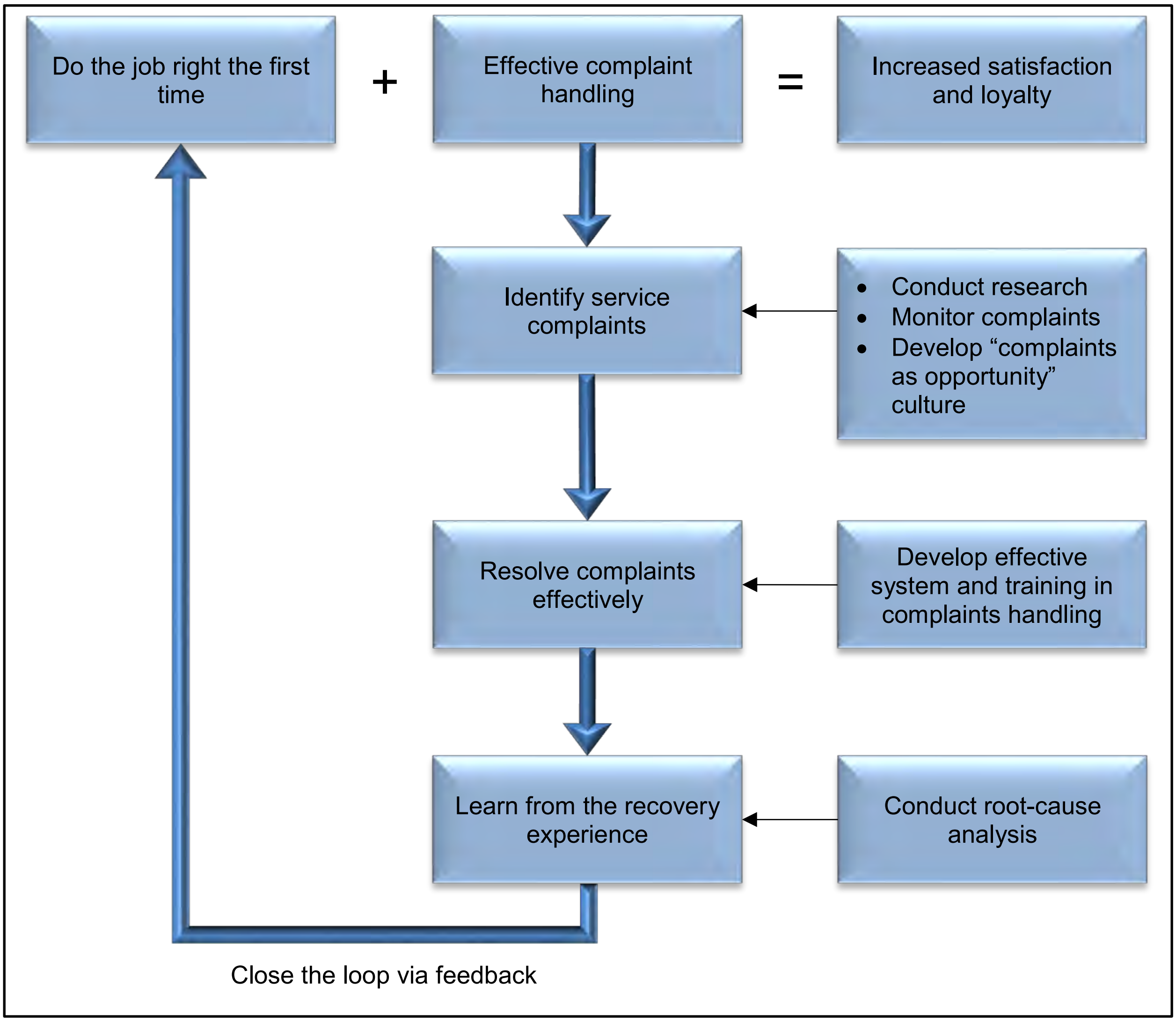
(Phabmixay *et al*., 2018:7). Practically, facilitation enables dissatisfied customers to lodge their complaints to the business without difficulty (Mostafa *et al*., 2014:302). Businesses can encourage customer complaints through activities such as toll-free numbers, availability of feedback cards, service guarantees, and easy complaint procedures (Ofori-Okyere & Kumadey, 2015:34). Davidow (2000:475) argued that although facilitation enables the customer's complaint to be heard, it does not guarantee a positive outcome in the recovery process. Conversely, Muralidharan *et al*. (2019:3) assert that facilitation has a significant role in determining customer satisfaction levels.

2.6.3.12 Attentiveness to customers

Concerning attentiveness, the interaction between service providers and customers in response to complaints is crucial (Park & Park, 2016:236). Attentiveness refers to the personalised psychological care and attention that dissatisfied customers receive from the service provider in an effort to calm and address their emotions and dissatisfaction (Awa *et al*., 2014:7). Concerning the care and attention that customers receive, attentiveness is recognised to be essential for the management of WOM intention and repurchase behaviour. For instance, if a customer is impolitely treated, it is more likely for him/her to switch to another service provider and spread negative WOM (Yang & Hassett, 2018:358). Attentiveness is a complex aspect since it depends on people rather than processes (Davidow, 2000:477). Yakubu and Kadiri (2019:66) assert that attentiveness consists of an atmosphere of respect and empathy and shows the willingness of employees to listen to customers with the utmost attention. It forms an atmosphere for the rest of the interaction by showing a customer that the business cares. It rather focuses on what was done (actual personal interaction) and not what should be done (policies and procedures) (Davidow, 2014:73).

Managers need to be aware that existing customers are valuable assets and should therefore establish effective procedures for service recovery after dissatisfying encounters. Three guiding principles that can be implemented for an effective service recovery system (as indicated in Figure 2-7) include (a) making it simple for customers to provide feedback, (b) facilitating effective service recovery and (c) creating appropriate compensation rewards (Wirtz & Lovelock, 2018:420).

Figure 2-7: Components of an effective service recovery system



Source: Adopted from Wirtz and Lovelock (2018:421).

A review of Figure 2-7 indicates the components of an effective service recovery system. It is crucial for the service provider to effectively handle complaints, identify customer complaints, resolve the complaints, and learn from the service recovery experience. It is imperative for businesses aiming to improve service effectiveness to develop an effective service recovery system (DeTienne *et al.*, 2015:2). Different strategies can therefore be implemented to achieve the aforementioned aspects of an effective service recovery system as shown in Figure 2-7.

Mobile ISPs can therefore implement this service recovery system for effective complaint handling, restoration of customer satisfaction and ultimately positive customer behavioural responses following service recovery such as trust, eWOM, and repurchase intention.

2.6.4 Behavioural outcomes following service recovery

Considering the intangible nature of services (as discussed in section 2.3.1.1), service failures are inevitable. Therefore, when a service failure occurs, there is a need for a service recovery (Assefa, 2014:50). Even though it is a challenge in some cases to satisfy a customer after a service failure, businesses must take action to compensate the tangible and intangible losses experienced by the customer (Rashid & Ahmad, 2014a:404). A clear service recovery strategy is important in order to reduce the unfavourable effects of service failure and increase favourable results from the recovery process (Anamali *et al*., 2014:12).

Petzer *et al*. (2017:242) assert that when customers perceive justice from the service provider's recovery efforts, the possibility exists that satisfaction levels can be enhanced, resulting in favourable customer behaviour. When customers are satisfied with a service recovery experience, it would instil trust in them (Mohd-Any *et al*., 2019:681) and improve the probability of them remaining loyal (Guchait *et al*., 2019:936). Ogbeide *et al*. (2017:214) posit that when a service failure occurs, the way in which employees deal with the situation can influence the customer's satisfaction, loyalty, and likelihood to recommend the service provider to others. These identified behavioural outcomes of service recovery are discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

2.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided a comprehensive review of the literature on services marketing and the service recovery concept. The chapter commenced with a discussion on the importance of studying services, which was followed by the definition of the service and services marketing concepts. The chapter further discussed the service marketing mix, presenting the traditional marketing mix as applied to services and the extended marketing mix. Furthermore, the chapter discussed the different profitable services marketing strategies that can be implemented by the service provider, including improving service quality, managing relationships and building loyalty, striving for service leadership, complaint handling, and service recovery. As service recovery forms the core of this study, a more detailed elaboration on the concept was done, presenting its importance, customers' recovery expectations and service recovery strategies that can be adopted by the service provider. The chapter lastly presented the customers' behavioural outcomes following service recovery. As the chapter presented the different behavioural outcomes of service recovery, the aim of Chapter 3 is to elaborate on customers' responses following service recovery.

CHAPTER 3

RESPONSES FOLLOWING SERVICE RECOVERY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 2 provided comprehensive insight into services marketing and the concepts of service failure and service recovery. In addition, it was established that, due to the characteristics of services, service failures are inevitable. Service failures cause customer dissatisfaction, hence highlighting the importance of implementing service recovery strategies to restore customer satisfaction. This chapter, therefore, examines existing literature concerning customers' responses following service recovery efforts, by specifically investigating satisfaction with service recovery, trust, and loyalty (i.e. eWOM and repurchase intention).

3.2 EQUITY CONSIDERATIONS IN SERVICE RECOVERY

It has been established (in section 2.6.1) that effective service recovery could have various benefits, including fostering a satisfied customer, building a stronger business-customer relationship and leading to more loyalty (Khan *et al*., 2016:3654). Etemad-Sajadi and Bohrer (2019:264) state that managers must understand the importance of the service recovery process and keep in mind that it does not merely focus on reducing customer dissatisfaction, but also aims to enhance satisfaction.

For an effective service recovery to occur, thoughtful procedures should be implemented to rectify problems and manage dissatisfied customers (Wirtz & Lovelock, 2015:394). Accordingly, the equity theory is essential in response to issues relating to justice or fairness during the service recovery process (Msosa & Govender, 2019:481). Equity evaluation forms the basis of customers' expectations of how appropriate levels of service recovery should be provided (Bagherzadeh *et al*., 2020:3). As per the equity theory, customers will experience inequity when a service failure occurs (Lii *et al*., 2018:5). The main ideology behind the equity theory is that the ratio of outputs to inputs is assessed on a comparative basis (Tseng & Kuo, 2014:1041). Thus, customers will perceive inequity when the ratio of an individual's inputs to his/her outcomes differs from the ratio of another person's inputs to outcomes (Son & Jin, 2019:1517). According to Mandina and Kurwiravamwe (2016:90), inequity within the exchange implies that inputs (such as time and monetary expenses) do not match the perceived recovery strategies (such as cash refund, apology, or replacement).

If there is an imbalance between the inputs and outcomes, individuals have the propensity to minimise the difference by adjusting their attitudes, contributions, or outcomes in order to restore the balance (Simon *et al*., 2015b:367). The higher the dissatisfaction from a service failure, the more inequitable the ratio perceived (Hur & Jung, 2016:726). As a result, an individual may divulge different behaviours when there is inequity, such as becoming upset, disappointed, or regretful (Çeti & Hassan, 2019:2). However, customers' perceptions of satisfaction after a service failure can be reshaped by their perceptions of equality during the service recovery process, thus restoring equity with post-purchase behaviour (Lii *et al*., 2018:5). The less effort an individual invests in the recovery process, the more he/she will perceive this process as equitable, which in turn may lead to positive customer behaviours, such as complaining, WOM communication, loyalty, and repurchase intention (De Ruyter & Wetzels, 2000:93; Lu *et al*., 2018:690).

According to Kwon and Jang (2012:1236), the equity theory entails that in order to understand the effectiveness of service recovery efforts, consideration should be made on the customer's entire history with the business. Customers will only respond positively to the service recovery attempts when they perceive that the recovery efforts match or exceed the experienced loss (Shin *et al*., 2018:4). As explained in section 2.6.1, effective service recovery – as well as satisfaction with service recovery – can restore customers' trust and loyalty towards the service provider (Ding & Lii, 2016:882); thus forming the rationale for specifically investigating trust and loyalty as service recovery behaviours in this study. Table 3-1 presents evidence from literature regarding available research conducted on different customer responses to satisfaction with service recovery.

Table 3-1: Customer responses to satisfaction with service recovery

Source	Setting	Satisfaction with service recovery outcomes
Tax *et al*. (1998:70)	Services	Commitment (+) Trust (+)
Kau and Loh (2006:108)	Mobile phones	Loyalty (+) Trust (+) WOM (+)
Moliner-Velázquez *et al*. (2015:478)	Retail store	Conventional WOM (+) eWOM (+)
Ding *et al*. (2016:69)	Telecommunication	Extra-role behaviours (+) Repurchase intention (+)
Ding and Lii (2016:889)	Online games	eWOM (+) Repurchase intention (+) Trust (+)
Nadiri (2016:205)	Banking	Repurchase intention (+) Trust (+) WOM (+)

Table 3-1: Customer responses to satisfaction with service recovery (continues)

Source	Setting	Satisfaction with service recovery outcomes
Ellyawati (2017b:1267)	Airline	Repeat purchases (+) WOM (+)
Tsao (2018:1103)	Hotel	Customer defection (+) Loyalty (-)
Mohd-Any *et al*. (2019:675)	Hotel	Loyalty (+) Trust (+)
Matikiti, Mpinganjira *et al*. (2019:101)	Airline	Commitment (+) Overall satisfaction (+) Repurchase intention (+)

Note: (+) = positively significant, (-) = negatively significant

As evident from Table 3-1, customer satisfaction with service recovery can result in negative or positive behavioural outcomes or responses. Thus, service providers must understand that customer satisfaction is the foundation for success and should develop strategies to enhance customers' satisfaction with service recovery (Matikiti, Roberts-Lombard *et al*., 2019:411). In an attempt to develop strategies to enhance satisfaction with service recovery, it is particularly important to investigate and understand what the concept entails. Therefore, the subsequent section provides an investigation and discussion of literature on satisfaction with service recovery.

3.3 SATISFACTION WITH SERVICE RECOVERY

Customer satisfaction is important for the growth of a business and often functions as an indication of the business' success (Nambiar *et al*., 2019:44). Ilieska (2013:327) describes customer satisfaction as a business asset that needs to be observed and managed in the same way as any other physical asset. From the research of Kim and Steinfield (2004:2776), it was established that satisfaction with service is likely to be a major prerequisite for customers when deciding whether to continue using the service. In addition, Haq (2012:364) notes that successful businesses (thus, including mobile ISPs) should aim to fulfil customers' needs and maintain customer satisfaction. It is, therefore, critical for businesses to understand their customers' needs and satisfy these needs accordingly to ensure the survival of the business, irrespective of the size or type of business (Cheung & To, 2016:2524). Moreover, it is crucial for businesses to increase efforts in order to familiarise themselves with customer needs and expectations and in turn increase the opportunities of fulfilling promises, garnering satisfaction and sustaining a long-term, equally beneficial relationship (Cambra-Fierro & Melero-Polo, 2017:277).

However, it is a challenge yet at the same time essential for businesses (including South African mobile ISPs) to attain customer satisfaction (Hussain, 2017:128). This is due to the variability of services, which makes it a challenge to assume that a service will be consistently delivered in the same manner and result in the same satisfaction levels among customers (Odoom *et al*., 2019:1). According to Munyanti and Masrom (2018:17), service providers need to take the necessary actions to acquire knowledge on the aspects that could improve customer satisfaction, which could in turn result in customer retention. Considering that an improvement in how a business performs and delivers the promised service quality will result in an increase in customer satisfaction, telecommunication service providers should focus on providing timely services (Alabar *et al*., 2017:45). It is also imperative to fulfil customer satisfaction by enhancing the quality of service, network coverage, mobile internet, customer service, promotional offers (Munyanti & Masrom, 2018:10), price fairness and complaint handling (Siloyam & Jampala, 2019:1150).

When customers experience a service failure, the main challenge relates to how customer satisfaction can be restored to retain dissatisfied customers (Siu *et al*., 2013:675). Irrespective of the way in which customer satisfaction is established, it should be noted that satisfying customers must be a priority, as satisfied customers have a higher lifetime value (Kruger *et al*., 2015:611). Hassan *et al*. (2014:200) postulate that businesses should ensure that they identify customers who encountered service failures and attempt to satisfy them through recovery, as recovery can have a positive impact on the business' profit, customers' loyalty, and customers' satisfaction. Unresolved service failures can result in customer defection, the sharing of negative experiences with other customers, and possibly challenging the service provider through litigation (Zeithaml *et al*., 2018:180). Therefore, when the customer makes a complaint due to a dissatisfying experience, such complaint behaviour must be properly managed (Mei *et al*., 2019:67).

According to Rashid and Ahmad (2014b:240), satisfaction with service recovery will only occur in the event of a service failure and if the business takes action to resolve the problem or service failure. Hence, service recovery is crucial for the service provider with the aim to restore customer satisfaction after a service failure (Ellyawati, 2017b:1265). Customers' level of satisfaction with the service recovery process influences their perceptions of the overall satisfaction, switching intentions, and WOM intentions towards the business (Nefat *et al*., 2012:1052). Thus, in order to understand the effectiveness of service recovery and the level of customers' satisfaction with the service recovery effort, it is imperative to measure satisfaction with service recovery as accurately and frequently as possible (Mandal & Bhattacharya, 2016:275). Notably, a poor service recovery effort after a service failure encounter can result in highly dissatisfied customers, who might turn into "terrorists" – actively seeking opportunities to criticise the business openly on internet review sites or online media (i.e. negative eWOM) (Wilson *et al*., 2016:328). In a further attempt to understand the concept of satisfaction with service recovery, it is imperative to define the concept.

3.3.1 Defining satisfaction with service recovery

Before defining the concept of satisfaction with service recovery, it is imperative to note that satisfaction with service recovery is different from customers' satisfaction with the first service experience (i.e. customer satisfaction) (Rashid & Ahmad, 2014b:240). Customer satisfaction refers to the overall psychological state that follows when the customer's emotions about the disconfirmed expectations is coupled with his/her prior feelings about the consumption experience (Oliver, 1981:27). In addition, Zeithaml *et al*. (2018:80) defined customer satisfaction as an assessment of whether a product or service matches the customer's needs and expectations.

On the contrary, Ngahu *et al*. (2016:56) define satisfaction with service recovery as a customer's subjective evaluation of the series of corrective actions taken after experiencing a service failure. In an attempt to explore the concept of satisfaction with service recovery, various definitions that have been conceptualised over the past years are further presented in Table 3-2 below.

Table 3-2: Definitions of satisfaction with service recovery

Source	Definition
Boshoff (1999:237)	Satisfaction with service recovery refers to the extent to which a customer is satisfied with the service provider's transaction-specific service recovery attempt after experiencing a service failure.
Davidow (2000:478)	Satisfaction with service recovery refers to the customer's emotions towards the business resulting from the business' handling of the complaint.
Maxham and Netemeyer (2002:240)	Satisfaction with service recovery refers to the satisfaction a customer derived from a service encounter involving a service failure and recovery.
Kuo and Wu (2012:7)	Satisfaction with service recovery includes the overall satisfaction the customer derives from the consumption of a secondary service (remedial action) by a service provider after a service failure.
Rahman *et al*. (2016:796)	Satisfaction with service recovery is the satisfaction of a complainer with the service provider's response or handling of his/her complaint.
Rejikumar (2015:10)	Satisfaction with service recovery refers to the extent to which a customer is pleased or satisfied by a successful service recovery experience.
Wei (2017:71)	Satisfaction with service recovery refers to the total level of a customer's satisfaction following the service failure and the business' compensation.

Considering the definitions from Table 3-2, the following noticeable generic elements of the concept of satisfaction with service recovery have been identified.

- **Follows a service failure and recovery experience**

  Even leading service providers encounter service failures that could result in a decrease in customers' satisfaction levels (Akinci & Aksoy, 2019:184). Although service providers cannot guarantee a completely error-free service delivery, they can make sure that service failures can be recovered based on customer expectations (Bagherzadeh *et al*., 2020:1). In highly competitive business environments, customers develop higher expectations from the business; thus, service recovery is of more significance than ever before (i.e. in case of unmet customer expectations) (Chang & Hung, 2018:1438). When customers perceive that the service recovery performance meets or surpasses their expectations, they will be satisfied with the service recovery (Juntongjin *et al*., 2014:57). In other words, satisfaction with service recovery is a function or outcome of the customers' positive evaluation of the service recovery experience.

- **Complaint handling**

  Listening to customers and handling their complaints (see section 2.5.4) is important for the business (Hsiao *et al*., 2016:693). Upon receiving complaints, which is facilitated by establishing easily accessible formal customer feedback channels, the subsequent steps that could be taken by the service provider include handling and responding to the complaint (Shooshtari *et al*., 2018:229). Complaints should be promptly responded to even though they may seem to be frustrating, time-consuming, or costly, as it might result in damaging the business' reputation due to customers' bad publicity (Ramphal, 2016:1). Effective complaint handling processes could provide the service provider with an opportunity to satisfy a dissatisfied customer and may even result in the creation of loyal customers (Supriaddin *et al*., 2015:2). Handling customer complaints, rectifying problems and ensuring that the service provider is meeting customer expectations is crucial to ensuring customer satisfaction (Marshall & Johnston, 2015:150). However, for effective service recovery to take place, it is necessary that dissatisfied customers first voice their complaints to the service provider and seek redress (i.e. a refund, exchange, repair, or apology) (Blodgett *et al*., 2018:914).

- **Customer satisfaction**

  In order to survive in competitive markets, businesses must move beyond from only identifying customer needs and wants to determining the level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction after customers buy goods or services (Park *et al*., 2014:255). Customer satisfaction has progressively developed to be a key component of a business' strategy and in a competitive industry, it is also perceived as a significant differentiator (Sanjeepan, 2017:2). A satisfied customer has more probability of returning to the same service provider as compared to a dissatisfied customer (Maggon & Chaudhry, 2018:59). Su *et al*. (2017:183-184) posit that customer satisfaction manifests from an assessment of expectations of the service encounter in comparison to perceptions of the actually delivered service. The customer's expectations of the service recovery process significantly influence the level of satisfaction after the service recovery (Tektas, 2017:855).

From the definitions (provided in Table 3-2) and generic elements discussed above, the following definition of satisfaction with service recovery has been formulated for the purpose of this study:

Satisfaction with service recovery is the customer's satisfaction derived from effective complaint handling by the mobile ISP following a service failure and recovery experience.

3.3.2 Customer dissatisfaction and customer complaint behaviour

When a service provider fails to meet expected service standards, the customer will perceive the service as dissatisfying and may decide to complain (Sann *et al*., 2020:81). Dissatisfied customers expect the service provider to take corrective action to restore satisfaction after the service failure (Ngahu *et al*., 2016:56). The service provider's handling of customer complaints and providing an effective service recovery is therefore important in keeping dissatisfied customers from switching to other providers (Wirtz & Lovelock, 2018:394). In order to deal with the perceived dissatisfaction, customers engage in different styles of complaint behaviour (Joe & Choi, 2019:3118).

As previously discussed (in section 2.5.5), customer complaint behaviour is defined as an action initiated by an individual that encompasses communicating negative information about a product or service either directly to the business or to a third party (Jacoby & Jaccard, 1981:6). Complaint behaviour is of significance to service providers, as it helps them to identify suitable service recovery strategies (Tsarenko & Strizhakova, 2013:72). Furthermore, customers' complaint behaviour provide the opportunity to understand the nature of the complaint. Thus, it should be utilised as an opportunity to identify problems associated with complaints and to formulate policy, development, and progress measures based on these complaints (Lee & Kim, 2020:6).

According to Nimako and Mensah (2014:59), customer complaints may arise due to unmet expectations during service delivery, faulty products, poor product or service quality and unfulfilled promises made by the service provider. Customers with relatively high levels of dissatisfaction are more likely to complain as compared to those customers who are satisfied or delighted (Istanbulluoglu *et al*., 2017:1125). A complaint functions as a source of information for managers, and should thus be appropriately investigated and analysed (Tag-Eldeen, 2018:307). Customers tend to differ in terms of their perceptions of when and how to make complaints (Badghish *et al*., 2015:52). Accordingly, major conceptual contributions have been made to the customer complaint behaviour theory into the classification of the customer's responses to dissatisfaction as explained from the seminal works of Hirschman (1970), Day and Landon (1977), Singh (1988) and Tronvoll (2012) (as discussed in section 2.5.4.3). Customers may opt to complain to the service provider when they are dissatisfied and they may seek legal action against the business, or opt to leave the sellers and manufacturers by stopping the use of their products or services (Nimako, 2012:87).

Agu *et al*. (2017:88) suggest that businesses should carefully identify the type of complaint and complainer in all situations when handling customers' complaints since there is a disparity in the approaches to complaint handling. Furthermore, understanding the different types of complaints and establishing whether the business has information about these complaints can assist the business in deciding on the best manner in which to respond and where to focus their service recovery efforts (Istanbulluoglu *et al*., 2017:1125). As such, businesses must encourage dissatisfied customers to make complaints in order to rectify the problem and retain the customer (Olatunde *et al*., 2020:77). However, complaints are not yet regarded by businesses as an operational value (Tag-Eldeen, 2018:307), as evident from South African mobile ISPs, where service providers do not rise to the occasion of responding to all customer complaints (BrandsEye, 2019). As a result, it is expected that customers exhibit different complaint behaviours when they experience dissatisfaction (as explained in section 2.5.4.3).

3.3.3 The expectancy-disconfirmation theory and satisfaction with service recovery

The expectancy-disconfirmation theory by Oliver (1980) has been broadly used to describe the process through which customers establish their satisfaction with service recovery (Ding & Lii, 2016:882). Based on the expectancy-disconfirmation theory, satisfaction is influenced by the difference between customers' expectations and perceptions of a product or service (Tang *et al*., 2017:13). The customer is presumed to obtain cognitive expectations about the performance of a product or service, which may be confirmed (or disconfirmed) during the use of the product or service (Taylor & Durand, 1979:803). According to Harun, Rokonuzzaman *et al*. (2018:114), if a service recovery performance matches or surpasses the expected performance, a *positive disconfirmation* occurs, resulting in the customer's satisfaction. However, when service recovery performs poorly than expected, *negative disconfirmation* occurs, resulting in customer dissatisfaction. Thus, the evaluation of the service recovery effort will determine the customer's level of satisfaction with the service recovery effort. Notably, services that fall below customer expectations will result in unfavourable outcomes for the business (Shahriar *et al*., 2018:44). When disconfirmation occurs, the customer reasonably asks why his/her expectations were not met (Nam *et al*., 2020:117).

Based on the expectancy-disconfirmation theory, it can be concluded that when customers receive a better quality of service recovery than what was expected after the service failure, they experience positive disconfirmation, which results in satisfaction with the service recovery effort. In contrast, when customers' expectations of a service recovery do not match the service recovery efforts, they experience negative disconfirmation, which may result in dissatisfaction with the service recovery effort (Ding & Lii, 2016:882). If the service provider can provide an excellent and satisfactory service recovery performance, it will be easier to meet or exceed customers' service recovery expectations (Lai & Chou, 2015:454). Service recovery efforts must be performed appropriately to avoid a double deviation situation, where a service failure occurs in both the initial service failure stage and the recovery failure stage (Kussusanti *et al*., 2019:130).

According to Lii *et al*. (2018:3), customers have predetermined expectations of a service recovery performance and when the service recovery is effectively performed, it will lead to a high level of satisfaction. However, higher expectations may complicate a recovery from a failure. Nonetheless, customers with no recovery expectations may exit and never return, whereas loyal customers may give the business a chance to recover (Miller *et al*., 2000:338). From the customer's point of view, the perceived severity of the service failure influences their expectations of the service recovery (Hoffman & Bateson, 2017:357). Therefore, Abney *et al*. (2017:285) posit that understanding customers' expectations can assist in explaining how satisfaction may result from service recovery as well as further behavioural intentions that may be of interest to the service provider. It also becomes necessary to assess service recovery policies or strategies based on customers' expectations (Shahriar *et al*., 2018:44).

Research suggests that customers' perceived justice could influence satisfaction with service recovery. Understanding the difference between the actual steps taken by the service provider (i.e. service provider's response) and the ensuing subjective evaluation of the service provider's response by the customer (i.e. perceived justice) is important (Harun, Rokonuzzaman *et al*., 2018:113). Thus, as suggested by Rosenmayer *et al*. (2018:271), perceived justice is the main theoretical framework that can be applied to gain an understanding of customers' perceptions of service recovery. The argument behind the perceived justice theory is that customers' level of satisfaction and their future behaviours are influenced by their perceptions of the service recovery (Chao & Cheng, 2019:1351). Considering the above discussion, the effects of perceived justice on customers' satisfaction with service recovery are subsequently discussed below.

3.3.4 Effects of perceived justice on satisfaction with service recovery

When customers experience a service failure, they tend to perceive injustice; hence, the service provider's ability to restore justice is vital in shaping the customer's perception of a satisfactory exchange (Yani-de-Soriano *et al*., 2019:710). The perceived justice component of equity theory will cause customers to evaluate whether they have received a fair service recovery strategy or not (Ogonu & Nwogu, 2018:35). The failure to effectively recover from a service failure can result in dissatisfied customers who might negatively evaluate the service provider (Mate *et al*., 2019:630). As a result, an effective service recovery facilitates changing dissatisfied customers into satisfied customers, sustaining long-term relationships and building loyalty (Chao & Cheng, 2019:1351).

Generally, it is less costly for the service provider to perform a service recovery as compared to the costs associated with having a dissatisfied customer (Wirtz & Lovelock, 2018:471). In the event of a service failure, the customers' satisfaction with the service recovery should be examined from a justice perspective (Chao & Cheng, 2019:1355). When customers perceive that the service recovery process is just, the possibility exists that their satisfaction levels will improve, resulting in desirable customer behaviour (DeTienne *et al*., 2015:2; Petzer *et al*., 2017:242). According to Thomassen *et al*. (2020:133), the perceived justice of recovery actions stimulates the cognitive evaluation of satisfaction with service recovery.

Existing research identified three dimensions of perceived justice (i.e. distributive, interactional and procedural justice) that could influence customers' satisfaction with the service recovery effort (see section 2.6.2.2 and Table 3-3). Empirical evidence, however, suggests that there are significant variations in the degree of influence that the perceived justice dimensions have on satisfaction with service recovery (Jha & Balaji, 2015:133).

Table 3-3: The effect of perceived justice on satisfaction with service recovery

Source	Setting	Results		
		Antecedents	Mediator/ moderator	Outcomes
Smith *et al*. (1999)	Restaurant and hotel customers	Distributive justice (+) Interactional justice (+) Procedural justice (+)		Satisfaction with service recovery (+)
Mattila (2001)	Restaurant, hair stylist, dry cleaning	Distributive justice Procedural justice Interactional justice	Satisfaction with recovery (+)	Purchase intention (+) Loyalty (+)
Kau and Loh (2006)	Mobile phone	Distributive justice (+) Procedural justice (+) Explanation & effort (+) Empathy & politeness (+)	Satisfaction (+)	Trust (+) Positive WOM (+) Loyalty (+)
Jha and Balaji (2015:139)	Telecommu-nication	Distributive justice (+) Procedural justice (+) Interactional justice (+)		Satisfaction with service recovery (+)
Cheung and To (2016:2536)	Manufacturing and service industries	Distributive justice (+) Procedural justice (+) Interactional justice (+)		Satisfaction with service recovery (+)
Ding and Lii (2016:889)	Online games	Distributive justice (+) Interactional justice (+) Informational justice (+) Procedural justice (+)		Satisfaction with service recovery (+)

Table 3-3: The effect of perceived justice on satisfaction with service recovery (continues)

Source	Setting	Results		
		Antecedents	Mediator/ moderator	Outcomes
Petzer *et al*. (2017:248)	Banking	Interactional justice (+) Distributive justice (+)		Satisfaction with service recovery (+)
Zhang and Shao (2018:13)	Tourism	Perceived justice (+)		Satisfaction with service recovery (+)
Yani-de-Soriano *et al*. (2019:721)	Telecommunication	Perceived justice (+)		Post-recovery satisfaction (+)

Note: (+) = positively significant

From Table 3-3, it is evident that perceived justice positively influences customer satisfaction with service recovery across a variety of industries. Consequently, perceived justice and its dimensions are considered important and appropriate in restoring customers' satisfaction after a service failure. It also appears from Table 3-3 that positive satisfaction with service recovery can mediate or moderate the relationship between perceived justice and customers' behavioural outcomes, such as purchase intention, loyalty, trust, and positive WOM.

3.3.5 The importance of satisfaction with service recovery

According to Pradhan (2015:82), successful service recovery tends to influence customers' satisfaction with the business positively, which could result in positive customer behavioural outcomes towards the business. Given this, it can be argued that satisfaction with service recovery is an important aspect for the following reasons:

- Satisfaction with service recovery can significantly affect customers' evaluation of the business and may lead to customer retention and loyalty (Ngahu *et al*., 2016:56). Customer retention is vital to businesses because the cost of acquiring a new customer is more than the cost of maintaining a relationship with an existing customer (Magatef & Tomalieh, 2015:79). Consequently, customer retention has evolved to be more crucial in competitive markets than customer acquisition (Darzi & Bhat, 2018:664). To a certain extent, the level of customer retention dictates the level of accomplishment of the business' objectives. In other words, the sales and profitability of a business are bound to decrease if customers do not support or repurchase products, which in turn will negatively affect the business' performance (Ibojo, 2015:42). Loyal customers are less likely to switch to other brands because of a lower price or special promotions from competitors (Javed & Cheema, 2017:5).

- A satisfactory service recovery can enhance customers' repurchase intentions (Moliner-Velázquez *et al*., 2015:471). Since fewer costs are associated with maintaining existing customers than the cost of attracting new customers, customers' repurchase intention are of paramount importance to the business (Samad, 2014:38). As a result, businesses should attempt to offer excellent services in order to retain customers and create favourable future repurchase intentions (Ibzan *et al*., 2016:96).

- Satisfaction with service recovery can positively influence the trust of customers (Nadiri, 2016:197). Trust is perceived as the main element to build on the success of a business. Without trust, it will be a challenge for the business to establish long-term relationships with its customers (Setyorini & Nugraha, 2016:2). Maintaining a long-term relationship with the customer is a way to remain competitive in the business environment (Aka *et al*., 2016:185). Long-term customers also frequently provide free advertising by positively talking about the business and its products or services (Gaurav, 2016:1).

- The business' ability to identify service failures, reasonably handle customer complaints and provide satisfactory service recovery can be essential to attain a sustainable competitive advantage in the market (Nadiri, 2016:211). The long-term success and sustainability of a business are primarily based on the sustainable competitive advantage acquired (Yeboah & Ewur, 2014:24). Sustainable competitive advantage is a type of competitive advantage that exploits a business' competencies that are valuable to customers, which is not easily imitated by the competitors and it provides competence and competitiveness for the business (Hosseini *et al*., 2018:2). A sustainable competitive advantage is based on the business' capability to acquire, integrate, and reconfigure its resources in response to increasing customer and market demands (López-Cabarcos *et al*., 2015:3).

Satisfaction with service recovery is, therefore, of importance to mobile ISPs, as it can enable customer retention, encourage repurchases, instil trust, establish loyalty, and ultimately result in a sustainable competitive advantage.

3.3.6 Satisfaction with service recovery and the service recovery paradox

Service recovery serves as one of the significant efforts needed to rectify failures in the service delivery process and it can change service failures into positive (satisfactory) service outcomes (Ho *et al*., 2020:2). When a service failure occurs and the service provider initiates service recovery, a service recovery paradox may occur (Cheng *et al*., 2015:839). A service recovery paradox refers to the scenario whereby the satisfaction of a customer after a service failure exceeds the satisfaction level that he/she had before experiencing the service problem or failure

(Fayos-Gardó *et al*., 2017:371). The service recovery paradox is progressively vital in establishing the basis to understand the way in which managers and researchers' responses to service failure has influenced customer behaviours (Cheng *et al*., 2015:836). The service recovery paradox is important to managers as it validates service recovery efforts and presents the possibility that the occurrence of service failures does not always result in dissatisfaction and a loss of customers (Allen *et al*., 2015:649).

The service recovery paradox promotes the notion that by successfully handling and recovering from a service failure experience, the customer can elevate to a higher level of satisfaction than prior to the service failure (De Meyer & Petzer, 2012:27). Considering that, service providers can prompt the service recovery paradox through positive disconfirmation formed by service recoveries that surpass customers' initial expectations (Hübner *et al*., 2018:292). The service recovery paradox may cause service providers to perceive service failures as good for customers so that they may be delighted by the effective resolution of the problem encountered. However, this approach is might be costly for the service provider (Wirtz & Lovelock, 2018:419).

The customer's satisfaction derived from the recovery process may also be dependent on the severity and recoverability of the service failure (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2011:355). It is important to take into consideration that the service recovery paradox is highly dependent on the context and situation. This means that although one customer may easily forgive the business after experiencing a service failure, another customer may be dissatisfied even with the recovery efforts (Hazarika & Dhaliwal, 2018:1247). Even though a service recovery paradox implies that a customer may ultimately gain more satisfaction from an excellent recovery, there is no assurance that the customer will become satisfied (Zeithaml *et al*., 2018:182). Wilson *et al*. (2016:329) argue that executing actions correctly from the beginning remains the best and safest strategy in the long-term considering the mixed reactions on the existence of the service recovery paradox. Performing the appropriate actions in any scenario necessitates knowledgeable and skilful employees as well as their motivation and willingness to perform the service recovery (Grönroos, 2017:203). Within the context of mobile ISPs, this may imply providing excellent customer service, correct billing, and stable internet connectivity as part of the base product offering (Chinunda, 2013:19).

Satisfaction with service recovery (as shown in Table 3-1) can result in positive behavioural outcomes on the part of the customer, such as trust and loyalty. An effective service recovery can result in redeveloped trust, as customers believe that the service provider is honest in rectifying their problems (bin Mohd Amin *et al*., 2020:39). Therefore, the following section discusses the concept of trust as a behavioural response of satisfaction with service recovery.

3.4 TRUST AS A RESPONSE TO SERVICE RECOVERY

Nambiar *et al*. (2019:48) emphasise that, in order to be successful in the marketplace, it is necessary to focus on building customer relationships and not merely focus on creating products. Considering the intangible nature of services, trust is of paramount importance for the establishment of service-based relationships (Berry, 1995:242; Oraedu, 2020). Trust is a requirement in services marketing for maintaining customer-service provider relationships because customers frequently must decide on what to buy before they can actually experience the service (Mirani *et al*., 2015:468). Furthermore, customers' access to information has increased, which has caused them to be flexible in their decision-making and have more alternatives to choose from, thus, it is vital for businesses to gain their trust (Drosos *et al*., 2019:1). However, creating trust is a challenge, therefore a business must ensure that effective service recovery is established to retain dissatisfied customers (Rashid & Ahmad, 2014b:238). Ellyawati (2017b:1263) further emphasises that in order to regain customer trust after a service failure, a service recovery strategy has to be carefully and properly managed, or it could cause the customer to be more disappointed and dissatisfied. If trust exists between the customer and the business, it will be easier for the business to nurture interactive relationships (Utami, 2015:640), which can be reinforced when exchange parties communicate in a manner that shows their attention to others' needs and benefits (Mohd-Any *et al*., 2019:667).

A violation of trust can damage the customer-service provider relationship (Bachnik & Nowacki, 2018:1). Thus, trust is a critical component for successful long-term business-customer relationships, as the customer's trust affects the intention of his/her future behaviour (Dimyati & Subagio, 2018:711). According to Da Rosa Pulga *et al*. (2019:501), managers who desire to restore trust following a service failure could implement actions that are aimed at rebuilding or strengthening the customer-business relationship. These actions may include virtual social interactions between the exchange parties such as sending an e-mail, or they could include physical social interactions such as a handshake. Customers who trust the business are more likely to engage in future transactions and maintain a relationship with the business (Alves & Mainardes, 2017:1163). Hasan *et al*. (2014:141) emphasise that high levels of trust will permit customers to make confident predictions about the service provider's forthcoming transactions, thus influencing customers' loyalty and attitudes. According to Huang and Kwiatkowska (2017:3769), trust is a dynamic concept that changes with time, based on events and previous experiences. It arises from integrity and certainty, whereby mutual trust yields positive behavioural intentions towards the other party (Moreira & Silva, 2015:256). Moreover, trust is built on the partners' mutual self-assurance of dependability, integrity, and performance (Ali *et al*., 2017:357). Trust is inherently a relationship-based concept and its existence has an influence on individual dyadic relationships and more impersonal (institution and system) exchange relationships (Hurley *et al.*, 2014:353). Trust is proven to be one of the most pertinent antecedents of stable and successful relationships (Ali *et al.*, 2017:357). Mirani (2015:468) postulates that to gain trust from an exchange partner within a business relationship, the service provider must continuously meet the expectations of competent performance. Trust is, therefore, a continuous reaction that is developed over time and it heightens customers' beliefs that the service provider will not engage in opportunistic behaviour (Saleem *et al.*, 2017:1139).

Service providers develop strategies to establish trust and confidence among their customers through service offerings. For instance, for an ISP to expose new customers to its services, it allows them to test the quality of its services, a free one-month trial package can be offered to the customer (Thaichon & Quach, 2015:298). Service providers should aim to deliver services as promised and develop effective methods for providing reliable service experiences. This implies that the service provider must be able to promptly respond to issues that may arise in the service delivery, demonstrating professionalism when handling customers, providing and updating correct information about services and tariff structure and other measures that can be used to enhance service quality (Oraedu, 2019:166). According to Matikiti, Mpinganjira *et al.* (2019:103), businesses should encourage employees to develop personalised and genuine one-on-one relationships with customers and perform what they promised (e.g. calling back a customer who made a complaint). Service providers can use a formal apology as trust recovery strategy. By making an apology, the service provider acknowledges the service failure and emits a psychological signal to the customer in an effort to restore the relationship (Da Rosa Pulga *et al.*, 2019:497).

3.4.1 Defining trust

Trust is a subjective concept. It has different meanings to different people and it can differ from individual to individual and setting to setting (Singh & Sidhu, 2017:110). Literature review on marketing reveals that trust is a multifaceted construct that has been defined over time (as indicated in Table 3-4) in different ways (Sharma & Jain, 2019:59).

Table 3-4: Definitions of trust

Source	Definition
Schurr and Ozanne (1985:940)	Trust entails the confidence that an exchange party is reliable in delivering promises made and fulfilling its obligations in an exchange relationship.
Anderson and Narus (1990:45)	Trust refers to a partner's belief that the other partner will execute actions leading to positive results and in the same manner does not initiate unpredicted actions that would lead to negative outcomes.
Crosby *et al.* (1990:70)	Trust refers to the customer's confidence that a salesperson can be relied on to perform actions that serve the customer's long-term interest.

Table 3-4: Definitions of trust (continues)

Source	Definition
Morgan and Hunt (1994:23)	Trust is the willingness of one party to depend on another party in whom one has confidence within a transaction between the parties.
Mayer *et al*. (1995:712)	Trust is the willingness of an exchange party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the belief that the trustee will do a certain action essential to the trustor, regardless of the capability to monitor or control the other party.
Sirdeshmukh *et al*. (2002:17)	Trust refers to the customer's expectation that the service provider will be reliable in delivering its promises.
Upamannyu *et al*. (2015:4)	Trust is the willingness to depend on another exchange party in situations involving risk.

Considering the definitions from Table 3-4, the following noticeable generic elements of trust have been identified.

- **Confidence**

  According to Wirtz and Lovelock (2018:222), it is vital for the service provider to create confidence in its experience, credentials, and employee skills. Influencing customer confidence will assist in creating and retaining customers (Utami, 2015:649). Businesses that can reliably provide excellent quality products or services are likely able to build successful relationships to strengthen customer confidence (Hulu *et al*., 2018:56). As customers become acquainted with the product, gain more knowledge and information about a product, they are more likely to exhibit confidence in their purchase decision-making of the respective product (Soesilo *et al*., 2020:534). According to Shayaa *et al*. (2018:2), when a business has a clear understanding of customer confidence, it can gain the ability to formulate strategies that align with the existing customer environment.

- **Reliability**

  Reliability (or dependability) is primarily concerned with services and requires the existence of trustworthiness between customers and employees (Haverila *et al*., 2020:305). Reliability relates to the ability of the service provider to execute the promised service dependably and accurately (Zeithaml *et al*., 2018:89). Moreover, it indicates that businesses aim to fulfil promises and pay attention to the results (Pakurár *et al*., 2019:5). Al-Azzam (2015:47) posit that reliability is based on handling issues concerning customer service, performing the services right from the beginning, delivering the services on time, and maintaining error-free records. Thus, reliability is normally the primary concern of service customers (Zeithaml *et al*., 2018:262). The willingness to rely or depend on another exchange party emanates from an understanding of the other party, based on past experiences (Upamannyu *et al*., 2015:4).

- **Promise fulfilment**

  Customers want to be served by service providers that can keep their promises, especially promises about the service outcome and main service attributes (Zeithaml *et al*., 2018:90). Fulfilling promises is similarly important as a means of attaining customer satisfaction and retention of the customer base (Dash & Rajshekhar, 2013:2). Al-Hersh *et al*. (2014:80) argue that it is inadequate just to make promises but rather crucial to execute those promises. Promises can be used by the business to attract and build a relationship with customers, however, if promises are not fulfilled, it becomes impossible to maintain and further develop the relationship between the two exchange partners (Trif, 2013:112). According to Wilson *et al*. (2016:98), promises made by a business – through media advertising, employees and alternative communications – might heighten customers' expectations, which form the standards against which customers evaluate service quality. If the service provider does not fulfil its promises, it leads to customer disappointment (Wirtz & Lovelock, 2018:222).

- **Actions leading to positive results**

  This relates to the magnitude to which a customer believes that the service provider has intentions and motives which would create positive results towards him/her and would also benefit him/her (Singh *et al*., 2017:240). The trustor believes in the trustee's abilities to execute certain actions (Callebert *et al*., 2016:4). Under circumstances where the trustor is uncertain or cannot confirm the outcomes of the trustee's actions, he/she can establish and evaluate expectations concerning these outcomes (Ahmed *et al*., 2018:606).

From the definitions (provided in Table 3-4) and generic elements discussed above, the following definition of trust has been formulated for the purpose of this study:

Trust is the customer's confidence that the mobile ISP is reliable (and dependable) and will execute actions leading to positive results that will fulfil the promises made to him/her during the exchange relationship.

3.4.2 Trust versus trustworthiness

Trust and trustworthiness are two distinct concepts (Kodish, 2017:38). Trust is an element of the relationship between exchange parties, whereas trustworthiness is an element of the individuals involved in the exchange (Roy *et al*., 2011:99). Moreover, whereas trust is concerned with the belief one holds about the service provider, trustworthiness on the contrary is related to the trait or character of the service provider (Yu *et al*., 2015:238). Trustworthiness is an attribute of a potential trustee, thus an entity who can possibly be trusted or not be trusted; whereas trust refers to the confidence held by someone else concerning that trustee (Kharouf *et al*., 2014:362). When customers perceive the service provider as trustworthy, they are more likely to share relevant personal information to ensure the continual development of the relationship (Ponder *et al.*, 2016:78). Trustworthiness develops from previous experiences and exchanges and it is dependable on the trustor's perceptions and cognitive elements by which the trustor understands the trustee. Given this, trustworthiness includes cognitive assessments and attitudinal associations, which develop as a result of exchanges (Rehman *et al.*, 2017:352).

For trust to exist, the trustor should make a judgement that the trustee can meet its obligations and the trustee's trustworthiness forms the foundation for this judgement (Roy *et al.*, 2015:1002). Over time, as a relationship matures, more information becomes known to the parties involved in the relationship, thus providing guidelines on trustworthiness beliefs (Alarcon *et al.*, 2018:1908). According to Saini and Singh (2020:3), a customer's ignorance of the competitors' offerings is a sign of his/her trustworthiness in the service provider. Considering the key differences between trust and trustworthiness, trustworthiness may be directly influenced by the tactics and actions of a trustee, unlike trust (Sekhon *et al.*, 2014:411). Table 3-5 further presents the key differences between trust and trustworthiness.

Table 3-5: Differences between trust and trustworthiness

Differentiator	Trust	Trustworthiness
Beliefs about…	future actions	past behaviours
Held within…	trustor's psychological state	characteristics of the trustee
Affects the relationship by…	reducing risk	inspiring trust and confidence

Source: Adopted from Kharouf *et al.* (2014:362).

From Table 3-5, it is evident that trust and trustworthiness are two different concepts. It can therefore be deduced that trust is based on beliefs about future actions that will be performed between exchange parties whereas for trustworthiness to be formed, it is based on beliefs about previous or past behaviours. According to Huang, Shi *et al.* (2016:752), one's trusting belief is formed based on trustworthiness. Therefore, when a trustor does not know the trustworthiness of the trustee, he/she must form a belief about this and act based on this belief (Reiersen, 2019:4). Based on the aforementioned discussion, it can be argued that, although trust and trustworthiness are two distinct concepts, the concepts are closely related, as the trustor often has to refer to the trustee's trustworthiness in order to develop trust.

Furthermore, the fact that trust is held within the trustor's psychological state reflects that trust is a cognitive reasoning of the trustor who desires to trust the trustee. In other words, every individual (i.e. trustor) makes trust decisions based on his/her subjective evaluation that the other exchange party (i.e. trustee) is trustworthy (Xu *et al.*, 2016:957). Considering this, trust is focused on an individual trustee, thus, it differs between and across relationships (Naber *et al.*, 2018:63). On the other hand, trustworthiness, which is held with the characteristics of the trustee, implies that there are specific attributes within the trustee that signifies trustworthiness. Druckman *et al*. (2019:146) suggest that these characteristics can be the trustee's skills and competencies, the trustee's willingness to treat the trustor in a good manner and the trustee's honesty, fairness and pledge to ethical values.

As shown in Table 3-5, trust can affect the relationship by reducing risk. The risk element in trust is generally related to the decision made. Consequently, the risk emanates from the desire and the willingness of the exchange partners involved to act accordingly (Heri, 2017:40). On the other hand, trustworthiness affects the relationship by inspiring trust and confidence, which implies that trustworthiness is a prerequisite for creating trust and confidence in the trustee. According to Heyns and Rothmann (2015:3), the perceived trustworthiness influences the level of risk that a trustor is willing to take within a certain relationship.

The review of the above literature indicates the differences between the concepts of trust and trustworthiness. Since this study focuses on the concept of trust, it is important to explore the concept further by examining the dimensions of trust.

3.4.3 Dimensions of trust

Trust is vital to every successful social exchange relationship (Fatma & Rahman, 2017:138). The distinct dimensions of trust include credibility trust and benevolence trust (Das, 2016:715; Ganesan, 1994:3). Considering that trust necessitates the evaluation of the other exchange party's credibility and benevolence, one exchange party must possess information regarding the other exchange party's past behaviour and promises (Doney & Cannon, 1997:37).

Credibility trust refers to the buyer's confidence in the seller's expertise to execute the task(s) effectively (Das, 2016:715). In addition, credibility is the belief that the word or written statement of the business can be depended upon and that promises will be kept (Van Esterik-Plasmeijer & Van Raaij, 2017:99). Aurifeille and Medlin (2009:16) note that credibility can be evaluated by referring to the past. According to Ganesan and Hess (1997:440), credibility is based on the exchange party's intention and capability to keep promises and deals with the exchange party's characteristics such as task-specific skills, dependability in the efficient delivery of goods and services, and predictability in terms of job-related behaviours. Credibility is also associated with contractual requirements; hence, it is expected to develop between any business and customer. However, many businesses claim to be credible, which poses a challenge to customers when attempting to recognise the more credible business (Ha-Brookshire & Bhaduri, 2014:2).

Benevolence trust refers to the buyer's confidence in the positive intentions of the seller (Das, 2016:715). Moreover, Oliveira *et al*. (2017:157) refer to benevolence trust as the business' ability to hold customers' interests before their self-interest and indicates a genuine concern about customers' welfare. Benevolence is noticeable when the service provider is responsive to and has empathy for customers' needs and concerns (Yu *et al*., 2015:240). Benevolence means that the trustee holds a certain degree of attachment to the trustor (Mayer *et al*., 1995:718). Drake and Mehta (2006:1694) further posit that benevolence is affective and arbitrary in nature whereby there is an expectation that the other exchange party desires to perform good actions and only has the best intentions toward the recipient. Consequently, benevolence can lead to the development of an affective attachment to a caring and supportive trustee, nurturing a sense of positive affect (Colquitt *et al*., 2007:911). Benevolence can be evaluated by relying on attributions with the future (Aurifeille & Medlin, 2009:16).

3.4.4 Types of trust

Researchers argued that trust must be conceptualised as a multifaceted, multi-dimensional psychological state that comprises both cognitive and affective elements (Ren *et al*., 2016:468). This implies that trust is cognitive-based and affective-based, as explained below.

- **Cognitive trust**

  Cognitive trust is a customer's trust in the ability and reliability of the service provider (Johnson & Peterson, 2014:522). Thus, literature revealed that cognitive trust emanates from a rational basis to expect reliability and dependability based on the trustees' competence and honesty (Kobayashi *et al*., 2017:802). Gardner *et al*. (2019:351) also assert that cognitive trust emanates from an individual's subjective evaluation of the likelihood that a trustee will perform an act to benefit him/her.

  To establish a certain degree of cognitive trust, it is important to accumulate some knowledge about the exchange partner (Trif, 2013:113). Accumulated knowledge permits an exchange partner to make assumptions that have some degree of certainty about the possibility that the other exchange partner will meet its obligations. Through increasing the degree of cognitive trust, businesses can develop more relationships and thus increase customers' loyalty to the business (Hanzaee & Norouzi, 2012:5001). Within a business environment, cognitive trust functions as the basis for exchange in the absence of a complete agreement based on the belief that exchange partners will not behave opportunistically because it is not in their interests to do so (Sekhon *et al*., 2014:412). Furthermore, Johnson and Peterson (2014:522) note that cognitive trust is the foundation for the development of affective trust, which is emotion-based and emerges from interpersonal liking.

- **Affective trust**

  According to King and Wei (2018:160), affective trust is built on cognitive trust and feelings, such as empathy. Considering this, affective trust is perceived by most researchers as an extension of cognitive trust, which is developed as exchange parties form more intimate, personal relationships due to their interactions during exchanges (Franklin & Marshall, 2019:171). Affective trust is a psychological condition that refers to a feeling of security and a durable emotional attachment, including the acceptance of vulnerability based on expectations of socio-emotional benefits (Akrout *et al*., 2016:262). According to Akpan and Etuk (2014:4), affective trust is an emotion-driven type of trust based on direct affective responses on attractiveness, aesthetics, and gestures of benevolence. The attributes of this form of trust are the feelings of security and the strength of the relationship (Ha *et al*., 2016:217). Affective trust is characterised by the prevalence of relational or emotional ties and a long-term orientation (Akrout, 2015:24). Therefore, at the core of affective trust is emotional dependence on an exchange partner. As emotional ties develop, trust in an exchange partner may venture beyond that which is justified by existing knowledge (Ha *et al*., 2016:217). However, the development of affective trust takes more time as it progressively accumulates from the past exchange history (Kobayashi *et al*., 2017:809).

3.4.5 Importance of trust

Trust is a critical aspect in competitive business environments (Sallam, 2016:29). Trust is not only of importance in developing and sustaining long-term relationships, but also acts as an important outcome of relationships (Ali *et al*., 2017:357). The concept of trust is regarded as an important construct within the fields of marketing and relationship marketing (Hapsari *et al*., 2020:53) and its importance is further highlighted below.

- Trust can result in the *commitment to a relationship* whereby an exchange party puts effort in preserving an essential relationship (Dash & Rajshekhar, 2013:3). Committed customers tend to purchase the product or service repeatedly (Ahmed *et al*., 2014:307). In order to develop commitment, the buyer (customer) should believe that the seller (business) does not have any negative intentions. The present and/or past experiences of commitment are believed to be a strong predictor of future intention (Chowdhury, 2012:51). A committed customer will continue patronising the business as a loyal customer and make referrals about the business (Afridi & Haider, 2018:530).

- Customer trust in the business can generate *confidence* in the product or service of the business. Trust is a psychological state that can only happen in specific relationships either when a customer trusts a business, or when he/she has confidence in the business' service quality and product quality (Rahmani-Nejad *et al*., 2014:263). Customers' perceptions of trust give them the confidence to eliminate information search and authentication, thus decreasing the complexity and uncertainty of a relationship (Zhu & Chen, 2012:488). Savila *et al*. (2019:860) suggest that when marketing a product, the business must be able to create a sense of confidence in customers in order to avoid deception.

- The establishment of trust between the customer and the business can make it easy to *improve customer retention* (Utami, 2015:641). Customer retention is highly beneficial to businesses, since it leads to a reduction in marketing costs, given that current customers need less marketing and promotional materials as compared to new customers (Al-Jader & Sentosa, 2015:100). Customer retention goes beyond meeting customer expectations to exceeding his/her expectations, so he/she ultimately becomes an advocate for the product or service (Ibojo, 2015:44). For the business to attain customer retention, it is essential to note that customers tend to judge their purchase experiences in terms of the perceived value that results from the cost of acquiring a product or service and the related benefits of using the product or service (Hanaysha, 2018:2).

- Trust in a business can assist in *enhancing customer loyalty* (Peppers & Rogers, 2017:300). Customer loyalty is beneficial to a business that seeks to be a market leader or aiming for longevity in the market (Myftaraj & Nexhipi, 2014:3). Loyal customers spend more on the business' products and/or services through repurchasing and recommending the business to other customers (Punyatoya, 2019:80). From a marketing perspective, studies indicate that building customer loyalty is cost effective and it contributes to business growth (Rajeswari *et al*., 2017:1042). Customer loyalty is regarded as the cornerstone for businesses as it can sustain and increase sales (Husnain & Akhtar, 2015:2). Therefore, a business needs to focus on some elements of its marketing efforts on developing, maintaining, and improving customer loyalty (Mou *et al*., 2018:1158).

- Trust in the service provider can result in *customer engagement* (Agyei *et al*., 2020:13). Customer engagement requires a certain level of involvement in and participation from him/her (Moliner *et al*., 2018:389). Rather *et al*. (2019:522) argue that customer engagement is different from other relational concepts (such as commitment) in the sense that it is interactive in nature, which therefore highlights the customer's investment in his/her interactions with the brand (or with the service provider). It is both theoretically and practically essential that customer engagement is not treated as an outcome, but instead as a process that results in more measurable outcomes such as customer satisfaction and loyalty (Harrigan *et al*., 2017:600).

- It is well established that building customer trust in the business and its product offerings is an effective way to generate profits and build a strong, reliable customer base (Paliszkiewicz & Klepacki, 2013:1291). Customers form the foundation of the business and without customers, a business has no sales or profits (Marshall & Johnston, 2015:18).

The objective of relationship marketers is to develop long-term relationships with valued customers (Kim & Kim, 2016:41). Establishing customer relationships transpires beyond the marketing function and is a business philosophy that affects the business' activities and processes, employees, customer service and quality (Myftaraj & Nexhipi, 2014:1). Building relationships can be perceived as a way of creating a competitive advantage (Hussain *et al.*, 2014:155). Thus, in business, trust is regarded as one of the most relevant antecedents of stable and cooperative relationships (Kundu & Datta, 2015:27), as customers are less likely to switch to competitors' offerings if they trust the business (Hapsari *et al.*, 2020:50).

In summary, the above discussion highlighted the importance of customers' trust, which are also relevant and applicable to mobile ISPs who can benefit from customers' commitment, confidence, retention, loyalty, and engagement with the business.

As shown in Table 3-1, another outcome or response to satisfaction with service recovery could include customer loyalty. From a service recovery point of view, it should be noted that establishing an effective system for managing customer complaints and service failures could improve overall customer loyalty (Hassan, 2015:67). Subsequently, the next section discusses the concept of loyalty as a customer response following service recovery efforts.

3.5 LOYALTY AS A RESPONSE TO SERVICE RECOVERY

Fair treatment to the customer (after a service failure) does not only result in satisfaction with service recovery but can also induce loyalty (Ateke & Kalu, 2016:19). When a customer repeatedly purchases a product or service from the same provider, it may indicate loyalty (Aslam *et al.*, 2019:8). Although, maintaining customer loyalty poses challenges for businesses (Nguyen *et al.*, 2018:3), customer loyalty is an essential goal for strategic marketing planning and forms the foundation for creating a sustainable competitive advantage (Famiyeh *et al.*, 2018:265). Cunningham (2018:5) recommends that businesses should attempt to deliver a constant level of satisfaction (or even exceed satisfaction levels) so that customers can convert into loyal ones and frequently repurchase from the business. Loyal customers tend to have favourable attitudes towards their service provider (Kosiba *et al.*, 2018:767), which may be exhibited in various ways, such as customers' preference for the business over others, continually repurchasing from the business, or through increasing deals with the business in the future (Zeithaml *et al.*, 1996:34).

Customer loyalty has drawn great attention practitioners and scholars, specifically in marketing (Nguyen-Phuoc *et al*., 2020:97). According to Abu-Alhaija *et al*. (2018:106), various definitions have been adapted by marketing scholars based on different research objectives and contexts. Respectively, some of the definitions of the concept of loyalty are presented in Table 3-6.

Table 3-6: Definitions of loyalty

Source	Definition
Oliver (1999:34)	Loyalty is a deeply held commitment by the customer to repurchase or re-patronise a chosen product or service in the future, thereby resulting in frequent same brand purchasing, regardless of situational influences and marketing pressures having the potential to instigate switching behaviour.
Hellier *et al*. (2003:1764)	Loyalty refers to the extent to which a customer has shown, over recent years, repurchase behaviour of a certain business' service.
Yi and Jeon (2003:231)	Loyalty is the repurchase of specific products or services during a particular period of time.
McCain *et al*. (2005:466)	Loyalty is defined as a repurchase behaviour which results from positive attitudes or as a frequent purchase behaviour emanating from a psychological decision-making and evaluative process.
Bose and Rao (2011:545)	Loyalty refers to the customer's commitment to be involved in exchanges with a specific business, which is exhibited in the repurchase of goods and services of that business.
Khan (2013:183)	Loyalty is the customer's willingness and action to prefer a particular business when making a purchase.
Ansari and Riasi (2016:18)	Loyalty refers to the deliberate behavioural response developed with the passage of time by a decision maker in preference of a specific brand.

Considering the definitions from Table 3-6, the following noticeable generic elements of loyalty have been identified.

- **Commitment**

  Commitment is vital in determining the relationship between the service provider and the customer (Curth *et al*., 2014:147). Customers who are highly committed to a certain service provider will frequently purchase from it (Luca & Ciobanu, 2016:347). Further, customers committed to certain products or services are willing to be associated with the respective product or service and they will even highly recommend it to other people above other competing products or services (Olotewo, 2017:28). When customer commitment has been attained, it has the potential to affect customer's perceptions of subsequent experiences (Keiningham *et al*., 2017:152). Customer commitment can result in a sustainable competitive advantage for the business, as it offers cost reduction, increased profits, positive WOM, and the prospect of sales at a premium price (Izogo, 2017:23).

- **Preference**

  Preference entails the customer's decision to select a certain business over other businesses with respect to repurchase and retention (Srivastava & Rai, 2018:213). Loyal customers seem to prefer purchasing specific products or services, even when the choices are comparatively the same. They are prepared to purchase products that they are satisfied with, primarily based on the quality and performance of the product or service (Jani *et al*., 2017:47). The customer's preference of a specific product (or a business) can be as a result of pre-purchase stimuli caused by marketing communication activities of the business, or WOM communication, or the culmination of post-purchase assessment of the product's perceived performance in respect of customers' expectations (Amoako *et al*., 2017:986).

- **Repurchase**

  Repurchase is the customer's actual behaviour, which results in the buying of a similar product or service on more than one occasion (Ibzan *et al*., 2016:97). Customers' perceived degree of satisfaction influences their decisions to repurchase a particular product or service (Filieri *et al*., 2017:631). Customers' repurchases form part of the business' objectives to develop sustainable financial benefits (Ismoyo *et al*., 2017:38) as customers' repurchases are the main drivers of a business' profitability (Pitaloka & Gumanti, 2019:197). If customers fail to repurchase the business' products or services, the sales and profits will decrease, which will negatively affect the entire business' performance (Ibojo, 2015:42).

From the definitions (provided in Table 3-6) and generic elements discussed above, the following definition of loyalty has been formulated for the purpose of this study:

Loyalty is the customer's commitment, combined with the preference over competing alternatives, to repurchase services from a particular mobile ISP.

According to Du Plessis *et al*. (2012:547), customer loyalty can be studied from two viewpoints, namely customers' attitudes (referred to as attitudinal loyalty) and customers' behaviours (referred to as behavioural loyalty). The justification underlying most of the attitudinal measures is that, even though behavioural measures of loyalty may provide an effective prediction of the customer's consequent behaviour, they are unable to provide an understanding of the aspects underlying (i.e. causing) the development and change of behavioural loyalty (Jacoby & Chestnut, 1978:47). If the service provider can correctly identify the attitudinal and behavioural discrepancies among customer groups, it can easily use this information to acquire customers and develop suitable customer loyalty strategies (Yaqub & Halim, 2018:22). With efforts to investigate the identified types of loyalty, the subsequent section commences with a discussion of the attitudinal aspect of customer loyalty.

3.5.1 Attitudinal loyalty

Saini and Singh (2020:3) encourage businesses to develop attitudinal loyalty to engender the feeling of satisfaction, trust, commitment, and reciprocity in customers with the aim of building their patronage preferences. Attitudinal loyalty refers to customers' positive feelings towards the product or service they use and it involves customers' efforts to encourage other individuals to use the recommended product or service (Kumari & Patyal, 2017:116).

Serra-Cantallops *et al*. (2018:145) further describe attitudinal loyalty as a psychological condition that customers may attain due to the relationship that exists between them and the business. Attitudinal loyalty exhibits customer bonding with a business, which practically displays their frequent repurchase patterns (Saini & Singh, 2020:3).

Customers' preferences can determine attitudinal loyalty for the business above the business' competitors (Palamidovska-Sterjadovska & Ciunova-Shuleska, 2017:201). Hence, attitudinal loyalty can assist the business in creating an exit barrier for the customer (Kumari & Patyal, 2017:116). Even though attitudinal loyalty may not guarantee that customers will buy the product or service themselves, WOM communication might assist in improving the business' image to other people (Cheng, 2011:150). However, this may not directly translate into profit, but will indirectly form a positive outcome.

Attitudinal loyalty can be summarised as the customer's price tolerance (Diaz *et al*., 2017:206; Huang *et al*., 2019:1452), the customer's preference (Jones & Taylor, 2012:63), and the customer's WOM communication (Cheng, 2011:150; Mubarik *et al*., 2016:47).

- **Price tolerance** refers to the maximum price increase that a loyal customer is prepared to pay or tolerate before switching to an alternative provider (Anderson, 1996:265). Customers have the propensity to pay more for products if they perceive to receive some benefits in turn (Hwang *et al*., 2016:355). According to Pandey *et al*. (2019:5), when customers are more loyal, the more it is expected for them to tolerate higher prices for the selected choice.

- **Customer preference** is the degree to which a customer favours a selected service and service provider, as compared to the service provided by other service providers in his/her consideration set (Hellier *et al*., 2003:1764). Conducting research on customers' preferences will provide marketers with information relating to customers' needs and wants that can be used to personalise service offerings (Lamb *et al*., 2018:95).

- **WOM** entails people communicating about products or services instead of using business advertisements. This communication can be mutual conversations or individualised advice or recommendations (Shirkhodaie & Rastgoo-deylami, 2016:20). Thus, WOM does not include any formal communication from the business to the customer, but is customer-generated content that cannot be regulated by the business (Hung & Cao, 2020:157).

With the view to minimise risk and uncertainty in the purchasing process, customers normally seek opinions or recommendations from other customers to assess alternatives available (Bayazit *et al*., 2017:25). Thus, WOM is an important source of information, which can change customers' attitudes and behaviours towards products, services, and service providers (Chu & Kim, 2018:3). WOM is also regarded as a credible source of information, since the communicator of WOM is independent from the service provider's influence and does not gain any benefits by providing positive information, but he/she still advocates for the service (Manohar *et al*., 2019:407). This is mainly because customers trust the information from other customers based on their personal experiences and not by the service provider (Shaheen *et al*., 2020:142). For instance, when a customer's communication is negative in nature, due to a service failure, other customers can consider the information as relatively trustworthy (Jan *et al*., 2018:51). Undeniably, from the ongoing discussion, WOM can affect both existing and potential customers' attitudes and behaviours towards the business and its products or services. Considering this, it is expected that WOM can also affect mobile ISPs' customers in the same manner. Hence, this study further investigates the concept of WOM.

3.5.1.1 Word-of-mouth (WOM)

It has been established that WOM is the most effective form of communication in persuading other or prospective customers to also use or buy a business' products or services (Cakir & Cetin, 2013:173). When customers purchase a new product, they often depend on recommendations obtained through WOM, because it is fast, cooperative and provides true information (Zarei & Kazemi, 2014:2). However, with the advancement in technology and information, increasingly more WOM communication is distributed via online mediums, known as eWOM (Gunawan *et al*., 2016:20). eWOM has subsumed these more traditional ways of communication and developed to be a frequent method of communication and in some cases, it has turned out to be a preferable method of communication (Arumugam & Omar, 2016:1865). According to Husnain *et al*. (2016:2), the internet acts as a "conversations catalyst", effectively simplifying customer interconnectivity. The internet has transformed communication technology, permitting customers to talk about and exchange consumption-related information with each other in a fast and convenient way (Kim *et al*., 2015:263). Undeniably, this development transformed the traditional way in which people communicate (Lerrthaitrakul & Panjakajornsak, 2014:142).

Developments in electronic communication technology have resulted in the emergence of eWOM, which permits individuals to share their views through electronic communication channels such as e-mails, blogs, networks, chat rooms, online reviews, and websites with user-generated information. The aforementioned channels have developed to be powerful tools for promotion and communication purposes (Ishida *et al*., 2016:1; Sharma *et al*., 2011:45). The marketing environment has witnessed substantial growth in customer-generated content, owing to the easy access and rapid dispersal of information via the internet (Mahapatra & Mishra, 2017:594). Technological flexibility enables eWOM content to be conveyed not only through textual information, but also by means of rich multimedia such as images, videos, and animations (Mishra & Satish, 2016:224).

Customers participate in eWOM dispersal for various reasons, including to provide first-hand reviews, assist fellow customers, discuss the merits and demerits of a product, and share information (Mishra & Satish, 2016:231). Thus, seekers of eWOM are concerned with reducing risk, securing lesser prices and effortlessly accessing information before making the decision to buy (Selvi & Thomson, 2016:117). The customer's reviews – posted and shared through social network sites – are a fast and informal way of sharing views and experiences about products or services with other existing and potential customers who do not necessarily have to be in the same geographical location (Gafni & Golan, 2016:45). Customers who write testimonials, positive reviews or tell others about their experiences can be given rewards or points (Kussusanti *et al*., 2019:133). Positive reviews are written by highly satisfied customers (e.g. customers who want to praise employees for providing excellent services), whereas negative reviews are written by highly disappointed customers (e.g. customers who describe unsatisfactory experiences to warn other customers) (Zhang & Yang, 2019:1609).

The negative reviews function as unfavourable eWOM and have a negative impact on the future purchasing behaviour of customers (Xu & Li, 2016:30) as individuals are more likely to value and trust eWOM (Pasternak *et al*., 2017:415). For instance, one customer who terminates his/her mobile service subscription with a telecommunication provider can cause a cross-customer spill over effect in churn, as dissatisfied and churned subscribers will possibly share bad publicity in the form of negative comments via their social network platforms about the provider (Nadarajan *et al*., 2017:389).

For managers, the main consideration for harnessing and leveraging eWOM should be the maintenance of credibility. Ensuring eWOM credibility provides marketers with the opportunity to leverage customer-to-customer communications for commercial gain (Moran & Muzellec, 2017:157). Credibility is the authenticity of message content from a customer's perspective (Lin *et al*., 2012:11). Considering the significance of eWOM, businesses pursue ways to manage online customer communications proactively, with the view of manipulating the credibility of online reviews and the potential for eWOM dispersal (Reimer & Benkenstein, 2016:323) as customers tend to trust the eWOM information shared by fellow customers more than they do structured advertisements (Amini & Khan, 2016:8). When a business succeeds in making its customers happy, it can be certain that the customer will recommend its product and services to more customers from his/her family and friends on the appropriate time (Vanisree & Priya, 2014:99). Customers who are satisfied with a service recovery experience will likely spread positive eWOM more frequently and possibly leading to habitual behaviour (Liu *et al*., 2019:384).

However, among South African mobile ISPs, the willingness for customers to recommend – as indicated by the net promoter score (NPS) – has declined. The NPS average across the industry declined by 17.5% between 2017 and 2018 (Consulta, 2019). The NPS measures the magnitude to which a customer would recommend a certain business to family, friends or colleagues (Raassens & Haans, 2017:322). Recommendations made by customers can result in the business' overall growth in profit as it decreases the cost of attracting and retaining customers (Gaurav, 2016:2).

3.5.1.2 Defining eWOM

As a form of communication, eWOM includes the generation of brand-related information, passive consumption of information and further dissemination or passing along the received information (Pasternak *et al*., 2017:416). Nadarajan *et al*. (2017:388) further state that a customer engages in eWOM to share experiences concerning a product or a service which can possibly recommend or discourage other customers from purchasing the same product or service and provides positive reviews in support of the product or service, or negative reviews against it. In respect of the preceding discussion, it is imperative to explain and clarify the meaning of the eWOM concept as further presented in Table 3-7.

Table 3-7: Definitions of eWOM

Source	Definition
Hennig-Thurau *et al*. (2004:39)	eWOM includes any positive or negative comments made by existing or former customers about a product, service or business, which is made available to other people and institutions through the internet.
Litvin *et al*. (2008:461)	eWOM is the informal communications intended for customers by means of web-based technology associated with the usage or characteristics of specific goods and services, or their sellers.
Park *et al*. (2011:74)	eWOM is the expansion of traditional or offline WOM to the internet.
Lamba and Aggarwal (2014:237)	eWOM refers to the effect of various customers' comments about a product or a brand name of a business via the internet.

Table 3-7: Definitions of eWOM (continues)

Source	Definition
Bandyopadhyay (2016:10)	eWOM includes online reviews about goods and services generated by internet users.
Suki *et al*. (2016:191)	eWOM is related to online information sharing (i.e. advice and recommendation) in the form of non-commercial messages expressed between customers about their experiences in buying products or services.
Chiosa and Anastasiei (2017:158)	eWOM is customer-generated information and views concerning products and brands shared on the internet (via social media, online communities etc.).
Chu and Kim (2018:2)	eWOM is customer-to-customer information sharing through online platforms or new technologies (e.g. mobile communication) that is marketing-related.

Considering the definitions from Table 3-7, the following noticeable generic elements of eWOM have been identified.

- **Customer comments or reviews**

  Customer reviews capture and show customer experiences, judgements and views (Tran & Strutton, 2020:3). Customer reviews through social networks provide a relatively fast and informal way for customers to share opinions and experiences associated with products or services with fellow customers and prospective customers. These customers do not necessarily have to be physically together with fellow customers and prospective customers when sharing customer reviews (Gafni & Golan, 2016:45). With online customer reviews through websites, social media and blogs to express positive or negative feedback on service experiences, it enables the service provider to acquire insights into which service aspects they provide are satisfying or dissatisfying to the customer (Hsieh *et al*., 2019:89). Positive customer reviews signify customer satisfaction while negative reviews signify customer dissatisfaction (Xu, 2018:1663). Negative reviews can negatively influence the customer by reducing his/her purchasing intentions of the goods or services sold by the business (Lee, 2017:2230).

- **Regarding the product, service, brand, or business**

  An online review about a service, product, or brand is generated by the customer who has previously used a product or experienced the service (Güngör & Özgen, 2020:208). From the customer's perspective, the reviews from other customers are a credible source for conveniently assessing the desired products and services (Niu & Fan, 2018:79) as well as information about the brand (Beneke *et al*., 2016:174). It is important for businesses to pay attention to and be conscious of online reviews about their products or services (Matute *et al*., 2016:1103). When customers post recommendations and reviews about a product or service on their social networking sites, they try to persuade friends, colleagues, or prospective customers to see their views and in turn, influence their decision-making (Kudeshia & Kumar, 2017:311). Therefore, if an individual becomes knowledgeable about any negative information concerning a product, he/she will not make the purchase (Shahid *et al*., 2017:3).

- **Online information sharing**

  In addition to customers sharing WOM with their family, friends, or colleagues, they are also progressively sharing eWOM with strangers via different online channels (Lee & An, 2018:1049). The internet has enabled eWOM communication by providing customers with the opportunity to share their views and experiences related to products or services (Selvi & Thomson, 2016:116) and this information can reach a large number of people who are geographically dispersed (Kucukemiroglu & Kara, 2015:4). The benefit of eWOM is that it is accessible to all individuals who can use internet platforms to share their opinions and reviews about products or services with other customers (Huete-Alcocer, 2017:2).

From the definitions (provided in Table 3-7) and generic elements discussed above, the following definition of eWOM has been formulated for the purpose of this study:

eWOM refers to customers' comments or reviews (either positive or negative) concerning a mobile ISP and its product or service offerings that are shared via online platforms.

eWOM channels vary in their abilities and features and people utilise them differently (Gvili & Levy, 2016:1031). According to Lerrthaitrakul and Panjakajornsak (2014:143), eWOM channels can be categorised as (a) one-to-one channel, whereby messages are sent from one individual to another individual, (b) one-to-many channel, whereby messages are sent from one individual to many other individuals, or (c) many-to-many channel, whereby messages are sent from many individuals to many other individuals. Table 3-8 presents the types of eWOM communication channels, their level of interaction and scope of communication.

Table 3-8: eWOM communication channels

Channel type	Level of interaction	Scope of communication
E-mail	Not at the same time	One-to-one & one-to-many
Instant messages	At the same time	One-to-one
Websites, visit the product and other sites	Not at the same time	One-to-many & many-to-many
Chat rooms	At the same time	One-to-many
Blogs and virtual communities	Not at the same time	Many-to-many
Newsgroup (such as Google News)	At the same time	One-to-many & many-to-many

Source: Adopted from Sharifpour, Khan *et al*. (2016:135).

From Table 3-8, it is evident that there are different types of eWOM communication channels that can be used among customers. Further, the identified eWOM channels can be differentiated by the level of interaction between the sender and the receiver, which can be at the same time or not at the same time and the scope of communication can be one-to-one, one-to-many or many-to-many.

3.5.1.3 WOM versus eWOM

While eWOM communication has certain features similar to traditional WOM communication, it varies from traditional WOM in some dimensions (Cheung & Thadani, 2010:330). From a descriptive perspective, John *et al*. (2014:126) define WOM as the oral dissemination of information, particularly recommendations and general information, in an informal one-to-one interactive manner. On the other hand, Hennig-Thurau *et al*. (2004:39) define eWOM as any positive or negative comments made by existing or former customers concerning a product or business, which is made available to many people and institutions through the internet.

With the ease of transmitting information on the internet, eWOM has a faster diffusion effect than WOM (Doma *et al*., 2015:17). Furthermore, eWOM harnesses the unrestricted reach of the internet to share views and experiences to the whole world. In contrast, it is impossible with traditional WOM to attain the same reach (Takhire & Joorshari, 2015:4). According to Rathore and Panwar (2016:33), eWOM has the ability of mediate reach and scalability and high-speed diffusion amongst connected persons. eWOM is more powerful than traditional WOM due to its ability to disperse to more customers quite rapidly (Davis & Khazanchi, 2008:130). Therefore, the use of different electronic technologies, such as online discussion forums, electronic bulletin boards, newsgroups, blogs, review sites and social networking sites, enable the exchange of information among individuals (Cheung & Lee, 2012:219).

WOM communications had geographic constraints and were mostly used by local networks (Al-Azzam, 2016:169). However, with the emergence of the internet age, customers were enabled to provide and receive product or service-related information through electronic platforms, which resulted in the emergence of eWOM (Anastasiei & Dospinescu, 2019:2). With eWOM, customers can effortlessly express their views and experiences related to product or service use through the internet and the information can be spread to many people who are geographically dispersed (Kucukemiroglu & Kara, 2015:4). Accordingly, customers can share ideas, thoughts, communications, products and comments effortlessly and freely with thousands of other customers online (Al-Azzam, 2016:169).

Traditional WOM emanates from a sender who is known by the receiver of the information; hence, the receiver is aware of the sender's credibility and the message sent to him/her. However, with the electronic features of eWOM in most applications, it removes the receiver's capability to judge or evaluate the credibility of the communicator and his/her message (Cheung & Thadani, 2010:331). Moreover, Yang *et al*. (2012:337) state that, unlike traditional WOM, which is spread among existing social groups, eWOM usually happens among people with little or no relationship between the eWOM sender and receiver.

Regardless that eWOM may generate more influence than traditional WOM because of its viral nature, reach and its online existence permitting access to information whenever the user searches the information; it is also significantly less personal as compared to traditional WOM, which may reduce the impact of eWOM (Selvi & Thomson, 2016:118). In other words, WOM involves more personal interaction between the communicator and the listener during a dialogue, as compared to eWOM – which limits such personal interaction. Online product or service reviews present both positive and negative reviews at the same time on the same online platform, unlike traditional offline WOM communications (Weisstein *et al*., 2017:201). Table 3-9 provides a summary of the differences between WOM and eWOM.

Table 3-9: Summary of differences between WOM and eWOM

Criteria	WOM	eWOM
Communication	Spoken Person-to-person Face-to-face	Written Variety of online channels One-to-many
Source	Personal strong ties (family & friends) Similar and credible	Strangers with no prior ties Difficult to rely on similarity and credibility Identity is kept anonymous
Contribution	Individual Slow One-time spoken Not always accessible Limited scope	Collective and detailed Fast Time-independent Always accessible Not geographically limited
Information solicitation	Dependent on known sources and existing source profile	Wider scope for unknown sources and range of source profiles
Motivations for disclosing information	Assistance in making informed decisions	In addition to decision making, opportunities to socialise

Source: Adopted from Tham *et al*. (2013:149) and Yildirim (2011:18).

A review of the above literature has shown how WOM differs from eWOM, indicating that eWOM is easily transmitted and not geographically limited as compared to traditional WOM. Consequently, the importance of eWOM is further discussed in the next section.

3.5.1.4 The importance of eWOM

With the emergence of the internet, the scale and scope of customers' WOM communications have expanded and the marketing power of eWOM has heightened (Sharifpour, Sukati *et al*., 2016:2). Therefore, owing to the ease of access to computers and the increasing use of smartphones, people can access the internet more frequently (Maria *et al*., 2016:1087). The influence and importance of eWOM is broadly acknowledged and businesses are using innovative ways to harness the power of eWOM to create awareness amongst customers (Mishra & Satish, 2016:230). The importance of eWOM (to both the business and customer) are as follow:

- eWOM can assist customers in decreasing searching costs, uncertainty and risks related to the buying of new products (Yang *et al*., 2012:337). In general, customers consider it vital to hear the views of others during (or before) their buying decisions (Park *et al*., 2011:75). Customers provide and seek opinions from the internet in the same way they do offline, thereby influencing the choice of various goods and services (Ishida *et al*., 2016:6). Therefore, customers' choices to buy are influenced by how fellow customers respond online after being exposed to similar eWOM (Hoyer *et al*., 2013:319).

- eWOM can influence customers' purchase intention (positively or negatively), by influencing their purchasing decision either to buy or not to buy (Sa'ait *et al*., 2016:74). Purchase intention can be used as a predictor of the products or services that customers will purchase in their next purchases (Kian *et al*., 2017:209). With a high level of purchase intention, the business will be able to establish profitable relationships with customers. Purchase intention also plays a significant role in encouraging the long-term success of the business, which assists in keeping customers and gaining customer lifetime value (Xiao *et al*., 2019:3).

- eWOM can assist customers in having more interaction with fellow customers and obtaining quicker responses or feedback on product-related information. The internet is a better source for customers to acquire product-related information and consumption-related advice from fellow customers (Park *et al*., 2011:74). Therefore, prior to deciding on which product or service to buy, customers normally search for previous customer reviews, rather than depending only on the product advertisement itself (Sa'ait *et al*., 2016:73).

- eWOM communications can generate brand awareness and inculcate the brand's identity into the customer's mind set (Eze *et al*., 2014:1820). Brand awareness can affect customer decisions; therefore, in order to ensure that a product is included in the consideration set of the prospective customer, the first step for the business is to create brand awareness (Ho *et al*., 2015:351). Furthermore, when customers have more awareness about the brand, they can easily identify and recall the brand in a category of different products or services (Altaf *et al*., 2017:221). On the other hand, customers who perceive the brand to have a strong identity are more likely to support a business and participate in its activities (Lin & Chung, 2019:644).

- eWOM efforts can generate higher customer-based brand equity (Eze *et al*., 2014:1816). High brand equity prompts desirable and favourable associations and customers gain confidence in the product or service quality (Ponnam *et al*., 2015:523). Brand equity is also essential in the purchasing phase as it influences customers' decisions and competes with the competitors' offerings (Gunawardane, 2015:102). Lastly, brand equity can assist customers in understanding the process, gather, and obtain information concerning brands and their respective benefits (Pitaloka & Gumanti, 2019:196).

In addition to the above importance of eWOM, Ismagilova *et al*. (2017:20) also noted the following statistics supporting the use of eWOM communication.

- About 92% of customers read online reviews.
- Approximately 63% of customers are more likely to buy from a website with user reviews.
- With 50 or more reviews per product, it can lead to a 4.6% increase in conversion rates.
- Customer reviews are 12 times more trusted than descriptions provided by the business.
- eWOM communication leads to an average of 18% increase in sales.

To summarise, the above indicates the importance of eWOM. Both customers and mobile ISPs can benefit from eWOM as it can help customers to decrease search, uncertainty, and risks, obtain quick response and information about products or services and brand interpretation. For the business, eWOM can assist in generating brand awareness, brand identity, brand equity and enhance customers' purchase intentions. As previously explained (in the beginning of section 3.5), customer loyalty can also be manifested as behavioural loyalty. Therefore, the next section further elaborates on the concept of behavioural loyalty.

3.5.2 Behavioural loyalty

Behavioural loyalty displays the low-level loyalty of customers. This implies that customers with behavioural loyalty will stay loyal to their service provider if there are no alternatives available or if there are limited product substitutes (Mubarik *et al*., 2016:47). The behavioural aspect of loyalty considers repeat transactions that are performed by customers at a certain time, which may be due to the lack of alternatives, customer behaviour, convenience, and satisfaction (Sharma &

Jain, 2019:59). When there are many substitutes to a product, customers' behaviour becomes more unstable and temporary in nature. According to Cheng (2011:150), behavioural loyalty ensures that customer loyalty can culminate into actual purchase behaviours. Some advantages of behavioural loyalty for a business include the following (Khang, 2015:1):

- It is formed based on actual purchases that are directly associated with performance.
- It is not supplementary, as it is based on customers' behaviour over a certain period of time.

Behavioural loyalty is generally perceived within the context of repurchase intention (Chang & Yeh, 2017:42; Rai & Srivastava, 2012:66), share-of-wallet (Kungumapriya & Malarmathi, 2018:75), and switching intentions (Jones & Taylor, 2007:45).

- **Repurchase intention** is a more favourable behaviour than purchase intention because it indicates the customer's continuance to purchase in the future (Savila *et al*., 2019:861). Setyorini and Nugraha (2016:3) state that repurchase intention occurs when customers have purchased the product or the service before.
- **Share-of-wallet** is the percentage of a customer's total category spending (i.e. size-of-wallet) captured by the business (Jang *et al*., 2016:123). Focusing on share-of-wallet means recognising that all customers have distinct needs and that customers do not perceive or evaluate the value of the business in the same manner (Pride & Ferrell, 2016:17).
- **Switching intention** refers to the customer's decision to stop purchasing services from a service provider (Liu, 2015:78). Switching intention results from the customer's assessment of a product or service after using it. Thus, when customers negatively assess the product or service, they tend to exhibit switching behaviour (Chen & Keng, 2019:169).

Repurchase intention is mainly used as a measure for behavioural loyalty (Keshavarz *et al*., 2019:272). Repurchase intention is practically significant as customers often make more future purchases if they have a positive experience with the initial purchase (Wang *et al*., 2019:22). According to Cui and Niu (2017:34), repurchase intention assists the business in predicting repurchase behaviour as well as maintaining a relationship with customers. Fikri *et al*. (2019:148) note that a business can use repurchase intention to predict sales in various marketing activities, such as handling service management. Understanding the repurchase intention of customers is important, as satisfied customers are more likely to maintain their relationship with their service provider as compared to dissatisfied customers (Adekunle & Ejechi, 2018:796). The service provider can use repurchase intention as an indicator of customers' satisfaction. Considering this, this study specifically addresses repurchase intention as a type of behavioural loyalty.

3.5.2.1 Repurchase intention

A fair service recovery process that compensates for the customer's loss or exceeds the service recovery expectations will positively affect customer repurchase intention (Latif & Lanxia, 2019:12). In a competitive business environment, it is crucial to encourage customer repurchases and avoid switching behaviour to sustain business operations and obtain a competitive advantage (Balla *et al*., 2015:5). In 2006, the amended regulations from the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) instituted mobile number portability in South Africa (Malinga, 2019). Mobile number portability enables the customer to switch from his/her current mobile network service provider to another service provider but still maintain his/her existing mobile phone number (Bojei *et al*., 2018:68). Considering that customers have the ability to port their number following any dissatisfaction with their network service provider (Mathiraj *et al*., 2019:2361), businesses (including mobile ISPs) ultimately seek to maintain their relationship with existing customers and aim to increase their repurchase intentions (Chang *et al*., 2014:48).

Since it is less costly to retain current customers than attracting new customers, the repurchase intention of a customer is crucial for the business (Tho *et al*., 2017:9). A business is at risk of losing future revenue that could be generated through repeat business by the customer when he/she is dissatisfied (Ogonu *et al*., 2019:278). Repurchase intention is regarded a psychological behaviour, as well as one of the key drivers that encourages customers to continue purchasing products or services (Trivedi & Yadav, 2018:428). In order to establish a competitive advantage, service providers must acquire and retain customers (Zhou *et al*., 2015:190). Increasing customer repurchase intention is essential to the business in terms of cost incurred and profitability (Latif & Lanxia, 2019:10). Considering this, it is critical to retain current customers if they develop repeat purchase intention as this affects the business' financial interests (Han *et al*., 2019:538).

Most product offerings have substitutes, which may affect customers' decisions to stay with the related provider based on their satisfaction with the product or service (Sibona *et al*., 2017:1128). Consequently, if customers realise that their current service provider is delivering a higher value than what is offered by other service providers, they might then choose to repurchase the service from the current service provider (De Toni *et al*., 2018:4). Satisfied customers have a higher propensity to return to a business for repurchase, which decreases the business' overall customer acquisition costs (Vijay *et al*., 2017:33). According to Varga *et al*. (2014:233), a repurchase is possible by creating and managing relationships with customers through adapting the business' product offering and by continually delivering value and improving satisfaction. Thus, when seeking to enhance repurchase intention, businesses should concentrate not only on merely repeated buying through various promotional activities but attempt to evoke in customers a commitment and desirable attitude towards their business.

According to Goh *et al*. (2016:994), the probability of a customer to repurchase a certain product depends on the customer's need for it, his/her perceived judgement and opinions of it and of the provider. Further, a customer will be willing to repurchase a similar brand or product if he/she had a good experience, or his/her expectation levels were met. However, when customers complain about a certain product, a proper and positive service recovery will have an impact on their overall satisfaction and future repurchase intention (Kuo *et al*., 2016:175). Satisfied customers develop high levels of repurchase intention, whereas dissatisfied customers will avoid buying again from the same business (Pee *et al*., 2018:231). According to Ding *et al*. (2016:65), when a service provider shows the ability to perform a service recovery in a manner that builds customer trust following a service failure, it increases the customer's likelihood to repurchase.

3.5.2.2 Defining repurchase intention

Repurchase intention is almost similar to purchase intention. The only difference is that repurchase intention entails a customer's choice for a specific product or service only after having previously used or purchased the product or service (Harun *et al*., 2020:15). In contrary, purchase intention is defined as the customer's preference to purchase a specific product of a particular brand (Shahid *et al*., 2017:2). Purchase intention refers to the customer's willingness to engage in a transaction with a business (Vaishnavee & Nandagopal, 2018:125). Having differentiated purchase intention from repurchase intention, it is equally important to define repurchase intention further, as it forms part of the focus of this study. According to Balla *et al*. (2015:6) and as indicated in Table 3-10, there are various definitions in literature for repurchase intention.

Table 3-10: Definitions of repurchase intention

Source	Definition
Hellier *et al*. (2003:1764)	Repurchase intention signifies an individual's decision to buy a specific product or service from the same business again, taking his or her present situation and circumstances into consideration.
Kuo *et al*. (2016:175)	Repurchase intention is the customer's act of consciousness that he/she is willing to re-use the same product or service.
Goh *et al*. (2016:994)	Repurchase intention occurs when customers initiate the effort to rebuy the same brand, product, or service.
Oman *et al*. (2016:26)	Repurchase intention refers to the probability that the customer will repeatedly use a service offered by a service provider in the future.
Yulisetiarini *et al*. (2017:216)	Repurchase intention refers to the likelihood that a customer will repeat his/her previous purchasing behaviour because of his/her preference towards the product.
Rambocas and Ramsubhag (2018:44)	Repurchase intention signals continuity in terms of a customer's plan to purchase the same product or service from the same supplier.
Trivedi and Yadav (2018:428)	Repurchase intention refers to the choice made by customers to substantiate to buy a good or service, thus overlooking other alternatives.

Considering the definitions from Table 3-10, the following noticeable generic elements of repurchase intention have been identified.

- **Rebuy**

  A customer's willingness to rebuy a similar product depends on his/her experience, whether expectation levels were met (Goh *et al*., 2016:994). Hence, the customer will review his/her experience with the product or service during the time of use (Hussain, 2017:126). The business expects customers to move beyond once-off purchases and rather frequently repeat their purchases (Pitaloka & Gumanti, 2019:196). Every business needs repeat customers to foster and to increase profit (Rana *et al*., 2017:1). Previous experiences influence what customers choose to select the similar service provider and purchase the very same service (Ariffin *et al*., 2016:393).

- **Same brand, product, or service**

  When a customer needs to purchase a product and he/she already has the name of the brand in his/her mind, it implies that the customer is highly conscious about that specific brand (Shahid *et al*., 2017:1). Customers will reduce the probability of undesirable consumption outcomes when specific brands are purchased and they often require less time to search for new brands (Rambocas & Ramsubhag, 2018:45). Repurchase intention also reflects the customer's intention to buy a similar product or service they have purchased before (Heriyati & Budharani, 2018:12). The customer's desire to repurchase a product or service occurs after making an overall judgement of the product or the service (Lau *et al*., 2019:249).

- **Preference**

  Customers often make preferences when making a comparison of various alternatives and choices available (Mumbua *et al*., 2017:316). Preferences allow the customer to rank goods or services based on the level of usefulness they provide (Opele *et al*., 2018:1109). A business must realise the customers' preference in order to create long-term relationships with them (Jani *et al*., 2017:47). When the preference for the business is established, it tends to endure, be unaffected and more importantly, the preference cannot be easily changed (Yu *et al*., 2018:2).

From the definitions (provided in Table 3-10) and generic elements discussed above, the following definition of repurchase intention has been formulated for the purpose of this study:

Repurchase intention refers to the customer's preference to rebuy mobile internet services from the same mobile ISP.

According to Nwokorie (2016:2), the assessment of past service encounters tends to impact customers' attitudes and intentions when preparing for future service encounters, which makes the theory of planned behaviour the most applicable theory to predict customers' behavioural intentions in a service context (Ajzen, 2011:1115). The following section, subsequently, examines the theory of planned behaviour and repurchase intention.

3.5.2.3 Theory of planned behaviour and repurchase intention

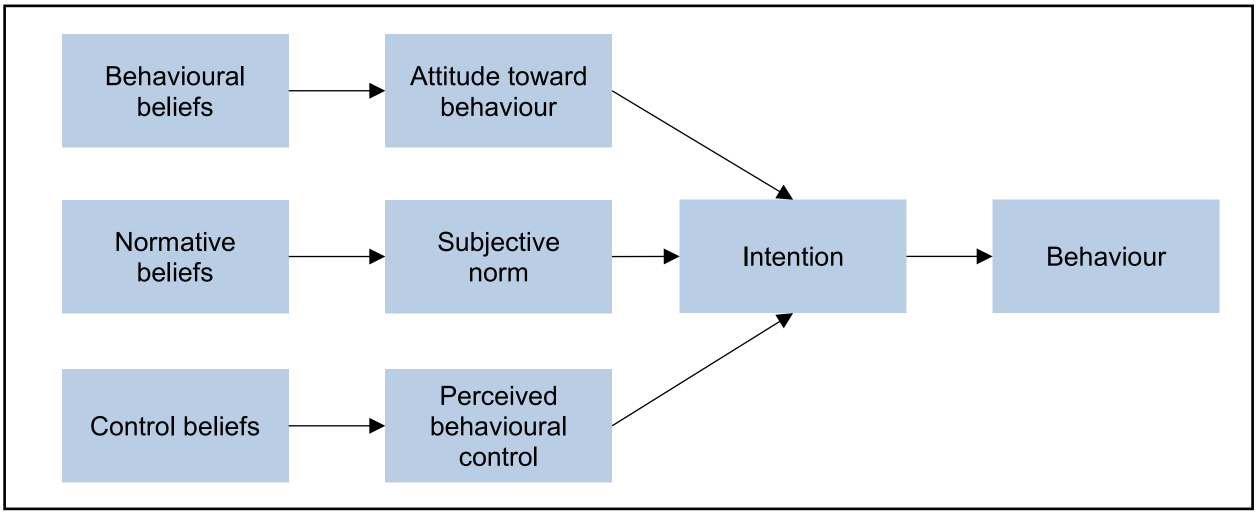
Ajzen (1991) presented the theory of planned behaviour in an effort to provide a better theoretical framework of customers' behaviour, by addressing limitations of the theory of reasoned action of incomplete volitional behaviour (Denan *et al*., 2015:343). The theory of planned behaviour is a well-recognised psychological model for explaining individual decision-making (Thorhauge *et al*., 2016:95). The theory was proposed to explain all individual behaviours over which one can exercise self-control (Semungus *et al*., 2017:9).

A central aspect of the theory of planned behaviour is determined by an individual's intention to conduct a behaviour (Eri *et al*., 2011:129). Thus, as highlighted by Kuo *et al*. (2016:175) (in Table 3-10) the intention of a customer to repurchase a product or service (i.e. repurchase intention) forms part of the theory of planned behaviour. Customers' intention to repurchase a product or service from a specific business will likely result in their actual repurchase of the product or service (Han *et al*., 2019:538).

Intentions are believed to capture the motivational aspects that influence behaviour; they are signs of how hard individuals are prepared to try, or how much of an effort they are planning to exert to perform the behaviour. Generally, the stronger the intention to be involved in a certain behaviour, the more probable should its performance be (Ajzen, 1991:181). If an individual expects that a specific behaviour will bear favourable results, it is more probable that he/she will perform that respective behaviour (King *et al*., 2008:190).

As illustrated in Figure 3-1, the theory of planned behaviour involves attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control as three aspects appropriate for predicting intention and actual behaviour (Huang & Chen, 2015:1686).

Figure 3-1: Theory of planned behaviour



Source: Adopted from Ajzen (1991:182).

In the theory of planned behaviour, attitude toward the behaviour is shaped by an individual's beliefs about a certain behaviour which consequently forms his/her intention to perform the behaviour (Sun, 2019:261). Attitudes towards the behaviour indicate the degree to which the behaviour is positively or negatively assessed (Vamvaka *et al*., 2020:3). Customers would have positive attitudes if the behaviour performed results in positive consequences. In contrast, customers will have negative attitudes if the behaviour performed results in negative consequences (Nurul, 2015:3). Attitudes are learnt. Thus, it can be concluded that as an individual possess positive attitudes, the more he/she strongly develops a certain behaviour and ultimately be resistant to changes (Pande & Soodan, 2015:285).

Subjective norms refer to perceptions of an individual about other people's perceptions and beliefs on the suggested behaviour (Yean *et al*., 2015:144). Ham *et al*. (2015:739) posit that subjective norms are influenced by the perceived social pressure from others for a customer to behave in a particular manner and his/her motivation to act accordingly with those people's opinions. According to Sanne and Wiese (2018:4), subjective norms are developed from normative beliefs and the motivation to conform to these expectations. Normative beliefs entail an individual's beliefs that are considered to be acceptable to particular individuals or groups and control if behaving in a certain manner is appropriate (Fang *et al*., 2017:2).

Perceived behavioural control is an individual's belief of how easy or difficult it would be to perform a behaviour (Moons & De Pelsmacker, 2015:6215). It is generally anticipated that the more positive the attitude and subjective norm about a behaviour and the more the perceived behavioural control, the stronger an individual will intend to conduct the behaviour (Lin & Chen, 2011:67). A high degree of perceived behavioural control should increase an individual's intention to perform a behaviour and a low degree of perceived behavioural control should reduce the motivation to perform the behaviour (Barua, 2013:57). It is expected for an individual to face few obstacles and to possess a stronger perceived behavioural control when he/she perceives to own more capacities, resources, and opportunities when performing certain actions (Zhang, 2018:77). It is essential to highlight that perceived behavioural control may not always match with the actual behavioural control because an individual can perceive specific behaviour to be more or less reasonable than it actually is (Milković & Štambuk, 2015:190).

In summary, the theory of planned behaviour entails that an individual's decision-making process is influenced by his/her assessment of the likely outcomes of a specific behaviour, the expectation of references and the possible resources or impediments associated with that behaviour (Stranieri *et al*., 2016:209). Beyond the factors that constitute the theory of planned behaviour (as shown in Figure 3-1), the theory acknowledges the crucial role of other variables, such as demographic characteristics, personality traits, attitudes and life values, intelligence and feelings. These variables are regarded as background factors and they are expected to affect the customer's intentions and behaviour only indirectly by their effects on behavioural, normative and control beliefs (Ajzen, 2015:126).

3.5.2.4 The importance of repurchase intention

In marketing, researchers have emphasised the importance of repurchase intention. Businesses are concerned about understanding how customers make their purchase decisions and what motivates them to continue repurchasing (Ali, 2016:262). Due to the financial contribution of repurchase intention to the business, several studies have stressed its importance (Han *et al*., 2019:538; Latif & Lanxia, 2019:10). Arguably, the importance of repurchase intention is mainly evident from existing literature, which explains that more costs are related to attracting customers as compared to the costs related to the retaining of existing customers. Expanding on the importance of repurchase intention, the following aspects were further identified from the literature:

- Repeat purchases can result in increased customer lifetime value (Vigolo & Ugolini, 2016:420). Customer lifetime value is the total revenues earned from a customer – over the lifetime of transactions, after subtracting the overall cost of attracting, selling and servicing the customer, taking into consideration the time value of money (Safari, 2015:168). Calculating customer lifetime value for a group of customers can enable the business to serve each group differently based on their value instead of serving all customers in the same manner (Safari *et al*., 2016:449).

- Repurchase intention can be used as an indicator of customer satisfaction (Dubihlela & Chauke, 2016:373). It is difficult for a business to survive without satisfying the customers' needs (Ibojo, 2015:44). Highly satisfied customers have a probability of making positive comments concerning the business and its products and are, therefore, less likely to make negative comments (Davis & Farrell, 2016:61). Satisfied customers may communicate their satisfaction to others, which orally advertises the business (Estanesti & Abad, 2015:535). Lastly, a satisfied customer has more probability of returning to the same service provider as compared to a dissatisfied customer (Maggon & Chaudhry, 2018:59).

- Repurchases can result in a decrease in costs and a subsequent increase in market share (Oman *et al.*, 2016:27). Repurchases minimise the costs associated with attracting new customers (Hussain, 2017:126). An increase in the business' market share is generally equated to the business' success, while a reduction in market share is an indication of negative actions by the business and generally associated with failure (Etale *et al.*, 2016:104). Market share can be carefully observed to see signs of change in the competitive market environment and it often influences strategic marketing planning (Marshall & Johnston, 2015:481).

- Repurchase intention can result in increased profitability and lower operating costs (Oman *et al.*, 2016:26). For almost every business, customers are the main source of generating sustainable profits (Pitaloka & Gumanti, 2019:196). Usually, a business expects to acquire profits consistently, with customers who have not only purchased once but who frequently repurchase (Ismoyo *et al.*, 2017:38). Adequate profitability will assist the business to sustain and expand its operations. In addition, with profitability the business can make better future investments (Sidhu & Verma, 2017:192).

- Customers with high repurchase intention can make recommendations to other customers and participate in WOM advertising about the product or service after their initial purchase (Adekunle & Ejechi, 2018:796). WOM is one of the most influential ways to convince people to purchase a product or service, as people typically trust what they directly hear from others as compared to commercial messages (Maisam & Mahsa, 2016:20).

It is apparent from the above discussion that repurchase intention can also be of importance to mobile ISPs, as it can result in increased customer lifetime value, increased market share, profitability and positive WOM.

3.5.2.5 The role of perceived switching costs on repurchase intention

When customers are dissatisfied, they tend to switch to competitors and criticise the product to other people (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018:31). However, most customers are discouraged from switching to competitors in order to avoid switching costs (Kim, 2018:7). Switching costs are the costs associated with changing from one service provider to another (Hollensen, 2015:82). Therefore, if a business successfully creates the perception that customers will incur high switching costs, it will increase the repurchase intention of their products (Aghivirwiati *et al*., 2018:85). Within this perspective, switching costs can be perceived as an exit barrier, which is accrued based on the consumption experiences of a product (Yin & Shen, 2017:85). Strong market players with more market share often increase switching costs, which makes it difficult for new entrants or small businesses to thrive and this ultimately affects the customers negatively (Thoumy & Abdalla, 2017:203). Three types of switching costs are proposed in literature, namely:

- **Procedural switching costs** consist of the use of time and effort (Burnham *et al*., 2003:112). These costs are further classified into economic risk cost (i.e. the cost associated with accepting the service provider's uncertain performance), evaluation cost (i.e. the cost of the learning process, searching and evaluating information) and set-up cost (i.e. the cost of initiating a relationship with the new service provider) (Ko *et al*., 2018:3). Procedural switching costs are perceived as an unfavourable source of constraint for the customer to change the service provider as dissatisfied customers stay in the relationship regardless of the poor performance of the service provider (Samudro *et al*., 2018:132).

- **Financial switching costs** entail the loss of financially or economically quantifiable resources (Burnham *et al*., 2003:112). Within the context of services, financial switching costs mainly emanate from the contractual structures established by the service provider. They arise from the likelihood of economic or financial loss customers may experience when switching to another service provider (Bergel & Brock, 2018:462). Therefore, when deciding either to maintain a relationship with a current service provider or to switch to another service provider, customers often assess the financial benefits and financial costs that can result from the ultimate decision that will be made (Willys, 2018:1035).

- **Relational switching costs** relate to the psychological or emotional discomfort resulting from the loss of identity and termination of the relationship (Burnham *et al*., 2003:112). In order to establish relational switching costs, emphasis can be placed on the development of interpersonal relationships between the business and the customers. This will consequently result in the development of psychological barriers related to switching to another service provider as well as increase emotional costs of switching (Kaur & Soch, 2018:373).

Arguably, from the foregoing discussion, it can be established that switching costs are of benefit to the business and on the contrary, a disadvantage to the customer. Whereas a business can be able to retain the customer, the customer will be constrained to remain in the relationship.

3.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter commenced with a discussion on equity considerations in service recovery. It was established that the equity theory is applicable in explaining customers' expectations of how an appropriate service recovery should be offered. When a service failure occurs, customers' perceptions of satisfaction can be reshaped by perceptions of equality during the service recovery process, therefore they attempt to restore equity with post-purchase behaviour. Effective service recovery can result in customers' satisfaction with the service recovery. A further review of literature focused on trust and loyalty (i.e. eWOM and repurchase intention) as customers' responses following service recovery. From the literature discussion, it can be noted that customer behavioural responses following service recovery (satisfaction with service recovery, trust, eWOM, and repurchase intention) are important managerial aspects for service providers – including South African mobile ISPs – to keep in mind.

In order to develop the conceptual model for this study, the subsequent chapter (Chapter 4) provides insight into the relationships between the constructs as established from existing literature (in Chapters 2 and 3).

CHAPTER 4

MODEL CONCEPTUALISATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces and resonates the theoretical underpinnings behind the conceptual model proposed for this study. Chapter 1 focused on the contextualisation of the study, with Chapters 2 and 3 exploring existing literature on services marketing and the constructs under investigation (i.e. service recovery attributes, perceived justice, satisfaction with service recovery, trust, eWOM, and repurchase intention). Therefore, the preliminary chapters provided a foundation for this chapter. Considering the comprehensive literature discussion in the preceding chapters, this chapter focuses on the model conceptualisation, by elaborating on the hypotheses formulated in Chapter 1 and providing insight into the relationships between the constructs.

The relationships between service recovery attributes (i.e. compensation, response speed, apology, and explanation), perceived justice (i.e. distributive, procedural, and interactional justice), satisfaction with service recovery, trust, eWOM, and repurchase intention are therefore examined in this chapter to compile the conceptual model for this study.

4.2 RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CONSTRUCTS

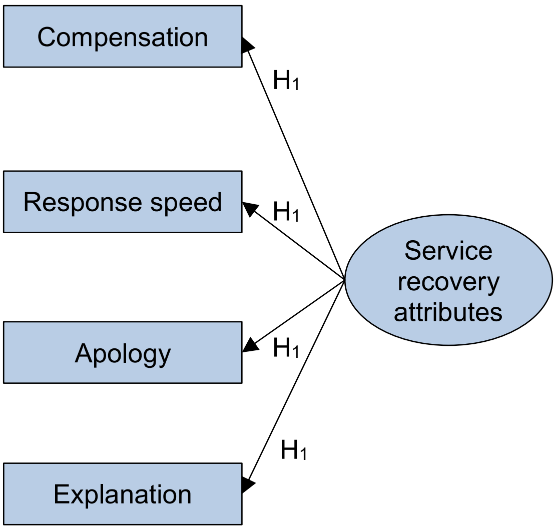
This section provides an overview of existing research to support the relationships between the constructs under investigation in this study.

4.2.1 Underlying dimensions of service recovery attributes

This study proposes that the service recovery attributes (i.e. compensation, response speed, apology, and explanation) identified from literature can form one multi-dimensional construct (i.e. all service recovery attributes fall under one construct) within the context of mobile ISPs.

Table 4-1 therefore presents the proposed dimensions of service recovery attributes supported by evidence of existing research that have been conducted in this regard.

Table 4-1: Proposed dimensions of service recovery attributes



Proposed dimensions	Attribute	Source	Context
	Compensation	Cengiz *et al.* (2007:186)	Banking
		Doaei *et al.* (2012:94)	Hotel
		Shin *et al.* (2018:8)	Services
	Response speed	Park and Park (2016:235)	Transport
		Smith *et al.* (1999:368)	Hotel and restaurant
		Varela-Neira *et al.* (2010:41)	Banking
	Apology	Smith *et al.* (1999:368)	Hotel and restaurant
		Varela-Neira *et al.* (2010:41)	Banking
		Sadaghashvili and Correia (2019:10)	Hospitality
	Explanation	Liao (2007:485)	Services
		Mostafa *et al.* (2014:305)	Tele-communication
		Smith *et al.* (1999:368)	Hotel and restaurant

Even though it is highly unlikely that businesses can limit service failures, it is possible to learn how to handle these failures effectively (by means of service recovery strategies) to maintain and improve customer satisfaction (Etemad-Sajadi & Bohrer, 2019:259). According to Miller *et al.* (2000:388), service recovery can be categorised into tangible and psychological recovery and can vary from doing nothing, to initiating any possible action to address the problem. It is well-recognised that it is essential to recover from service failures effectively. However, irrespective of this notion, there is less understanding about the way in which a business should attempt to recover from the service failure (Ayertey, 2018:91).

Considering the decline in customer satisfaction with their mobile ISPs, as well as prevalent poor customer complaint resolution (BrandsEye, 2019), it is imperative to determine and compile a multi-dimensional service recovery attribute. According to Mostafa *et al.* (2014:301), in order to be effective, managers require an overarching framework of successful service recovery actions that they can implement when a service failure occurs. This study, therefore, seeks to identify a multi-dimensional construct that mobile ISPs can easily consider and utilise when dealing with service failures and responding to customer complaints. In order to achieve this, the study investigates extant literature that has identified different service recovery attributes as single dimensions. The study also presents the significance of each identified service recovery attribute by indicating the consequences it has on customers and the business as supported by existing literature, thus, justifying the inclusion of each attribute.

Within the context of hotels and restaurants, Smith *et al*. (1999:358) identified four service recovery attributes that could influence customers' service recovery evaluations, including compensation, apology, response speed, and recovery initiation. From this study, it was established that these service recovery attributes had strong effects on customers' perceived justice. In addition, Cengiz *et al*. (2007:186) measured compensation, apology, promptness, empathy, effort, facilitation, and reparation as service recovery actions and established that these actions positively influenced customers' perceptions of justice in the banking context. The research of Varela-Neira *et al*. (2010:41) investigated and identified the impact of compensation, apology and response speed on satisfaction with service recovery, of which the results revealed that customer satisfaction with service recovery was higher when the service provider compensated the customer, apologised and when the recovery action was promptly taken. From a different perspective, Doaei *et al*. (2012:94) identified apology, explanation, redress and response speed as the service recovery actions that could be utilised by hotels to restore customer satisfaction after making a complaint. Furthermore, based on the research of Park and Park (2016:237), the service recovery attributes that were identified included compensation, promptness (response speed), apology/explanation, and attentiveness. The study measured the influence of these service recovery attributes on the image perceptions of airline passengers. However, among the identified attributes in this study, only promptness (response speed) was found to be positively associated with the airline's image. This implies that airline passengers were more concerned about the response speed from the airline following a service failure than any of the other service recovery attributes (i.e. compensation, apology/explanation, or attentiveness).

As evident from the above background discussion and further examination of literature, different researchers identified different service recovery attributes within different service settings, including (a) compensation, apology, response speed, and contact (Chang & Wang, 2012:1037), (b) apology, problem solving, courteous, explanation, and response speed (Liao, 2007:482), (c) compensation, apology, and explanation (Odoom *et al*., 2019:2; Sadaghashvili & Correia, 2019:10), and (d) compensation, apology, and response speed (Wirtz & Mattila, 2004:159). Although literature suggests different attributes of service recovery – as discussed above – the most common actions that have been identified from existing research include compensation, response speed, apology, and explanation. These service recovery attributes are not only common in a variety of studies, but it is apparent that they have significant outcomes on either the customer or the business, such as positive customer perceptions of the business' image (Park & Park, 2016:237), perceived justice in service recovery (Smith *et al*., 1999:358) and satisfaction with service recovery (Doaei *et al*., 2012:94).

Based on the above background and literature pertaining to different research settings, this study therefore sets out to establish whether these service recovery attributes (i.e. compensation, response speed, apology, and explanation) can also be applied to the South African mobile ISP context. The following sections therefore further elaborate on the service recovery attributes identified to be most relevant to this study.

- **Compensation**

  By compensating the customer, Wamuyu *et al*. (2015a:853) explain that negative customer outcomes about the service failure are overcome by providing tangible evidence that the service provider is fair. According to Shin *et al*. (2018:4), customers – as victims of service failures – have the ability to differentiate between the benefits of the compensation offered (such as vouchers, discounts, refunds) and the costs related to the service failure incident (such as financial or emotional costs). By providing some form of compensation, the business should be able to reduce the magnitude of perceived injustice by having an impact on the physical outcome of the complaint. More importantly, compensation is perceived to signify a symbolic statement of respect to the complainant and express the genuine regret of the business (Jugwanth & Vigar-Ellis, 2013:149).

- **Response speed**

  Chang *et al*. (2013:203) refer to the speed of responding to a service failure as the time taken by the business to address and handle a service failure and communicate a response to customers. The response speed also refers to the promptness of the response when customer complaints are being rectified and it is crucial in handling the service failure, since the response speed can improve the chances of positive evaluation from the customer of how the service provider interacted with them (Wamuyu *et al*., 2015b:33). Mandina and Kurwiravamwe (2016:85) emphasise that service providers must ensure speedy responses when handling customer complaints in order to minimise the negative impact of service failure. A service failure not responded to can quickly intensify (Zeithaml *et al*., 2018:189).

- **Apology**

  According to Quy and Lan (2015:1078), making a genuine apology to a customer is one of the most effective methods of service recovery. Moreover, Kruger (2016:162) postulates that apologies can alleviate customer anger by acknowledging the psychological loss experienced in the event of a service failure. An apology affects the quality of personal treatment and communication during the service recovery encounter and has been related to customers' perceptions of interactional justice (Smith *et al*., 1999:359). Hence, Li (2011:546) states that service providers are often encouraged to apologise, especially if they cannot provide a tangible form of compensation. Notably, the way in which customers evaluate the justice of a service provider's apology is highly personal and subjective (Shin *et al*., 2018:5).

- **Explanation**

  Explanation is associated with the information provided by a business to clarify the reason for the arising service failure and what the business will do to avert a similar failure in the future (Quy & Lan, 2015:1079). Service providers must understand that it is a right for the customer to know the reason behind the service failure and his/her need must be dealt with through a proper explanation (Tarofder *et al*., 2016:528). Research suggests that when the service provider fails to deliver the desired customer need, customer dissatisfaction can be reduced by providing an adequate explanation to him/her (Zeithaml *et al*., 2018:191). Msosa and Govender (2019:479) further suggest that a proper explanation following a service failure can help in diffusing the customer's negative reaction towards the service provider. Therefore, providing a detailed explanation concerning the problem encountered is one of the most effective organisational responses a service provider can make to complaining customers (Hinson *et al*., 2019:79).

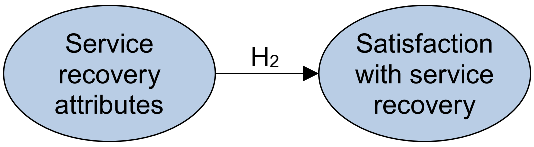
Based on the above discussion and from Table 4-1, it is evident that actions such as compensation, response speed, apology, and explanation can be regarded as the most fundamental attributes of service recovery and that it might therefore be regarded as dimensions of service recovery attributes. Previous studies have not yet investigated service recovery attributes as a multi-dimensional construct, but rather measured the actions as independent constructs, as is evident from the work of Awa *et al*. (2014:6), Davidow (2000:475), Shin *et al*. (2018:8) and Smith *et al*. (1999:358). This study, therefore, aims to investigate these attributes as dimensions under a single higher-order factor, namely service recovery attributes. Thus, based on the above background, the following hypothesis is proposed regarding service recovery attributes:

H_1: Service recovery attributes underlies compensation, response speed, apology and explanation.

4.2.2 Relationship between service recovery attributes and satisfaction with service recovery

This study proposes that there is a relationship between service recovery attributes and satisfaction with service recovery within the mobile ISP context. Since there are limited studies that have specifically investigated compensation, response speed, apology, and explanation as dimensions of service recovery attributes, this study takes a unified approach to explore the impact of these dimensions on satisfaction with service recovery. Table 4-2 indicates the proposed relationship, supported by evidence of existing research that has been conducted.

Table 4-2: Proposed relationship between service recovery attributes and satisfaction with service recovery

<table>
<tr><th>Proposed relationship</th><th>Service recovery attribute</th><th>Source</th><th>Context</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="9">
</td><td rowspan="2">Compensation</td><td>Kim (2007:83)</td><td>Internet shopping mall</td></tr>
<tr><td>Varela-Neira et al. (2010:41)</td><td>Banking</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Response speed</td><td>Doaei et al. (2012:94)</td><td>Hotel</td></tr>
<tr><td>Varela-Neira et al. (2010:41)</td><td>Banking</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Apology</td><td>Quy (2014:73)</td><td>Banking</td></tr>
<tr><td>Sadaghashvili and Correia (2019:10)</td><td>Hospitality</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Explanation</td><td>Ikponmwen (2011:61)</td><td>Hotel</td></tr>
<tr><td>Quy and Lan (2015:1086)</td><td>Banking</td></tr>
<tr><td>Sciarelli et al. (2017:34)</td><td>Tele-communication</td></tr>
</table>

Satisfaction with service recovery refers to a customer's subjective and positive evaluation of the outcome of a service recovery process (Huang, 2011:511). It reflects the customer's satisfaction with the service provider's recovery effort, which encompasses the perceived interaction and problem resolution provided (Ngahu *et al*., 2016:56). As posited by Matikiti, Roberts-Lombard *et al*. (2019:411), businesses have already realised the importance of customer satisfaction to ensure success and sustainability and should therefore establish strategies to enhance customers' satisfaction with service recovery. Ateke and Kalu (2016:19) established that providing a fair treatment to customers after a service failure results in satisfaction with service recovery and could even induce loyalty. According to Gohary *et al*. (2016:130), the process and outcome of satisfaction with service recovery also highly influences the customers' decision-making process and can cause them to switch to an alternative service provider. Therefore, when the service recovery outcome is positive and satisfying, the business can expect the customer to remain loyal, on the other hand when the customer is dissatisfied with the outcome, the business is more likely to lose the customer (Ateke & Harcourt, 2017:15).

The research of Kim (2007:83) – in the context of internet shopping mall – found that compensating customers will result in their satisfaction with the service recovery effort and could function as a key aspect to enhance customers' service disconfirmation. In the context of retail banking, Varela-Neira *et al*. (2010:43) further confirmed that compensating customers is associated with higher levels of satisfaction with service recovery and on the contrary, not compensating customers is associated with low levels of satisfaction with service recovery.

Based on the findings of Ekiz and Arasli (2007:278), an apology will positively influence customers' satisfaction with the service recovery effort. Furthermore, from the findings of Quy (2014:75), although offering an apology to customers does not contribute as strongly to satisfaction with service recovery as the other actions (i.e. redress, attentiveness, and explanations) measured in the same study, an apology was still found to have a positive effect on customers' satisfaction with service recovery. Based on this, it can be argued that although making an apology might not have a large impact on satisfaction with service recovery, service providers should not neglect it, as it remains essential in restoring satisfaction following a service failure. It is also empirically proven that a response to a service failure should include an apology accompanied by an explanation for the reason of the failure (Sadaghashvili & Correia, 2019:10).

Extant research established that when addressing a service failure, the service provider's response speed positively influences the customer's satisfaction with service recovery (Davidow, 2000:482). The study of Doaei *et al*. (2012:96) which was conducted within the hotel industry also revealed that response speed significantly contributes to customers' satisfaction with service recovery. This means the response speed is a service recovery attribute that should also be addressed by the service provider when dealing with service failures or customer complaints, as it ultimately has an impact on the customer's satisfaction with service recovery.

Lastly, Ikponmwen (2011:62) found that providing an explanation to customers could result in satisfaction with service recovery. The result is consistent with the findings of Quy and Lan (2015:1086) as well as Sciarelli *et al*. (2017:35), who also confirmed that providing an explanation to customers will positively impact satisfaction with service recovery. As evident from these previous studies, arguably, a service provider should also not overlook making an explanation to customers due to its impact on satisfaction with service recovery.

Therefore, as evident from Table 4-2 and the preceding overview, a positive relationship can be observed between service recovery attributes (i.e. compensation, response speed, apology and explanation) and customer satisfaction with service recovery. Subsequently, as summarised above and from a unified approach, the following hypothesis is proposed for this study:

H_2: Service recovery attributes have a positive effect on satisfaction with service recovery.

4.2.3 Mediating role of perceived justice on the relationship between service recovery attributes and satisfaction with service recovery

It is debated that customers' perceived justice in the service recovery process is one of the most significant elements that can be used in differentiating between successful and unsuccessful businesses (Duygun & Menteş, 2015:109). More specifically, Adams' (1963) theory of perceived justice has been viewed as a useful technique to determine customers' satisfaction after a service failure (Nadiri, 2016:194). If customers perceive less justice during service delivery, it prompts them to change service provider, which is not ideal for service providers, as they will incur more costs in attracting new customers (Gohary *et al*., 2016:138). Considering this, it is arguably justifiable to perform service recovery when a service failure occurs in order to create positively perceived justice in customers. As noted by Wirtz and Mattila (2004:151), customers evaluate the justice of a service recovery effort based on three dimensions, namely distributive justice, procedural justice and interactional justice.

In a service recovery encounter, *procedural justice* refers to a customer's perceptions of fairness (or unfairness) regarding the processes initiated by the business in solving a service failure or problem (Singh & Crisafulli, 2016:767). A fair procedure consists of three important aspects. Firstly, the business must take responsibility for the service failure and secondly, complaints should be addressed quickly, beginning with the employee first communicated with by the customer. Lastly, it consists of system flexibility and taking into consideration personal circumstances and responses from customers concerning the ultimate outcome they expect (Siagian & Triyowati, 2015:103). Procedural justice is a basic requirement in the service recovery process, as low levels of procedural justice can result in negative emotions and subsequently customer dissatisfaction (Jha & Balaji, 2015:143).

Wahid and Ismail (2013:66) argue that customer satisfaction from a service recovery encounter can be improved by enhancing customers' perceptions of distributive justice. *Distributive justice* refers to the perceived fairness and equality that the business adopts to distribute the resources to resolve and compensate for a service failure (Ding & Lii, 2016:883). Distributive justice during service recovery is achieved when a customer receives what he/she should have received in the first place prior to the service failure (Cheng *et al*., 2019:191). The evaluation of whether the compensation is fair or not may be influenced by a customer's previous experience with the business, knowledge of how other customers were treated in a similar situation and perceptions of the extent of his/her own loss (Assefa, 2014:51).

Ghalandari (2013:1024) defines *interactional justice* as the magnitude of fairness in which service providers relate to and deal with failed customers. An evaluation of interactional justice comprises the attitude of the service provider's frontline employees in terms of the politeness, courtesy, and consideration with which they handle relations with customers during the service recovery encounter (Ngahu *et al*., 2016:57). Extant research established that assessments of service recovery are influenced by the interaction between customers and service providers (Huang, 2011:511). Thus, interactional justice emphasises the customer-service provider communication (Cheng *et al*., 2019:192).

Within the context of this study, perceived justice is conceptualised as an overall assessment of procedural justice, distributive justice and interactional justice (Roschk & Gelbrich, 2017:401). A proper analysis of perceived justice can lead the service provider to train its employees about the appropriate interpersonal behaviour which they should develop. Consequently, this will permit customers to participate in the decision-making process and the provision of outcomes that customers can consider as just (Setyawati, 2018:236).

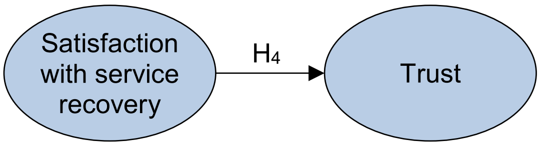
The research of Liao (2007:482) established that making an apology, providing an explanation and prompt handling (response speed) have a significant impact on satisfaction with service recovery as mediated by perceived justice. Roschk and Gelbrich (2017:401) found that perceived justice could mediate the relationship between compensation and satisfaction with service recovery. However, limited studies have investigated the mediated effect of perceived justice on the relationship between service recovery attributes and satisfaction with service recovery. Thus, for this study – in the context of mobile ISPs – it is proposed that perceived justice mediates the relationship between service recovery attributes and satisfaction with service recovery. Mediation hypotheses are designed to provide answers about how an independent variable (service recovery attributes) influences a dependent variable (satisfaction with service recovery) through one or more mediator variable(s) (perceived justice) and the direction of this effect (Özdil & Kutlu, 2019:31). Subsequently, based on the above discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed for this study:

H_3: Service recovery attributes have a positive indirect effect on satisfaction with service recovery, as mediated by perceived justice.

4.2.4 Relationship between satisfaction with service recovery and trust

This study proposes that there is a relationship between satisfaction with service recovery and trust within the context of mobile ISPs. Table 4-3 indicates the proposed relationship, supported by evidence of existing research that have been conducted in this regard.

Table 4-3: Proposed relationship between satisfaction with service recovery and trust

Proposed relationship	Source	Context
	Chaparro-Peláez *et al.* (2015:84)	Electronic commerce
	Chao and Cheng (2019:1360)	Health
	Ding *et al.* (2016:69)	Telecommunication
	Kau and Loh (2006:107)	Banking
	Nadiri (2016:205)	Mobile phone services
	Piaralal *et al.* (2014:216)	Telecommunication
	Tax *et al.* (1998:71)	Services marketing
	Wen and Geng-ging Chi (2013:315)	Airline

When a customer experiences a successful service recovery after a service failure has occurred, it ensures his/her trust in the service provider and confidence concerning the trustworthiness and integrity of the service provider (Garg, 2013:27). Trust can be described as the customer's confidence that he/she will find what he/she needs from the goods and service providers (Wahyoedi, 2017:335). Trust levels are formed by experience and once formed, the trust level generally remains without any notable change for some time (Rehman *et al.*, 2017:351). Dahlstrom *et al.* (2014:269) argue that, in the event that trust deteriorates on one part of a relationship (i.e. either the customer or the business), trust is also likely to deteriorate on the other part of the relationship. Considering the trend toward intense competition for customers – where even satisfied customers frequently engage in switching behaviour – building strong interpersonal trust with customers has become an imperative for businesses aiming to improve the duration of their relationships with customers (Dadzie *et al.*, 2018:134). As posited by Van Tonder (2016:290), trust in the service provider is the foundation for the long-term success of a relationship.

Trust enables mutual understanding, decreases the search for substitutes and assists in developing affection towards the service provider (Balaji *et al.*, 2016:191). Gul (2014:373) posits that trust is an important intervening factor between customer behaviour before and after the purchase of a product. Consequently, the development of trust is regarded as an important outcome of investing in an affective relationship between the exchange partners in the relationship

(Hasan *et al*., 2014:141). However, the service provider will not always meet the customer's expectations in the service encounter, thereby damaging his/her trust (Da Rosa Pulga *et al*., 2019:497). It is therefore important for the service provider to find ways to restore the trust that was lost due to a service failure as it is a challenge to build trust (Norizan *et al*., 2019:2). A customer develops trust when he/she perceives that the service recovery has met his/her expectations of fair treatment after making a complaint (Ding *et al*., 2016:63). Literature also presents that trust can be restored by improving customers' satisfaction with the service recovery experience as shown in Table 4-3. According to Kau and Loh (2006:103) and Tax *et al*. (1998:71), existing research established that satisfaction with service recovery serves as an antecedent to customer trust. Similarly, Wen and Geng-ging Chi (2013:319) suggest that customers are more likely to be satisfied and develop or strengthen trust if the business delivers an effective service recovery experience after the initial service failure.

Chaparro-Peláez *et al*. (2015:86) state that when trust has been compromised, satisfaction with service recovery has a significant role in regaining and maintaining customers' trust. Accordingly, this trust is essential in order to cultivate long-term relationships with them and generate loyalty and WOM. Ding *et al*. (2016:69) and Piaralal *et al*. (2014:216) similarly confirmed that there is a positive relationship between satisfaction with service recovery and customers' trust within the telecommunication industry. Consequently, when a telecommunication service provider can successfully restore the customer's satisfaction after a service failure, this will in turn lead to the customer trusting the service provider. Therefore, restoring customer satisfaction with a service recovery experience cannot always be perceived as a cost to the business, as trust creates a feeling within customers of being valuable to the business (Nadiri, 2016:207). By reinforcing trust, through satisfaction with service recovery, businesses can change dissatisfied customers into advocates of the business (Chaparro-Peláez *et al*., 2015:86). Lastly, research conducted by Chao and Cheng (2019:1360) within the health sector also found that satisfaction with service recovery is an antecedent of trust.

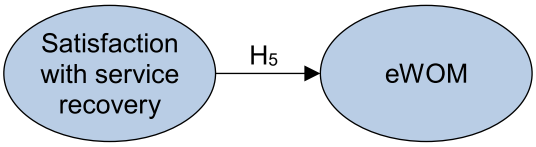
Based on the above discussion (and as summarised in Table 4-3), it is clear that customers' satisfaction with service recovery could have a positive and significant impact on their trust. Subsequently, the following hypothesis is proposed for this study:

H_4: Satisfaction with service recovery has a positive effect on trust.

4.2.5 Relationship between satisfaction with service recovery and eWOM

This study proposes that there is a relationship between satisfaction with service recovery and eWOM within the context of mobile ISPs. Table 4-4 indicates the proposed relationship, supported by evidence of existing research that have been conducted in this regard.

Table 4-4: Proposed relationship between satisfaction with service recovery and eWOM

<table>
<tr><th>Proposed relationship</th><th>Source</th><th>Context</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="6">
</td><td>Binh and Vi (2013:14)</td><td>Banking</td></tr>
<tr><td>Ding and Lii (2016:888)</td><td>Online games</td></tr>
<tr><td>Jan et al. (2018:54)</td><td>Banking</td></tr>
<tr><td>Jung and Seock (2017:28)</td><td>Online retail</td></tr>
<tr><td>Moliner-Velázquez et al. (2015:478)</td><td>Retail</td></tr>
<tr><td>Nefat et al. (2012:1061)</td><td>Telecommunication</td></tr>
</table>

Customers typically generate eWOM in order to share their experiences about a product or a service and this can encourage or discourage other customers from purchasing a similar product or service. Thus, eWOM provides either positive reviews that support the product or service, or negative reviews against the product or service (Nadarajan *et al*., 2017:388). Moran and Muzellec (2017:150) describe eWOM as customer-to-customer conversations occurring by means of online methods. According to Shan and King (2015:16), customers who engage in eWOM can be categorised as (a) the endorsers who create a buzz about the product, (b) message recipients who only read other customers' comments, and (c) message transmitters who pass along or share advertising messages.

eWOM information assists customers by reducing uncertainty, searching costs and the risk of buying unknown products (Sharifpour, Khan *et al*., 2016:134). Communication through WOM is a significant consequence of satisfaction with service recovery as customers typically refer to previous experiences of other customers and thus, acquire other customers' perceptions about the business (Nefat *et al*., 2012:1062). eWOM also permits for more knowledgeable decisions, since customers have easy access to information for making decisions (Alhidari *et al*., 2015:111). Hence, customers will attempt to seek references through eWOM before making purchase decisions (Liang *et al*., 2018:80). Studies conducted on service failures reveal the importance of satisfaction with service recovery in eliciting eWOM among customers (Binh & Vi, 2013:14; Moliner-Velázquez *et al*., 2015:478). In other words, these studies confirm that satisfaction with service recovery positively results in customers' eWOM behaviour.

In the context of retail services, Jung and Seock (2017:28) proved the role of satisfaction with service recovery in prompting customers to engage in eWOM. Based on the research of Kussusanti *et al*. (2019:133), when customers are satisfied with the service recovery, they will be willing to share their shopping experience, recommend other customers to purchase from the same store, write positive reviews and more particularly, they will share about how their complaint was handled. Therefore, it can be argued that when customers receive and perceive a satisfactory service recovery from the service provider's recovery efforts, their intention to spread eWOM can be secured, as evident and supported by the work of Ding and Lii (2016:889) and Jan *et al*. (2018:54).

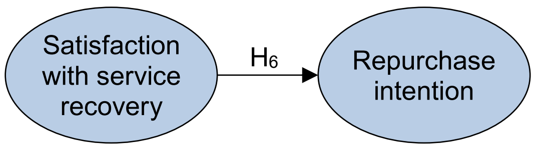
Based on the above discussion (and as summarised in Table 4-4), it is apparent that customers' satisfaction with service recovery could have a positive and significant impact on their eWOM. Subsequently, the following hypothesis is proposed for this study:

H_5: Satisfaction with service recovery has a positive effect on eWOM.

4.2.6 Relationship between satisfaction with service recovery and repurchase intention

This study proposes that there is a relationship between satisfaction with service recovery and repurchase intention within the context of mobile ISPs. Table 4-5 indicates the proposed relationship, supported by evidence of existing research that have been conducted in this regard.

Table 4-5: Proposed relationship between satisfaction with service recovery and repurchase intention

Proposed relationship	Source	Context
	Binh and Vi (2013:14)	Banking
	De Matos *et al*. (2012:2212)	Services
	Ding *et al*. (2016:69)	Telecommunication
	Gohary *et al*. (2016:132)	Online retail
	Räikkönen and Honkanen (2016:345)	Tourism

Repurchase intention occurs when customers initiate the effort to purchase a similar brand, product, or service again from the same provider (Goh *et al*., 2016:994) or it signals continuity with regard to the customer's plan to buy a similar product or service from the same business (Rambocas & Ramsubhag, 2018:44). The customer's decision to repurchase is influenced by the value obtained in previous encounters (Fungai, 2017:123). The more a customer is satisfied with the service provider, the more likely the repurchase intention will increase (Dawi *et al*., 2018:201).

However, with a service failure and based on the equity theory, low repurchase intention can be successfully restored if businesses can effectively resolve customer feelings of perceived inequity through a satisfactory service recovery (Ding *et al*., 2016:64). The study of De Matos *et al*. (2012:2212) established that a high level of satisfaction with service recovery significantly influences customers' repurchase intention. Furthermore, according to the research of Binh and Vi (2013:14) in the banking context, if a bank can successfully restore the customer's satisfaction after a service failure, it would restore the customer's repurchase intention.

Similarly, the study of Ateke and Harcourt (2017:19) determined that service providers that desire to secure repeat transactions from customers following a service failure should ensure that they satisfy the customer by their complaint handling interactions. The service provider should also ensure that they satisfy the customer by the outcome of the complaint handling, as well as the procedures during the complaint handling process. Lastly, the studies of Duygun and Menteş (2015:117), Gohary *et al*. (2016:132), as well as Räikkönen and Honkanen (2016:345) – conducted in different research contexts – also established that restoring the customer's satisfaction following a service failure provides the business with an opportunity to restore the customer's subsequent repurchase intention.

Based on the above discussion (and as summarised in Table 4-5), it is proposed that customers' satisfaction with service recovery could have a positive and significant impact on their repurchase intention. Subsequently, the following hypothesis is proposed for this study:

H_6: Satisfaction with service recovery has a positive effect on repurchase intention.

4.3 PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Based on the preceding investigation into each of the proposed relationships, the conceptual model for this study was compiled and subsequently illustrated in Figure 4-1. These proposed relationships (i.e. hypotheses) are, therefore, statistically tested in the empirical chapter (Chapter 6) of this study.

Figure 4-1: Proposed conceptual model

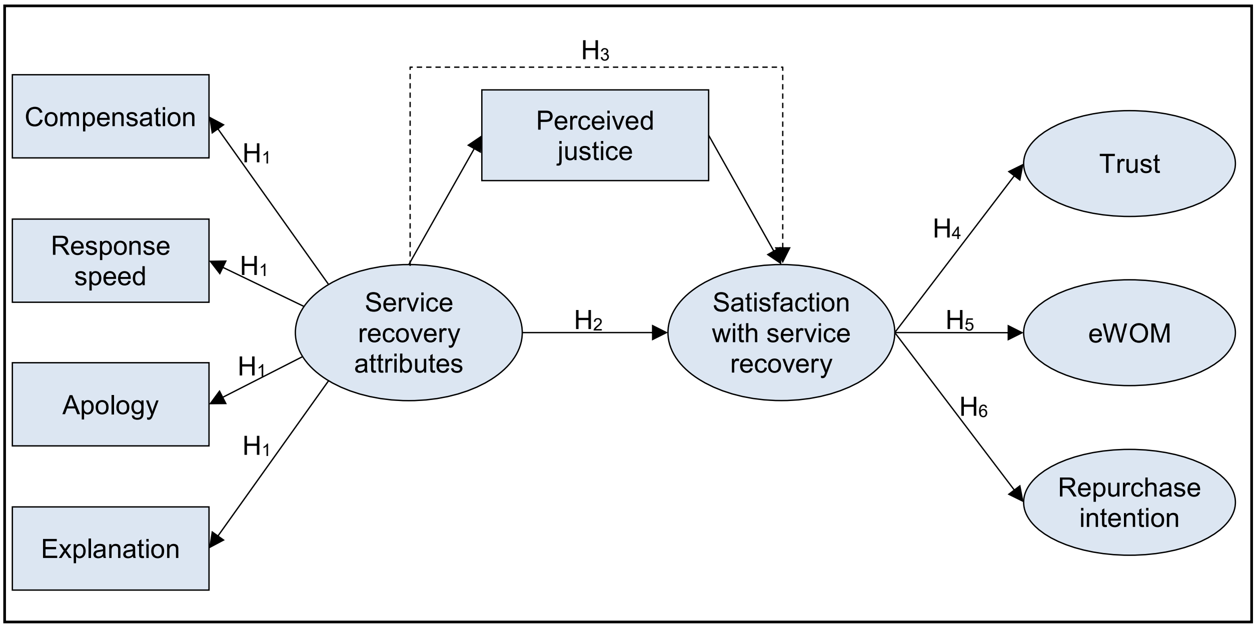


Figure 4-1 proposes the relationships between the theoretical constructs based on existing literature. It is proposed that – within the South African mobile ISP industry – the service recovery attributes (i.e. compensation, response speed, apology, and explanation) will result in customers' satisfaction with service recovery as mediated by perceived justice after a service recovery encounter. The conceptual model further illustrates the (positive) hypothesised impact of satisfaction with service recovery on customers' trust, eWOM and repurchase intention.

4.4 CONCLUSION

The aim of this chapter was to compile a conceptual model to illustrate the hypothesised relationships between the constructs, which were formulated and supported by findings from previous research. Consequently, existing literature was presented in support of the proposed relationships between the constructs under study. From the literature, statistically significant relationships were established between service recovery attributes (i.e. compensation, response speed, apology and explanation), perceived justice, satisfaction with service recovery, trust, eWOM, and repurchase intention. Thus, forming the basis for the proposed conceptual model that will be further tested in the empirical phase of this study to address the research objectives (formulated in Chapter 1). The subsequent chapter provides a detailed discussion of the research methodology used in this study.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapters provided a comprehensive review of the literature of this study, beginning with the contextualisation of the study, the discipline of the study (i.e. services marketing), constructs of the study (i.e. service recovery attributes, perceived justice, satisfaction with service recovery, trust, eWOM and repurchase intention) and model conceptualisation. The literature discussion provided a better understanding of the research problem under investigation, and served as the basis for the development of the research objectives, hypotheses, and proposed conceptual model.

This chapter presents the different research methods that can be implemented and the specific research methodology followed in this study. Accordingly, a discussion is provided on the marketing research process and each of the steps of this process. The following section, therefore, commences with an explanation of the concept of marketing research.

5.2 MARKETING RESEARCH

The objective of marketing research is to provide information to a business concerning customers' needs and desires, marketing opportunities of certain products or services, and the changing attitudes and buying behaviour of customers (Pride & Ferrell, 2019:82). By conducting marketing research, businesses can gain insights into customers' needs, leading to the development of product offerings that satisfy these needs and improve customer relationships (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018:147). Researchers are involved in decision making concerning what they perceive to be potential opportunities and problems (i.e. a process of identifying issues) (Malhotra *et al.*, 2017:5).

Every decision a business makes presents unique requirements for information collected through marketing research. Appropriate strategies can be developed based on the information collected from marketing research (Aaker *et al.*, 2013:6). Therefore, in the case of this study, the researcher will provide theoretical and managerial contributions to South African mobile ISPs based on the research findings.

5.2.1 Marketing research defined

Marketing research has been defined in various ways throughout existing marketing literature. Some of the most prominent definitions of marketing research include the following:

- The AMA (2017) defines marketing research as the function that connects the consumer, customer, and public to the marketer through information, which is used to (a) determine and define marketing opportunities and challenges, (b) generate, clarify and assess marketing activities, (c) monitor marketing performance, and (d) enhance the understanding of marketing as a process. Marketing research identifies the information needed to address these issues, designs the technique for gathering information, manages and implements the data gathering process, analyses the findings, and reports the findings and implications.

- Marketing research is the systematic and objective identification, gathering, analysis, communication, and use of information, with the aim of enhancing decision-making related to the identification and solution of problems, as well as the identification of opportunities in the marketing environment (Malhotra *et al*., 2013:39).

- Marketing research is the process of designing, collecting, analysing, and reporting research findings, which may be used to resolve a specified marketing problem (Burns *et al*., 2017:37).

- Brown *et al*. (2018:6) as well as Zikmund *et al*. (2017:6) define marketing research as the process that involves the collection and interpretation of data for use in developing, executing, and monitoring the business' marketing plans.

- Marketing research is defined by Lamb *et al*. (2018:152) as the process that involves the planning, gathering, and analysing of data related to a marketing decision.

- Lastly, Pride and Ferrell (2019:82) define marketing research as the systematic design, gathering, interpretation, and communicating of information to assist marketers in finding solutions to certain marketing problems or to take advantage of the marketing opportunities.

From the above marketing research definitions, the following noticeable generic elements of marketing research have been identified.

- **Data collection**

  The data collection stage of marketing research is usually the most expensive and highly susceptible to error (Kotler & Keller, 2016:135). There is no specific data collection method that is better than the other, but it is crucial to use the appropriate method based on an evaluation of the research problem and research type (Marshall & Johnston, 2015:77). The aim of collecting data will eventually determine the purpose for which that information is applicable and useful (Malhotra *et al*., 2017:98). Irrespective of the data collection method, the objective should be to produce data that is error free (Clow & James, 2014:38).

- **Data analysis**

  Marketing researchers can transfer the collected data and enter the data into software packages that are used for analysing the data (Burns *et al*., 2017:73). The objective of data analysis is to interpret and draw conclusions from the collected data (Lamb *et al*., 2018:167). The criteria for determining the types of data analysis to conduct are both controlled by the data's fitness for purpose and its validity. The type of data analysis must be suitable for the type of data collected (Cohen *et al*., 2018:186).

- **Interpretation of data**

  Researchers are increasingly requested to have a proactive and consulting role in interpreting data and information into recommendations for managers (Kotler & Keller, 2016:135). The interpretation of data is easier if marketers can carefully plan their data analysis methods in the early stages of the marketing research process (Pride & Ferrell, 2019:95). The conclusions made from the interpretation of the results of data analysis should be unbiased, that is it should be based on the facts of the results obtained from the actual data and not the researcher's own subjective or emotional values (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016:21).

- **Reporting findings**

  After the researcher finishes analysing the data, he/she must prepare the report and communicate the findings and recommendations to management (Lamb *et al*., 2018:168). The research results must be clearly reported and it should provide a basis for managerial action (Keegan & Green, 2017:220). The significance of reporting the marketing research findings with clarity, accuracy, and proficiency cannot be overemphasised (Burns *et al*., 2017:434). Saunders *et al*. (2019:730) suggest that each research report must be prepared in a manner that is suitable for its respective users. Therefore, it is necessary for researchers to have knowledge of the needs and expectations of each report user and adapt it accordingly (Pride & Ferrell, 2019:96).

From the definitions and generic elements discussed above, the following definition of marketing research has been formulated for the purpose of this study:

Marketing research is a systematic process that involves the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data in order to report research findings that can provide solutions for a specific marketing-related problem.

5.2.2 Types of marketing research

According to Beri (2013:3), marketing research can be classified as either basic or applied research. *Basic research* is conducted to validate an existing theory or obtain more knowledge of an existing concept or phenomenon (Lamb *et al*., 2018:61). In the same vein, Clow and James (2014:6) assert that researchers conduct the majority of basic research intending to advance marketing knowledge. In essence, basic research is theoretical in nature and deals with theoretical problems (Skinner *et al*., 2015:7). Brynard *et al*. (2014:7) explain that even though basic research is not conducted for immediate practical use in mind, the likelihood of future use is not excluded.

Applied research is conducted with the objective of solving a certain problem and represents the majority of marketing research studies (Burns *et al*., 2017:40). Applied research – also referred to as decisional research – begins with a specific problem and it identifies alternative solutions and the potential outcomes of each alternative (Beri, 2013:3). Applied research is conducted with the aim of obtaining knowledge that can be practically applied to different situations (Fain, 2017:23). Clow and James (2014:6) indicate that the majority of commercial marketing research and research conducted internally by research departments is applied research, since businesses are looking for solutions to problems or seeking information that can aid them in exploiting potential marketing opportunities.

5.2.3 Appropriate conditions for conducting marketing research

A manager who has encountered a certain problem should not intuitively decide to do new marketing research to seek a solution for the problem (Aaker *et al*., 2013:17). Babin and Zikmund (2016:18) recommend that when approaching a major decision, a manager must firstly determine whether to conduct new research.

When managers have insufficient information during decision-making, it indicates the need to conduct new marketing research (Burns *et al*., 2017:70). However, there are some instances where the decision to conduct marketing research may not be necessary (Hair, Wolfinbarger *et al*., 2017:27). The aspects that determine when to conduct marketing research are provided in Table 5-1 and subsequently discussed briefly.

Table 5-1: Aspects influencing the need to conduct marketing research

Factor	Conduct marketing research	Do not conduct marketing research
Time	Enough time is available before a decision can be made.	Time limitations require a decision before adequate research can be conducted.
Data availability	Business does not have access to data, but data can be obtained.	Business already has relevant data or data cannot be obtained.
Nature of decision	Decision is of significant strategic or tactical importance.	Decision is not of significant strategic or tactical importance.
Benefits versus costs	Potential value of research exceeds the costs of conducting research.	Costs of conducting research exceed the potential value of the project.

Source: Adopted from Babin and Zikmund (2016:20).

- **Time:** In many circumstances, systematic research that can produce high-quality information can be time-consuming (Hair, Wolfinbarger *et al*., 2017:29). Normally, decisions need to be made within a short period of time using any available obtainable information as it may be time-sensitive (Aaker *et al*., 2013:17). Although making managerial decisions without undertaking researching is not ideal, in some instances, the urgency of a situation prevents the use of formal research methods (Babin & Zikmund, 2016:18). Therefore, as posited by Iacobucci (2015:34), if the manager has limited available time and is unable to undertake a new marketing research project, the required information might be obtainable from existing sources within the business.

- **The availability of data:** For most decisions, managers can depend on the knowledge that they already have (Burns *et al*., 2017:70). If the required marketing information is unavailable within the business' internal records, a customised marketing research project can be considered to acquire the information (Hair, Wolfinbarger *et al*., 2017:28). However, if the data cannot be acquired or obtained in time, the research project in question should not be considered (Babin & Zikmund, 2016:19). Aaker *et al*. (2013:17) assert that when the business already has the information needed for decision-making (in the form of research results from a different problem or in the form of managerial skills and talents), marketing research is deemed unnecessary.

- **The nature of the decision:** The significance of marketing research relies on the nature of the managerial decision to be executed. A routine strategic decision that needs less substantial investment may not appear to justify a substantial expenditure on marketing research (Babin & Zikmund, 2016:19). However, the more strategically significant a decision is, the more probable it is that research will be undertaken (Zikmund *et al*., 2017:14). Wiid and Diggines (2015:10) argue that it is cost ineffective to undertake research for every decision that must be made.

- **Benefits versus costs:** Although the cost of conducting marketing research ranges from one project to another, accurate estimations can generally be made on the marketing research costs (Hair, Wolfinbarger *et al*., 2017:29). Thus, as suggested by Aaker *et al.* (2013:18), prior to conducting research, a shrewd manager must perform a cost-benefit analysis to determine the value of the information required through research. Consequently, as argued by McDaniel and Gates (2015:10), research should only be conducted if the expected value of the information is more than the cost of acquiring it. The way a manager assesses the marketing research benefits directly relates to the level of his/her certainty about specific outcomes of the business' course of action (Feinberg *et al*., 2013:44).

As discussed in section 5.2.1, Brown *et al*. (2018:6), Burns *et al*. (2017:37) and Zikmund *et al*. (2017:6) established that marketing research is a process. The following section therefore provides a comprehensive discussion on what the marketing research process entails and how each step was applied to this study.

5.3 THE MARKETING RESEARCH PROCESS

The marketing research process (illustrated in Figure 5-1) provides an outline of the general sequence of activities that need to be followed to provide the information required for improved decision-making (Brown *et al*., 2018:15). Notably, the steps of the research process overlap and not all research projects follow each step in exactly the same way due to the uniqueness of each research project (Babin & Zikmund, 2016:61). This is evident from the following marketing research processes that have been conceptualised by various researchers:

- Feinberg *et al*. (2013:30) identified the following nine steps for the marketing research process: (a) Establish the need for information; (b) Outline the research objectives and information needs; (c) Set a research design and data sources; (d) Design the data collection procedure; (e) Design the sample; (f) Collect the data; (g) Process and code the data; (h) Analyse the data; (i) Present the results.

- Ary *et al*. (2014:36) proposed a seven-step marketing research process, namely: (a) Select the problem; (b) Review the literature; (c) Design the study; (d) Collect the data; (e) Analyse the data; (f) Interpret the data; (g) Report the findings.

- Clow and James (2014:30) identified the following six steps for the marketing research process: (a) Identify the research purpose; (b) Select the research design; (c) Compile the sampling plan; (d) Collect the data; (e) Analyse the data; (f) Compile the research report.

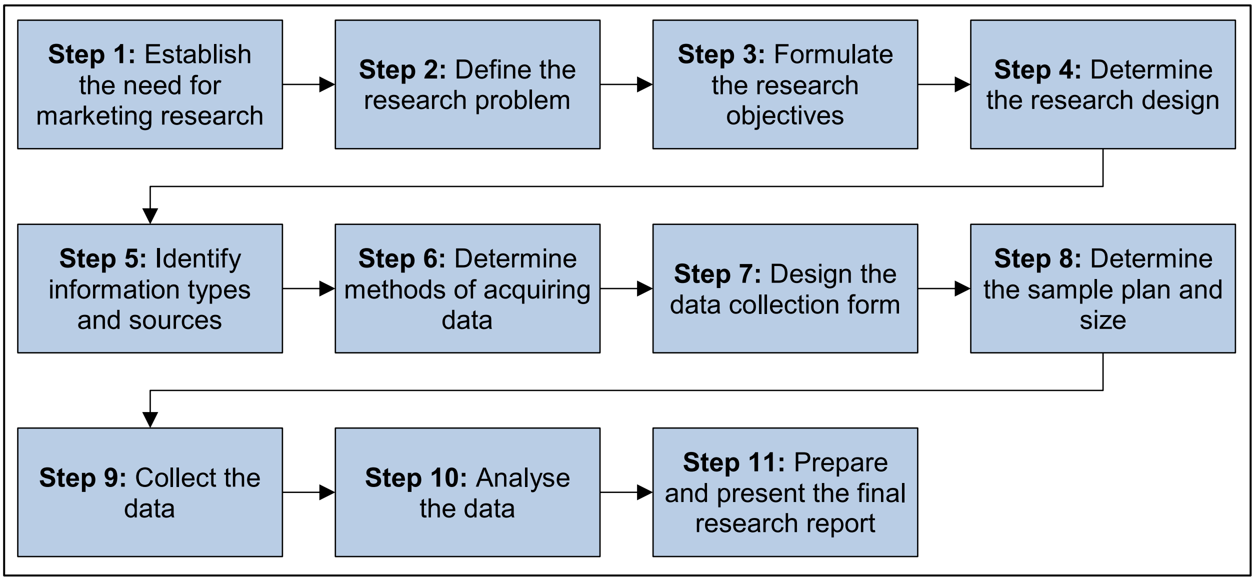
- Babin and Zikmund (2016:61) proposed the following six steps for the marketing research process: (a) Define the objectives; (b) Plan the research design; (c) Plan the sample; (d) Collect the data; (e) Analyse the data; (f) Form the conclusions and prepare the report.

- Hair, Wolfinbarger *et al*. (2017:31) proposed an elaborate eleven-step marketing research process: (a) Identify and clarify information needs; (b) Define the research questions; (c) Specify the research objectives and confirm the information value; (d) Determine the research design and data sources; (e) Develop the sampling design and sample size; (f) Examine measurement issues and scales; (g) Design and pre-test the questionnaire; (h) Collect and prepare the data; (i) Analyse the data; (j) Interpret the data to create knowledge; (k) Prepare and present the final report.

- Lastly, Burns *et al.* (2017:68) proposed a marketing research process that consists of the following eleven steps: (a) Establish the need for marketing research; (b) Define the research problem; (c) Establish the research objectives; (d) Determine the research design; (e) Determine the types and sources of information; (f) Determine methods of acquiring data; (g) Design the data collection questionnaires; (h) Determine the sample plan and size; (i) Gather the data; (j) Analyse the data; (k) Prepare and present the final research report.

For this study, the more detailed eleven-step marketing research process of Burns *et al.* (2017:68) is implemented, as shown in Figure 5-1. The marketing research process of Burns *et al.* (2017) was used for this study based on the researcher's discretion of what was perceived to be a comprehensive marketing research process.

Figure 5-1: Marketing research process



Source: Adopted from Burns *et al.* (2017:68).

Figure 5-1 presented the marketing research process of Burns *et al*. (2017:68) implemented in this study. Consequently, the following sections elaborate on each step of the marketing research process, commencing with the first step of this process, which is to establish the need for marketing research.

5.3.1 Establish the need for marketing research

The reasonable starting point that can help the researcher is to formulate an understanding of the nature of the marketing challenge that needs research support (Malhotra *et al*., 2017:9). The need for research might be to enhance the understanding of a situation or phenomenon, to investigate an opportunity, to acquire an understanding or deal with problems that may negatively affect the business (Clow & James, 2014:31).

Taking into consideration that marketing research is time sensitive and costly, managers need to assess the value that may be obtained from undertaking marketing research and having the information at hand with the cost of acquiring that information (Burns *et al*., 2017:69). As explained (in section 5.2.3), it might sometimes not be necessary to conduct marketing research (Hair, Wolfinbarger *et al*., 2017:27). If, however, the required data is unavailable, outdated, or unreliable, the researcher will have to gather primary data (Kotler & Keller, 2016:126).

For this study, an extensive review of literature was done from which the apparent marketing gap and research problem was identified (see section 1.2), thus, illustrating the need for doing marketing research.

5.3.2 Define the research problem

The second step of the marketing research process, as illustrated in Figure 5-1, is to define the research problem. When defining a research problem, the researcher should consider the aim of the study, the pertinent background information, the information sought, and how it will be used during the decision-making process (Malhotra *et al*., 2013:42). If the research problem is not clearly understood, the researcher is likely to gather irrelevant or inaccurate data, which might result in a waste of effort, time, and financial resources (Hair, Wolfinbarger *et al*., 2017:162).

Based on the background information and literature provided in Chapter 1, the research problem **for this study** can be summarised as follows:

Customer satisfaction is crucial for the survival of any business. Therefore, customer-oriented businesses will always strive to meet customers' expectations in order to keep them satisfied. However, in the process of providing services, service failures are inevitable due to the inherent characteristics of services. Customers will perceive an inequity from these the service failures. Service failures can, therefore, often result in customers' dissatisfaction and prompt them to make complaints to the service provider or third parties, or switch to another service provider. When customers choose to complain to the service provider and the service provider responds to the dissatisfied customers, a service recovery process is initiated in order to restore the customers' satisfaction. Depending on the level of customer satisfaction realised from the service provider's service recovery efforts, customers are likely to form different behavioural intentions (such as trust, eWOM, and repurchasing).

However, within the context of South African mobile ISPs, there is limited apparent research on customers' behavioural responses (i.e. trust, eWOM and repurchase intention) after a service failure and a service recovery effort. Although these behavioural responses have been previously studied in different research contexts and countries, it is important to examine these factors in the context of South African mobile ISPs, as research indicates that customer behaviour tends to differ across countries and industries. Furthermore, recent South African market reports indicate the significant decline of customers' satisfaction with their mobile ISPs. These providers have further not been able to respond (in a timeous manner) to almost half of the customer complaints and when they were able to respond, the majority of customers were not satisfied with the complaint resolution. Arguably, South African mobile ISPs are failing to meet customers' expectations and restore their satisfaction after experiencing a service failure, which ultimately will have an impact on customers' behavioural responses. Accordingly, this study seeks to develop a service recovery model for South African mobile ISPs, which may be considered as a strategic tool when dealing with service failures.

5.3.3 Formulate the research objectives

The research objectives specify to the researcher what must be done to acquire the information sought by managers to make effective decisions (Burns *et al*., 2017:71). The research objectives must be in written form and communicated to the decision-maker clarifying the reason and the need to undertake a research project (Feinberg *et al*., 2013:41). Specifying the research objective(s) is a useful way of describing research (Zikmund *et al*., 2013:5). Research objectives are the specific goals that researchers set and desire to accomplish by conducting research (Babin & Zikmund, 2016:62). Researchers must define the research objectives before attempting to develop a data collection form (i.e. questionnaire), since the objectives determine the question content and the required detail (Hult *et al*., 2014:123). Therefore, in light of the above identified research problem, the *primary objective* of this study (as indicated in section 1.6.1) is to develop a service recovery model for the South African mobile ISP industry. Consequently, the following *secondary objectives* (as indicated in section 1.6.2) have been formulated to support the primary objective.

1) Provide an overview of existing literature pertaining to the constructs of this study, namely service recovery attributes, perceived justice, satisfaction with service recovery, trust, eWOM and repurchase intention.
2) Compile a sample profile of the respondents who participated in this study.
3) Measure respondents' perceptions of the service recovery attributes of their mobile ISP.
4) Measure the justice that respondents perceive they obtain from their mobile ISP.
5) Measure respondents' satisfaction with the service recovery of their mobile ISP.
6) Measure respondents' trust in their mobile ISP.
7) Measure respondents' eWOM intentions towards their mobile ISP.
8) Measure respondents' repurchase intention towards their mobile ISP.
9) Examine the interrelationships between the constructs of the study.

5.3.4 Determine the research design

The fourth step of the marketing research process (as illustrated in Figure 5-1), is to select the research design. Ary *et al*. (2014:35) describe a research design as a blueprint for the research project, which consists of the methods to be implemented, the type of data that will be collected and where or how and from who it will be collected. By using an appropriate research design, the researcher ensures that the research project will be focused on the identified research problem and ultimately, the researcher can make sure that unnecessary cost implications will be limited (Iacobucci, 2015:57). Cooper and Schindler (2014:83) are of the opinion that the benefits of different research designs should be taken into consideration prior to deciding on the final design. Hair, Wolfinbarger *et al*. (2017:36) distinguish between three research designs, namely exploratory research, descriptive research and causal research. These research designs are compared in Table 5-2 and further discussed below.

Table 5-2: Comparison of research designs

Description	Exploratory research	Descriptive research	Causal research
Amount of uncertainty characterising the decision situation	Highly ambiguous.	Partially defined.	Clearly defined.
Key research statement	Research question.	Research question.	Research hypothesis.
When conducted?	Early stage of decision-making.	Later stages of decision-making.	Later stages of decision-making.
Research approach	Unstructured.	Structured.	Highly structured.
Examples	"Our sales are declining for no apparent reason." "What kind of new products are fast-food customers interested in?"	"What kind of people patronise our stores compared to our primary competitor?" "What product features are important to our customers?"	"Will consumers buy more products in a blue package?" "Which of the two advertising campaigns will be more effective?"
Nature of results	Discovery-oriented, productive, but still speculative. Often in need of further research.	Can be confirmatory but more research might be needed. Results can be managerially actionable.	Confirmatory oriented. Fairly conclusive with managerially actionable results often obtained.

Source: Adopted from Babin and Zikmund (2016:60).

Burns *et al*. (2017:93) posit that the choice for the most practically applicable research design depends on the research objectives. Three common objectives are (a) to obtain background information and to formulate hypotheses, (b) to measure the state of the desired variable (e.g. level of satisfaction with service recovery), or (c) to test the hypothesised relationships between two or more variables (e.g. satisfaction with service recovery and repurchase intention). The subsequent sections further elaborate on the three types of research designs that can be used by the researcher.

- **Exploratory research**

  Exploratory research encompasses a preliminary investigation of a problem which the researcher has limited knowledge about or when he/she needs new or more contemporary information (Burns *et al*., 2017:95). Exploratory studies are often undertaken for three reasons, namely to (a) satisfy the researcher's interest and obtain a better understanding of a phenomenon, (b) examine the feasibility of conducting a more extensive research project, and (c) develop the methods to be used in the subsequent research project (Rubin & Babbie, 2017:141). An exploratory study provides a valuable way to ask open-ended questions to determine what is happening and gain insight into the subject matter (Saunders *et al*., 2019:186). Pride and Ferrell (2019:84) note that exploratory research is generally associated with qualitative research methods (see section 5.3.5).

- **Descriptive research**

Descriptive studies usually require substantial existing knowledge and it is assumed that the problem or issue has been clearly defined (Pride & Ferrell, 2019:85). Feinberg *et al*. (2013:57) note that descriptive research is practically applicable when the research objectives include (a) presenting the characteristics of marketing phenomena and determining the frequency of occurrence, (b) determining the extent to which marketing variables are related, and (c) making assumptions concerning the occurrence of marketing phenomena. Brown *et al*. (2018:113) note that descriptive research is more common, mostly conducted by using a survey, and typically involves obtaining a sample from a large population. The types of descriptive studies include cross-sectional and longitudinal designs (Brown *et al*., 2018:128).

A *cross-sectional* study involves the measurement of sample elements from the target population only once (Burns *et al*., 2017:99). A cross-sectional study is a one-time survey with a sample that is only approached once for research purposes (Brown *et al*., 2018:128). The cross-sectional design is more applicable to research projects that seek to investigate the occurrence of a phenomenon, situation, problem, attitude, or topic, by taking a cross-section of the population (Kumar, 2018:93). Typically, research projects are cross-sectional mainly due to time constraints and resource limitations (Gray, 2020:38). The benefit of conducting a cross-sectional study is that it allows the researcher to acquire valuable developmental information over a relatively short time (Bordens & Abbott, 2018:354).

A *longitudinal* study encompasses measuring a variable under a similar group of sample elements over a period of time (normally after a few months or every few years) (Gravetter & Forzano, 2018:257). Schindler (2019:79) states that one of the benefits of a longitudinal study is that it allows the tracking of changes over time. Although a longitudinal research project requires a minimum of two different time periods, data can be gathered over as many time periods as required to address the research questions (Johnson & Christensen, 2014:404).

- **Causal research**

Causal research is concerned with investigating cause-and-effect relationships (Babin & Zikmund, 2016:57). Causal research is useful to (a) gain an understanding on which variables are the cause and which variables are the effect of a phenomenon, (b) discover the nature of the relationship that exists between the causal variables and the effect to be predicted, and (c) test hypotheses (Malhotra *et al*., 2017:80). In order to state that a variable caused an effect on another, three conditions must be met, namely (a) a constant variation must exist between the cause and the effect, (b) the time order of the cause and the effect must be accurate, and (c) other explanations must be disregarded (Brown *et al*., 2018:114).

For the purpose of this study, a descriptive (cross-sectional) research design was used since this research design is pertinent to the research objectives of the study. Descriptive research allows businesses to identify trends, to test proposed hypotheses about relationships that exist between variables and ultimately identify ways to solve an identified marketing problem (Hair, Wolfinbarger *et al.*, 2017:77). Descriptive research is used to answer the questions who, what, when, where and how in describing the characteristics of customers, brands and other marketing phenomena (Clow & James, 2014:28). Therefore, the descriptive research questions are covered by surveying mobile ISP (what) customers (who) in South Africa (where) on what influences their behavioural intentions upon service recovery (why).

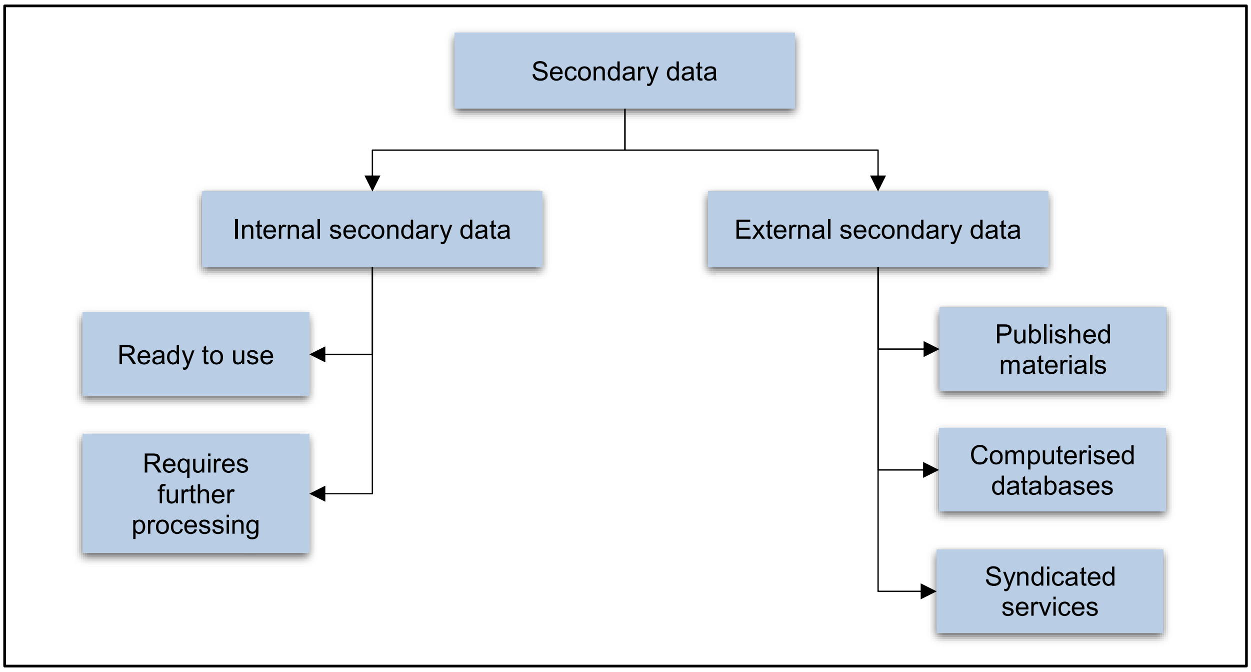
In this study, the researcher had limited available time and finances to conduct a longitudinal study, hence a cross-sectional study was conducted (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016:105). A cross-sectional study was also conducted since it collects data only once from the target population, thereby eliminating the response bias that is associated with generating responses from the same respondents who have been studied previously (Bajpai, 2015:39). Most importantly, the researcher did not have a sampling frame available to use for contacting respondents (further explained in section 5.3.8.2). Consequently, respondents were sampled based on their accessibility, which limited the execution of a longitudinal study.

5.3.5 Identify information types and sources

The fifth step in the marketing research process involves identifying information types and sources. Two types of information can be distinguished, namely primary information, which is gathered particularly for the problem at hand and secondary information, which has already been collected for the purpose of other research (Burns *et al.*, 2017:72). Although both types of research are usually essential to attain the research purpose, research projects should always commence with secondary data research (Clow & James, 2014:63), since secondary data is a cost effective and easily obtainable source for obtaining background information for the research (Malhotra *et al.*, 2017:46).

Secondary data are facts and information previously gathered and recorded by another researcher for purposes other than the present research project (Babin & Zikmund, 2016:143). When the required information already exists as secondary data, the researcher can simply retrieve the data from internal or external sources and continue to do data analysis and or/interpretation (Brown *et al.*, 2018:60). However, Neelankavil (2015:61) recommends that secondary data that is likely to be used in a research situation must be systematically reviewed for its applicability. As noted by Berman *et al.* (2018:224), secondary data can be categorised as either internal to the business or external (as shown in Figure 5-2).

Figure 5-2: Categories of secondary data



Source: Adopted from Malhotra *et al*. (2017:100).

According to Hair, Wolfinbarger *et al*. (2017:54), the ideal starting point in searching for secondary data is the business' own internal information. Internal secondary data is defined as data that a business or an individual has already gathered, but desires to use it for other research purposes (Mooi *et al*., 2018:53). The main benefit of using internal data first is that it is readily and easily obtainable (Clow & James, 2014:76). Malhotra *et al*. (2017:100) define external data as data that is produced by sources outside of the business. If the external data address the problem under investigation and it has been obtained from a credible source, a business would usually decide to use that data rather than to incur the costs of capturing new data on the topic (Brown *et al*., 2018:18).

Even though it is necessary that the researcher should always try to use secondary data before conducting primary research, in some instances, it is impossible to find the data relevant to the problem at hand (Shank & Lyberger, 2015:108). Burns *et al*. (2017:72) recommend that, in such instances, it is necessary to gather primary data. When researchers gather new data for the first time, it is known as primary data (Bairagi & Munot, 2019:131). Primary data involves directly gathering responses from the sample elements (Fallon, 2016:5), and is gathered to address a specific research objective (Aaker *et al*., 2013:78). However, gathering primary data is a lengthy, expensive, and more complex process than gathering secondary data (Pride & Ferrell, 2019:88). Primary data can be gathered using either qualitative or quantitative research (Marshall & Johnston, 2015:77), which are discussed below.

- **Qualitative research**

  Qualitative research primarily focuses on gaining an understanding, explaining, exploring, discovering, and clarifying situations, feelings, opinions, attitudes, values, beliefs, and experiences of a group of people (Kumar, 2018:12). Qualitative research can be applied when investigating the nature of little-understood phenomena and to provide more information on the ways in which the phenomenon is expressed (Polit & Beck, 2018:9). Qualitative researchers normally gather comprehensive data from small samples by asking questions or through behaviour observation (Hair, Wolfinbarger *et al*., 2017:79). Qualitative data gathering techniques can be applied in instances where people may be reluctant to respond to some direct questions. It can also be used on questions that respondents may consider confidential, questions that may be perceived as embarrassing, or questions that may negatively affect their ego or status (Aaker *et al*., 2013:178).

- **Quantitative research**

  Quantitative research involves structured data gathering methods that generate output that can be converted into numbers and statistically analysed (Clow & James, 2014:41). The main purpose of quantitative research is to acquire information to (a) generate accurate predictions regarding the relationships that exist between market factors and behaviours, (b) increase meaningful insight into those relationships, (c) validate relationships, and (d) test hypotheses (Hair, Wolfinbarger *et al*., 2017:78). Quantitative research encompasses the issuing of a set of structured questions with predetermined answers to a large number of respondents (Burns *et al*., 2017:143).

Table 5-3 provides a further indication of the distinguishing differences between qualitative and quantitative research.

Table 5-3: Qualitative versus quantitative research

Qualitative research	Differentiating dimension	Quantitative research
Discover ideas, used in exploratory research with research objects.	**Common purpose**	Test hypotheses or specific questions.
Observe and interpret.	**Approach**	Measure and test.
Unstructured, free-form.	**Data collection approach**	Structured responses; categories provided.
Researcher is immediately involved. Results are subjective.	**Researcher independence**	Researcher uninvolved observer. Results are objective.
Small samples, often in natural settings.	**Samples**	Large samples to produce generalisable results.
Exploratory.	**Most often used design**	Descriptive and causal.

Source: Adopted from Babin and Zikmund (2016:111).

For this study, secondary data was gathered (in Chapters 1 to 5) for literature review purposes. Chapter 1 focused on the contextualisation and background of the study, as well as information on the South African mobile ISP industry. Chapter 2 provided a comprehensive discussion on the discipline of services marketing and service recovery and Chapter 3 focused on the theoretical constructs (i.e. service recovery attributes, satisfaction with service recovery, trust, eWOM, and repurchase intention). Chapter 4 provided the conceptualisation of the conceptual model pertinent to this study and Chapter 5 presented the different research methodologies and processes in literature and the specific research methodology used in this study. Relevant secondary data was acquired from published academic journals, marketing reports, industry and business profiles, theses, textbooks and credible internet sources. Primary data was collected for this study by means of quantitative research, since the research design is descriptive in nature, and the hypothesised relationships of the conceptual model (see Chapter 4) needed to be empirically tested.

5.3.6 Determine methods of acquiring data

The research design must indicate the type of data to be collected and the way in which the data will be collected (Pride & Ferrell, 2019:87). The type of data will determine the method of data collection and is driven by the type of research the business is conducting (Marshall & Johnston, 2015:77). The method of data collection is also affected by the nature, extent, and objectives of the research (Bairagi & Munot, 2019:18). Researchers typically begin by examining the different valuable, less costly, and readily available secondary data to assess if they can either partially or fully resolve the existing problem without going through the process of gathering costly primary data. The researcher can collect secondary data or primary data or alternatively collect both (Kotler & Keller, 2016:125).

5.3.6.1 Methods for collecting secondary data

Secondary data is important throughout the research process and specifically during the problem or opportunity identification phase (Lamb *et al*., 2018:155). Berman *et al*. (2018:222) suggest that secondary data (see Figure 5-2) may be classified as internal (e.g. business records) or external (e.g. government reports and trade publications). Searching for different sources and collecting additional information provides a better understanding of the research problem and add to the primary data gathered for a particular study (Marshall & Johnston, 2015:80).

Internal data can be obtained from internal sources, which can be valuable since it is a source of information about the business' own marketing activities and these sources may include the businesses' databases, sales records, and research reports (Pride & Ferrell, 2019:88). Upon completing the search for internal secondary data, the next step will be for the researcher to search for secondary external data (Hair, Wolfinbarger *et al*., 2017:54). *External data* can be obtained from published material, online databases, or information issued by syndicated services. However, it may be more of a challenge, more expensive and problematic to assess the accuracy of external data as compared to internal secondary data (Malhotra *et al*., 2017:100).

5.3.6.2 Methods for collecting primary data

Collecting primary data is time consuming, more costly and more complex as compared to collecting secondary data (Pride & Ferrell, 2019:88). Wiid and Diggines (2015:98) identified the following three main qualitative research methods for collecting primary data:

- **Focus groups:** A focus group gathers respondents to discuss a specific subject matter in a group setting led by a moderator (Hult *et al*., 2014:111). Essentially, each focus group needs respondents to be screened or chosen based on certain pertinent characteristics (Babin & Zikmund, 2016:124). According to Brown *et al*. (2018:44), even though focus groups differ in the size of the panel members, most focus groups consist of eight to twelve members. The duty of the moderator is to encourage all respondents to participate in the discussion as well as leading the discussion by asking questions when necessary (Pride & Ferrell, 2019:84). Focus groups can be used when the research objective is to investigate or describe, rather than predict (Burns *et al*., 2017:152). A group-format is effective and can produce more dialogue even though some participants may be uncomfortable in sharing their views or experiences in the presence of other group members (Polit & Beck, 2018:204). Kumar (2018:124) differentiates a focus group interview from an in-depth interview by indicating that a focus group is conducted with a group of participants, whereas an in-depth interview is conducted with a single participant.

- **In-depth interviews:** This involves a trained interviewer posing a set of semi-structured, probing questions to a respondent usually in a one-to-one setting (Hair, Wolfinbarger *et al*., 2017:81). Malhotra *et al*. (2013:188) posit that the interviewer's task is crucial for the success of the in-depth interview. The objective of this method is to transcend the respondent's surface reactions, hence, discovering more important reasons for the respondent's attitudes and behaviour (Feinberg *et al*., 2013:219). According to Kumar (2018:124), it is anticipated that the understanding between the researcher and the respondent will be improved and the corresponding understanding and confidence between the two will result in detailed and accurate information, since the technique involves frequent contacts and in turn, more time spent with the respondent. Interviews are mainly suitable when the respondents do not prefer to discuss issues in a group setting (Bairagi & Munot, 2019:36).

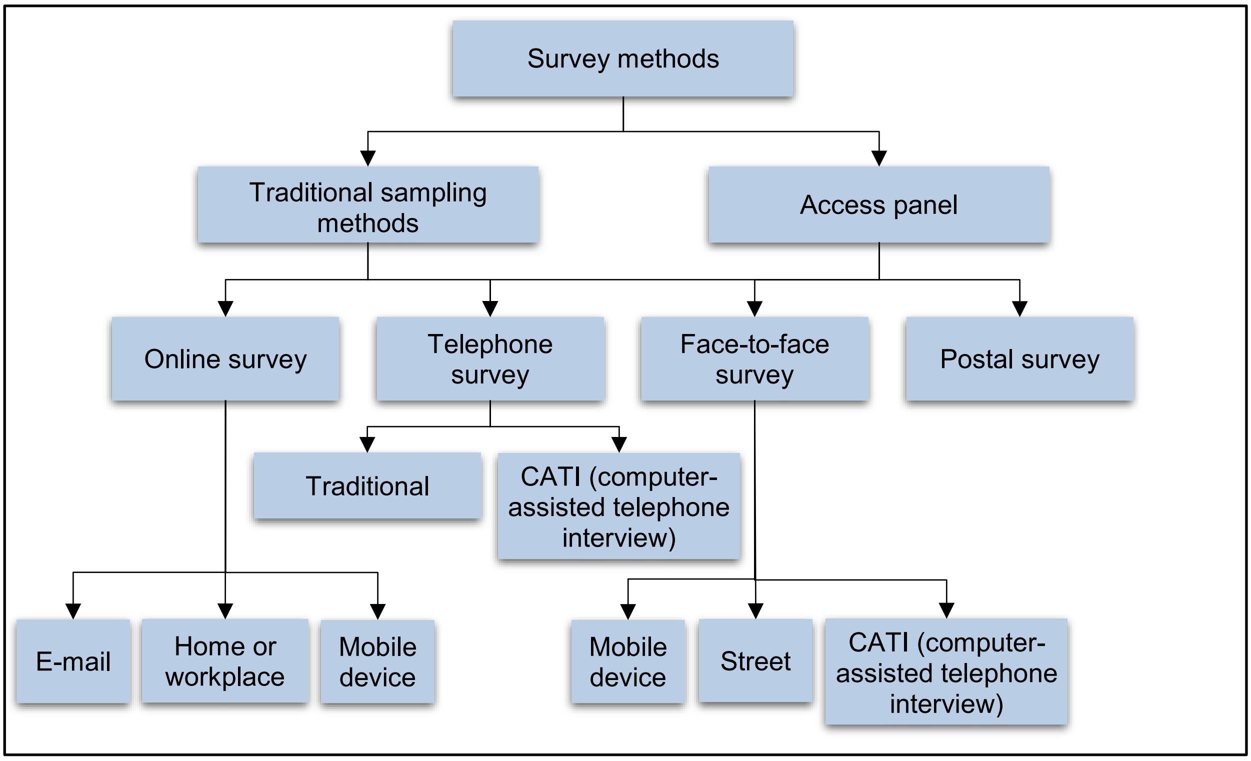
- **Projective techniques:** The main reason for projective tests emanates from the knowledge that people are usually unwilling or unable to reveal their deepest feelings (McDaniel & Gates, 2015:110). Even though participants of projective techniques are aware of their participation in the research project, they may be unaware of the specific purpose of the research (Mooi *et al*., 2018:84). Burns *et al*. (2017:161) identify five common projective techniques used by marketers, including the word-association test, the sentence completion test, the picture test, the cartoon or balloon test and role-playing activity.

  The *word association test* requires the participant to respond at the presentation of a stimulus (word) with the first answer in his/her mind, so as to obtain information about words that have a maximum association (meaning) (Sharma, 2014:280). With *sentence completion*, Hair, Wolfinbarger *et al*. (2017:92) state that, the respondents must answer the presented questions in their own words. *Cartoon or balloon tests* involve the respondents being asked to write the dialogue for a cartoon-like picture (Schindler, 2019:133). With *role-playing*, participants are requested to pretend to be a “third person” such as a friend or neighbour and to describe how they would behave in a specific situation or to a certain statement (Burns *et al*., 2017:162).

The main quantitative research methods for collecting primary data include the following:

- **Surveys:** Surveys include closed-ended questions that often present the respondent with predetermined answers (Schwester, 2015:1). Silver *et al*. (2013:127) explain that surveys produce appropriate data for hypothesis testing, which suggests relationships between the tested variables and between respondent groups. Survey research involves presenting questions to a sample of respondents over a relatively short period of time, and then testing hypotheses or describing a situation based on the responses (Monette *et al*., 2014:161). Kotler and Armstrong (2018:134) posit that survey research is generally the main method used to gather primary data and this approach is more applicable for collecting descriptive information. However, different factors affect the choice of the survey method to be used, including the nature of the research problem, the data required to test the hypothesis and the resources available to the researcher (e.g. funding) (Pride & Ferrell, 2019:89). Access to respondents can be obtained through traditional types of sampling frames (i.e. personal contact, directories, or databases) or through access panels (Malhotra *et al*., 2017:270), as shown in Figure 5-3.

Figure 5-3: A classification of survey methods



Source: Adopted from Malhotra *et al*. (2017:270).

As shown in Figure 5-3, the four methods for administering surveys may be through online surveys, telephone surveys, face-to-face surveys, or postal surveys. With respect to *online surveys*, respondents complete an internet-based questionnaire via e-mail, websites, or mobile devices (Burns *et al*., 2017:181). During a *telephone survey*, an interviewer records on a questionnaire the answers provided by the respondent over the phone (Pride & Ferrell, 2019:90). *Face-to-face surveys* entail an interviewer physically meeting with respondents and asking the questions through personal interaction (Saunders *et al*., 2019:506); whereas *postal surveys* involve self-administered questionnaires that are sent to potential respondents for participation via physical mail (Babin & Zikmund, 2016:187).

Online surveys require less time to complete as compared to telephone surveys. Moreover, the respondent can participate in the online survey at his/her own convenience, it is more stimulating and more interactive (McDaniel & Gates, 2015:150). As noted by Malhotra *et al*. (2017:271), online surveys can be undertaken using devices in homes or workplaces, or they can be administered on mobile devices. During online surveys, respondents are prompted to answer all questions before they can proceed to answer more questions in the subsequent sections of the questionnaire. As a result, problems of missing data which are inherent in other survey methods are eliminated during online surveys (Hair, Wolfinbarger *et al*., 2017:117).

- **Observations:** Observation is the systematic process of recording the actual behaviour of humans, objects, and events as they occur (Babin & Zikmund, 2016:208). Mooi *et al*. (2018:62) assert that observational methods are often used to gain an understanding of what people do, rather than understanding why they perform a specific behaviour. According to Bradley (2013:128), observations can be successful when used to determine problems, thus it is less related to problem-solving research. Since the researcher does not have to question people, the respondents' cooperation may not be needed during observations, which in turn reduces survey biases (Berman *et al*., 2018:228). However, data collected through observations can be biased if the subject is aware that he/she is being observed (Hult *et al*., 2014:123).

- **Experiments:** Experiments permit researchers to conclude the relationship between variables (Pride & Ferrell, 2019:85). Experimental research designs involve the investigation of the influence of an independent variable on a dependent variable, where the independent variable is manipulated through treatment or mediation and the effect of these mediations is observed on the dependent variable (Sharma, 2014:146). Experiments can be performed in a lab or field environment. Lab experiments are conducted in controlled environments (normally in a business or academic lab), thereby permitting for isolating the effects of one or more variables on a specific outcome (Mooi *et al*., 2018:87), whereas field experiments are research studies which involve experimental manipulations that are performed in a natural setting (Bajpai, 2015:173).

For this study, a self-administered questionnaire was used by means of online surveying (accessible via mobile devices) by initially posting the link to the questionnaire on residential online activity Facebook groups and Twitter. However, due to difficulties in acquiring enough data for the sample, the researcher outsourced Consulta (a marketing research agency) to collect the rest of the data. Consulta also made use of online surveying by sharing the link to the questionnaire on an online panel of respondents. An online survey was used since it allows respondents to participate in the survey at their own convenience, allowing easy accessibility of geographically spaced respondents who cannot be easily reached in person. The researcher also used an online survey with the view to eliminate issues related to missing data, as respondents are prompted to complete all the compulsory questions before being able to continue to the next parts of the questionnaire.

In order to collect the data, a questionnaire or data collection form must be designed. Therefore, the subsequent section discusses how to design the data collection form used to collect data from the respondents.

5.3.7 Design the data collection form

This is one of the most fundamental steps of the marketing research process, as the quality of the data collection form determines the quality of the collected data. If the researcher interacts with respondents (ask them questions), the form is referred to as a questionnaire (Burns *et al*., 2017:73). A questionnaire is a structured instrument with a sequence of questions prepared by the researcher, and is designed to collect data about respondents' knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, or feelings (Sharma, 2014:256). McDaniel and Gates (2015:275) posit that designing a questionnaire involves a sequence of steps. Although most researchers tend to follow the same general steps, in some cases, the steps may differ depending on the researcher's choice, the research topic, and the target population. The subsequent sections discuss the basic steps followed in questionnaire development.

5.3.7.1 Preliminary considerations

It is essential to consider the aim of the research prior to questionnaire design (Mooi *et al*., 2018:64). Central to this process is the formulation of research objectives and the identification of information needs (Feinberg *et al*., 2013:267). It is useful to evaluate components of the problem and the research approach, specifically the research questions, hypotheses and the characteristics that influence the research design (Malhotra *et al*., 2017:376). Cooper and Schindler (2014:300) postulate that researchers need enough background information about the subject to obtain information in its most usable format. Without clear knowledge of the subject matter to be researched, irrelevant data may be gathered (Berman *et al*., 2018:222).

For this study, the researcher conducted a background search of information by analysing the secondary data from South African telecommunication industry market reports, and marketing journals to ensure effective questionnaire design and collection of relevant data.

5.3.7.2 Question content

The researcher should establish the purpose of the questionnaire before the questionnaire development. This in turn will provide a guide to the content of the questions and ensure that it produces valuable information that contributes to the research being conducted (Pride & Ferrell, 2019:94). Zikmund *et al*. (2013:334) argue that certain types of questions may be more effective in measuring certain things than others. Therefore, the researcher should determine if the content of the questions accurately address the formulated research objectives. If not, these questions should be adapted or excluded from the survey (Mooi *et al*., 2018:70).

According to Cooper and Schindler (2014:303), four questions guide the researcher in selecting suitable question content:

- Should this question be asked (is it applicable to the research objective)?
- Is the question of the proper scope and does it include all the important aspects?
- Can the respondent accurately answer the posed question?
- Will the respondent willingly respond to the posed question as it is?

For this study, the questionnaire comprised eight parts (as outlined below), which were based on the secondary research objectives formulated in Chapter 1 (see section 1.6.2).

(i) **Cover letter:** A cover letter serves as an important means of persuading the potential respondent to complete and return the questionnaire (Babin & Zikmund, 2016:190). At the beginning of a questionnaire, the significance and purpose of the study is generally described to mention its purpose, as well as to ensure the respondent that the results will be treated confidentially (Mooi *et al*., 2018:78). Thus, for this study, the purpose of the study was indicated in the cover letter and respondents' confidentiality and anonymity were explained and ensured. The contact details of the researcher were also provided, to allow respondents to follow-up if needed and the ethical clearance number assigned to the research was provided.

(ii) **Screening questions:** Hague *et al*. (2016:147) suggest that the questionnaire must have a screening question to ensure that only the relevant people are targeted to participate in the survey. The screening question is determined by the research objectives (Burns *et al*., 2017:224). To ensure that the correct population was targeted, the screening questions for the questionnaire of **this study** aimed at identifying those respondents who had been making use of the services of one of the main South African mobile ISPs (i.e. Cell C, MTN, Telkom, or Vodacom), as well as those respondents who had made a recent complaint to their mobile ISP (between 2017 and 2019).

(iii) **Patronage habits:** The aim of this part of the questionnaire was to obtain background information pertaining to respondents' mobile ISP patronage habits, thus assisting in addressing secondary objective 2 (see section 1.6.2). This part of the questionnaire was compulsory for respondents to answer and consisted of statements determining respondents' duration of using their mobile ISP, the average amount of time spent on the internet, the main purposes for using mobile internet and the service failure experienced from their mobile ISP.

(iv) **Service recovery attributes:** The aim of this part of the questionnaire was to measure the service recovery attributes construct, thus addressing secondary objective 3 (see section 1.6.2). This part of the questionnaire was compulsory to answer and it consisted of statements measuring respondents' perceptions of their mobile ISP's service recovery attributes. The items measuring this construct were adapted from previous studies that confirmed the reliability and validity of the items (further explained in section 5.3.7.9).

(v) **Perceived justice:** The aim of this part of the questionnaire was to measure the perceived justice construct, thus addressing secondary objective 4 (see section 1.6.2). This part of the questionnaire was compulsory to answer and it consisted of statements measuring the justice that respondents perceive they obtain from their mobile ISP. The items measuring this construct were adapted from previous studies that confirmed the reliability and validity of the items (further explained in section 5.3.7.9).

(vi) **Satisfaction with service recovery:** The aim of this part of the questionnaire was to measure the satisfaction with service recovery construct, thus addressing secondary objective 5 (see section 1.6.2). This part of the questionnaire was compulsory to answer and it consisted of statements measuring respondents' satisfaction with the service recovery of their mobile ISP. The items measuring this construct were adapted from previous studies that confirmed the reliability and validity of the items (further explained in section 5.3.7.9).

(vii) **Behavioural intentions:** The aim of this part of the questionnaire was to measure respondents' behavioural intentions towards their mobile ISP, thus addressing secondary objectives 6, 7 and 8 (see section 1.6.2). This part of the questionnaire was compulsory to answer and included items measuring respondents' trust, eWOM intentions, and repurchase intention towards their mobile ISP. The items measuring these constructs were adapted from previous studies that confirmed the reliability and validity of the items (further explained in section 5.3.7.9).

(viii) **Socio-demographic information:** The aim of this part of the questionnaire was to obtain additional background information regarding respondents' socio-demographics, thus forming part of addressing secondary objective 2 (see section 1.6.2). This part of the questionnaire was optional for respondents to complete, since its purpose was only to acquire descriptive data to further characterise and outline the sample, but did not affect the primary objective of this study (i.e. to develop a service recovery model for the South African mobile ISP industry). The questions in this part determined respondents' age, gender, ethnicity, level of education, employment status, and net income.

5.3.7.3 Response formats

Once the researcher has determined the question content, he/she must decide whether to use open or closed-ended questions (Brown *et al*., 2018:118). Most questionnaires include both open and closed-ended questions (Babin & Zikmund, 2016:309), which are subsequently explained.

- **Open-ended questions:** Open-ended questions are used to collect unrestricted responses that are often gathered exactly as expressed by respondents (Hague *et al*., 2016:129). Mooi *et al*. (2018:71) posit that open-ended questions (also referred to as verbatim items) are flexible and allow for an explanation, therefore, making it specifically appropriate for exploratory research. Open-ended answers are a source of information to researchers on the thought process behind decisions and attitudes and usually provide new or different insights (Clow & James, 2014:327). However, although open-ended questions can be easily constructed, it is tedious and time-consuming to analyse (Ary *et al*., 2014:418).

- **Closed-ended questions:** Closed-ended questions generally provide a list of possible responses the respondent can choose from (Hague *et al*., 2016:129). However, the main limitation is that researchers usually fail to include some essential responses (Wimmer & Dominick, 2014:195). Johnson and Christensen (2014:198) posit that closed-ended questions mainly produce quantitative data. Malhotra *et al.* (2017:385) distinguish between three types of closed-ended questions, namely multiple-choice, dichotomous and scale.

    - *Multiple-choice questions* require respondents to make a choice from more than two answers provided (Sharma, 2014:257). Multiple-choice questions are more advantageous as compared to open-ended questions, as these questions can be quickly administered and minimise interview bias (Malhotra *et al*., 2017:387). The number of choices that should be made available to the respondents is a key consideration when constructing multiple-choice questions. The researcher must present all possible and mutually exclusive choices to the respondent (Bajpai, 2015:81).

    - *Dichotomous questions* require the respondent to select an answer from one of the two choices provided (Babin & Zikmund, 2016:309). The choices should be mutually exclusive, which implies that only one dimension of a question should be related to each other (Babin & Zikmund, 2016:310).

    - *Scaled question* is a structured question designed to measure the intensity of a respondent's answer (Lamb *et al*., 2018:163). The main advantage of scaled-response questions is that it allows the measurement of the intensity of respondents' answers. A scaled-response has numbers that can be used as codes (McDaniel & Gates, 2015:286).

For this study, although closed-ended questions were mainly used, since the research was quantitative in nature, the questionnaire also included open-ended questions.

5.3.7.4 Measurement scales

Measurement involves the assigning of numbers or labels to people, objects, or events in accordance with certain guidelines for representing quantities or qualities of attributes (McDaniel & Gates, 2015:222). There are four main measurement scales which that may include nominal, ordinal, interval and ratio scales (Malhotra *et al*., 2017:33) as indicated in Table 5-4. The scale of measurement is used to determine the quantity of information that is contained in the data and it specifies the most applicable data summarisation and statistical analysis (Anderson *et al*., 2018:7).

According to Trochim *et al*. (2016:114), the four basic types of measurement scales include nominal, ordinal, interval, and ratio scales.

- **Nominal scale:** A nominal scale is a figurative labelling scheme whereby numbers only function as labels or tags for identifying and categorising items (Malhotra *et al*., 2017:337). The nominal scale is a categorical scale that only permits the researcher to divide responses into mutually exclusive subgroups with no distances between them (Hair, Wolfinbarger *et al*., 2017:164). A nominal scale enables the researcher to divide the data into two or more distinct categories that are mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive (Schindler, 2019:229). Although nominal scales permit the researcher to determine if two individuals are similar or different, it does not permit a quantitative comparison (Gravetter & Forzano, 2018:66). Demographic-type questions, such as gender and race, are basic examples of nominal scales (Burns *et al*., 2017:206).

- **Ordinal scale:** An ordinal scale is used when the items being measured are ranked or arranged in order with respect to a mutual variable (Aaker *et al*., 2013:263). Measurements on an ordinal scale comprise a series of ranks (Gravetter & Forzano, 2018:66). According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016:218), ranking is used to determine the preferences between two or more items that are ordinal in nature. Ordinal scales indicate only relative size variations that exist among items, namely greater than, less than, or equal to (Burns *et al*., 2017:207). The mathematical calculations that can be done when undertaking measurement with ordinal scales include modes, medians, frequency distributions, and ranges (Hair, Wolfinbarger *et al*., 2017:164). Basic examples of ordinal scales may include questions determining respondents' level of education or income categories (Warne, 2018:25).

- **Interval scale:** An interval scale comprises all information similar to an ordinal scale, but also enables the researcher to compare differences between the objects (Malhotra *et al*., 2017:340). The difference that exists between any two values on the scale is similar to the difference between any other two next values of the scale (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016:209). The benefits of using interval scales are that they permit the researcher to determine the extent to which something is preferred, or the level of agreement that is being expressed through calculations of means and standard deviations (Clow & James, 2014:261). The most frequently used interval scale is the Likert scale, where respondents are required to indicate their agreement or disagreement with a series of statements (Burns *et al*., 2017:209).

- **Ratio scale:** With a ratio scale, the researcher can make comparisons between intervals, rank objects according to magnitude, or use the numbers to identify items (i.e. everything that interval, ordinal, and nominal scales can perform) (Brown *et al*., 2018:173). Usually, ratio scales require the respondents to indicate a certain numerical value as their response, irrespective of whether or not a set of scale points is used (Hair, Wolfinbarger *et al*., 2017:166). A ratio scale contains a zero point that precisely indicates the unavailability of the quantity being measured (Bordens & Abbott, 2018:137). Among the four scales of measurement, a ratio scale is the most significant, because it has a unique zero origin (not an arbitrary origin) and includes all the properties found in the other three scales (i.e. nominal, ordinal and interval) (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016:209).

Table 5-4: Summary of measurement scales

Scale	**Basic characteristics**	**Common examples**	**Marketing example**	**Permissible statistics**	
				Descriptive	**Inferential**
Nominal	Numbers identify and classify objects	Student registration numbers Numbers on rugby players' shirts	Gender classification of retail outlets	Percentages, mode	Chi-square, binomial test
Ordinal	Numbers indicate the relative positions of objects but not the magnitude of differences	Rankings of the top four teams in the football World Cup.	Ranking of service quality delivered by a number of shops	Percentile, median	Rank order correlation, Friedman, ANOVA
Interval	Differences between objects can be compared; arbitrary zero point	Temperature (Fahrenheit, Celsius)	Attitudes, opinions, index numbers	Range, mean, standard deviation	Correlation, t-test, ANOVA, regression, factor analysis
Ratio	Fixed zero point; ratios of scales can be computed	Length, weight	Age, income, costs, sales, market shares	Geometric mean, harmonic mean	Coefficient of variation

Source: Adopted from Malhotra *et al*. (2017:338).

For this study, nominal and ordinal scales were used in parts 2, 3 and 8 of the questionnaire. Interval scale questions were used to measure the constructs of the study (in parts 4 to 7 of the questionnaire), where respondents had to indicate their level of agreement on a 5-point unlabelled Likert scale (ranging from 1 being 'strongly disagree' to 5 being 'strongly agree'). Each question and its respective response format are presented in Table 5-5. The items used to measure the constructs were adapted from previous studies related to the present study.

5.3.7.5 Question wording

Question wording is the conversion of the required question content and structure into words that can be easily understood by respondents (Malhotra *et al*., 2017:389). The wording of each question is a critical task because an inappropriately worded question can result in respondents refusing to answer it, or misunderstanding and answering incorrectly (Brown *et al*., 2018:191). Although it is a challenge to state the most appropriate question wording, several areas that cause respondent confusion or measurement errors can be identified (Cooper & Schindler, 2014:304). Clow and James (2014:337) suggest the following guidelines to support in compiling well-formulated questions:

- Questions should be clearly written, without jargon and ambiguity.
- Questions should be relevant to the respondents.
- Questions should use vocabulary that can be understood by respondents.
- Questions should be in a conversational format.
- The selected scales should be easy to understand and use.
- The researcher should understand the limitations of the human memory.
- Avoid making use of either/or questions.
- Questions should not be double-barrelled.
- Leading questions should be excluded.

For this study, in order to ensure that a logical, understandable, and good quality questionnaire was compiled, a pre-test and revision of the questionnaire was done (refer to section 5.3.7.8) and the above recommendations were taken into consideration to compile the final version (see Table 5-5). The researcher also consulted various examples of questions and measures to ensure that the question wording is consistent with similar existing studies.

5.3.7.6 Question sequence

A component of questionnaire construction that requires careful attention is the correct sequence of questions. The careless ordering of questions can result in negative consequences, such as a decreased response rate or biased responses to questions (Monette *et al*., 2014:167). The appearance of one question can influence the kind of responses of the subsequent ones (Rubin & Babbie, 2017:227). Hence, as recommended by Ary *et al*. (2014:426), it is appropriate to integrate questions of the same content. According to Cohen *et al*. (2018:493), taking into consideration the sequence of the questionnaire items, some of the guidelines include:

- Place general, non-threatening questions at the beginning of the questionnaire.
- Pose easy questions first and make them interesting and answerable.
- Place the most vital questions in the first half of the questionnaire.
- Pose sensitive or possibly embarrassing questions later in the questionnaire.
- Progress from factual to abstract questions over the course of the questionnaire.
- Place open-ended questions later, rather than at the beginning of the questionnaire.
- Demographic and personal questions may be put at the end of the questionnaire.

Rosen (2019:109) posits that demographic-type questions might be perceived as sensitive by some respondents, and if these questions are poorly worded or appear to be irrelevant, respondents might be reluctant to complete the survey. It is therefore ideal to place these types of sensitive questions at the end of a survey and even make it optional to answer.

For this study, the researcher used the above guidelines by asking questions vital to addressing the study’s main objective first (in parts 3 to 7 of the questionnaire) and asking more personal demographic-related questions at the end of the questionnaire (in part 8). These questions (in part 8) were optional, since this information was only required for compiling the sample profile.

5.3.7.7 Physical characteristics

The appearance of the questionnaire can influence respondents’ cooperation when conducting paper-based or online studies (Brown *et al*., 2018:198). An organised questionnaire encourages respondents to be conscientious and complete the survey, whereas a poorly organised survey discourages respondents and may even cause them not to complete the survey (Burns *et al*., 2017:223). Mooi *et al*. (2018:80) suggest that the layout of both mail and internet-based surveys should be concise, specifically in relation to mobile surveys. The researcher should avoid using small font or font colours that reduce questionnaire readability. The questionnaire can be divided based on the questions relevant to each section of the questionnaire (Bajpai, 2015:90).

For this study, the researcher ensured that the questionnaire was easily readable, presentable, and organised, by dividing the questionnaire into distinct parts that focused on addressing the research objectives of the study.

5.3.7.8 Pre-testing and revision

It is a requirement for a questionnaire to be tested prior to the actual survey (McDaniel & Gates, 2015:294). A pre-test involves undertaking a test of the survey on a small, representative set of respondents to reveal questionnaire errors prior to the launch of the actual survey (Burns *et al.*, 2017:230). Regardless of how the pre-test is undertaken, the researcher must bear in mind that the aim of the pre-test is to identify any problems that the questionnaire might cause (Babin & Zikmund, 2016:328).

For this study, 30 respondents who formed part of the target population participated in pre-testing the questionnaire. Upon completion of the pre-test, the identified irregularities in the questionnaire were amended and the questionnaire was proofread to ensure that the recommendations were addressed in designing the final version of the questionnaire. The pre-tested questionnaire did not have a screening question to identify complaining customers. Therefore, the final version of the questionnaire was adapted to include a screening question to identify those respondents who had made a complaint to their mobile ISPs.

5.3.7.9 Compile the final questionnaire

The last step in designing the questionnaire is to compile the final version of the questionnaire. Brown *et al.* (2018:199) emphasise that data gathering should not commence until the researcher has pre-tested the survey. If the pre-test results suggest slight changes, a final draft of the questionnaire can be compiled and distributed to fieldworkers (Feinberg *et al.*, 2013:288).

In designing the final questionnaire **for this study** (refer to Appendix A), the guidelines for questionnaire design (in section 5.3.7) were taken into consideration. To ensure that all the needed and relevant information were collected from respondents, the research objectives of the study were considered in designing the questionnaire. Table 5-5 below presents the questions from the questionnaire, the response format, the measurement scale, the secondary objective the related question/s aim to address, as well as the related hypothesis. The questions were either self-generated by the researcher or adopted from existing research.

Table 5-5: Summary of the questions, response format, measurement scale, secondary objective, hypothesis, and source

Statement	Response format	Measurement scale	Secondary objective	Hypothesis	Source(s)
Screening questions					
Which one of the following mobile ISPs do you MAINLY use?	Multiple-choice	Nominal	N/A	N/A	Self-generated
Have you recently made a complaint to your mobile ISP (between 2017 and 2019)?	Dichotomous				
Patronage habits					
How long have you been using your mobile ISP? Please indicate in YEARS.	Open-ended	Nominal	2	N/A	Self-generated
What is the average amount of time you spend on the internet?	Multiple-choice				
What are the three MAIN purposes for using your mobile internet?	Ranking	Ordinal			
What is the most recent service failure you have experienced from your mobile ISP?	Multiple-choice				
Service recovery attributes					
After the service failure, my mobile ISP offered me adequate compensation for the loss incurred.	Likert scale	Interval	3	H_1 & H_2	Liao (2007); Mostafa *et al.* (2014)
After the service failure, my mobile ISP adequately compensated me for all the time I spent dealing with the service failure.					
After the service failure, my mobile ISP adequately compensated me to cover my financial losses.					
After the service failure, my mobile ISP adequately compensated me for all the hard times I had due to the service failure.					
After the service failure, my mobile ISP adequately compensated me for the inconvenience I went through due to the service failure.					
After the service failure, my mobile ISP reacted promptly to my inquiries regarding the service failure.					

Table 5-5: Summary of the questions, response format, measurement scale, secondary objective, hypothesis, and source (continues)

Statement	Response format	Measurement scale	Secondary objective	Hypothesis	Source(s)
Service recovery attributes					
After the service failure, my mobile ISP quickly attended to my service failure-related problem.	Likert scale	Interval	3	H_1 & H_2	Liao (2007); Mostafa *et al*. (2014)
After the service failure, my mobile ISP responded promptly to my complaint regarding the service failure.					
After the service failure, my mobile ISP did not take long to solve the service failure.					
After the service failure, my mobile ISP apologised to me for what had happened.					
After the service failure, my mobile ISP expressed regret for the mistake that occurred.					
After the service failure, my mobile ISP apologised for the inconvenience the problem had brought to me.					
After the service failure, my mobile ISP apologised for what I had suffered because of the problem.					
After the service failure, my mobile ISP explained why the problem might have occurred.					
After the service failure, my mobile ISP explained which factors might have caused the problem.					
After the service failure, my mobile ISP explained what might have gone wrong.					
After the service failure, my mobile ISP offered a convincing explanation for the reason of the problem.					

Table 5-5: Summary of the questions, response format, measurement scale, secondary objective, hypothesis, and source (continues)

Statement	Response format	Measurement scale	Secondary objective	Hypothesis	Source(s)
Perceived justice					
In resolving the service failure, my mobile ISP gave me what I needed.	Likert scale	Interval	4	H_3	Huang (2011); Ozkan-Tektas and Basgoze (2017)
I did not get what I deserved.					
The outcome I received from my mobile ISP in response to the problem was fair.					
The outcome of addressing the service failure was not up to expectation.					
My mobile ISP showed adequate flexibility in dealing with my problem.					
The length of time taken to resolve my problem was longer than necessary.					
My mobile ISP was appropriately concerned about my problem.					
My mobile ISP did not put the proper effort into resolving my problem.					
My mobile ISP's communications with me were appropriate.					
My mobile ISP did not give me the courtesy I was due.					
Satisfaction with service recovery					
I am satisfied with the way in which my problem was dealt with.	Likert scale	Interval	5	H_2 & H_3	Huang (2011)
I am satisfied with the way my problem was resolved.					
In general, my mobile ISP provided a satisfactory solution to this particular problem.					
I am happy with the way my problem was solved.					

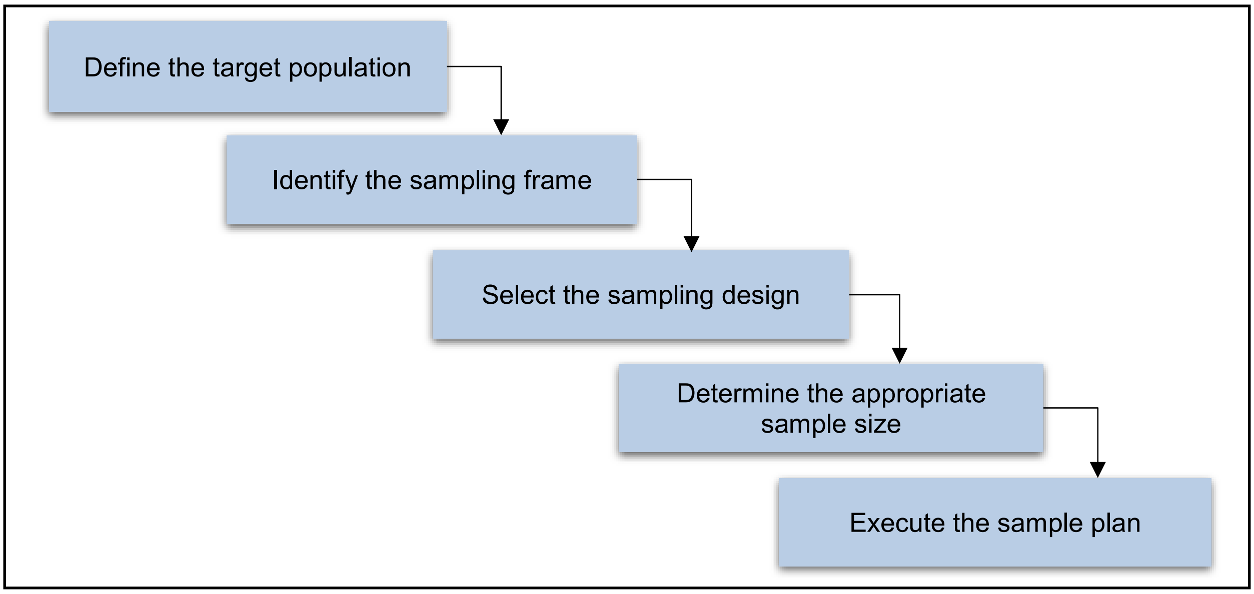
Table 5-5: Summary of the questions, response format, measurement scale, secondary objective, hypothesis, and source (continues)

Statement	Response format	Measurement scale	Secondary objective	Hypothesis	Source(s)
Behavioural intentions					
My mobile ISP can be relied upon to keep its promises.	Likert scale	Interval	6, 7 & 8	H_4, H_5 & H_6	Crosby *et al.* (1990); Ding and Lii (2016)
I believe that my mobile ISP is trustworthy.					
I find it necessary to be cautious in dealing with this mobile ISP.					
I will share my service experience with my mobile ISP through social networking sites or mobile technology.					
I will say positive things about my mobile ISP through social networking sites or mobile technology.					
I will recommend my mobile ISP if someone ask me for information on social networking sites or mobile technology					
After the service failure I have experienced, I will not use my current mobile ISP in the near future.					
I intend to use my mobile ISP's services in the future.					
I will keep using the services of my mobile ISP.					
Socio-demographic information					
In which year were you born?	Open-ended	Nominal	1	N/A	Self-generated
What is your gender?	Dichotomous				
What is your ethnicity?	Multiple-choice				
What is your highest level of education?		Ordinal			
What is your employment status?					
What is your personal average net income (after deductions)?					

5.3.8 Determine the sample plan and size

Step 8 of the marketing research process entails determining the sample plan of the study. A sample plan (as illustrated in Figure 5-4) provides the researcher with guidance on the specific stages to follow in order to draw and reach the desired sample (Burns *et al*., 2017:257). Sampling is a fundamental part of marketing research and requires in-depth examination (Babin & Zikmund, 2016:337). A sample element is an object (i.e. respondent) about which, or from which, the required information is obtained from (Malhotra *et al*., 2017:414). Neelankavil (2015:240) defines sampling as the process that targets a small number of elements of the population as a basis for representing and making conclusions for the total population. The process of selecting a subset of individuals from the population to survey is known as sampling and the subset of individuals selected is the sample (Clow & James, 2014:225). The most significant aspect of sampling is that the targeted sample should be representative of the population. A representative sample implies that the characteristics of the sample resemble the total population (Mooi *et al*., 2018:41). Due to the representative nature of samples, it allows conclusions to be validly generalised to the population from which they are drawn (Monette *et al*., 2014:132).

Figure 5-4: Sample plan



Source: Adopted from Sekaran and Bougie (2016:240).

5.3.8.1 Define the target population

Once the researcher has chosen to conduct sampling rather than a census, the following step involves numerous important sampling decisions and tasks that have to be made, including the task of defining the target population (Silver *et al*., 2013:153). The target population is defined by Grove *et al*. (2015:250) as the group of individuals (i.e. sample elements) who meet the requirements of the sampling criteria. Mooi *et al*. (2018:41) explain that a population is defined based on the research to be undertaken and the aim of the research. Notably, in some instances, the target population is so small that it is permissible for the researcher to collect data from all the individuals of the target population (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015:24). Ary *et al*. (2014:171) suggest that since the goal of obtaining a sample from a population is to acquire information about that population, it is of significance that the respondents included in the sample constitute a representative cross-section of individuals in the population.

The target population **for this study** included customers (i.e. individuals) of the main South African mobile ISPs (i.e. Cell C, MTN, Telkom, or Vodacom) who have recently complained (between 2017 and 2019) to their respective service provider.

5.3.8.2 Identify the sampling frame

The sampling frame is a representation of the total available sample elements in the population from which the sample is obtained (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016:240). According to Malhotra *et al*. (2017:415), the sampling frame constitutes a list or set of directions for establishing the target population. Despite the source for obtaining the sampling frame, it is generally a challenge and costly to acquire an accurate, representative and up-to-date sampling frame (Hair, Wolfinbarger *et al*., 2017:138). Without access to a representative sampling frame available, the researcher will be unable to make use of probability sampling and will instead have to implement a non-probability sampling method (Saunders *et al*., 2019:297).

A representative sampling frame of the target population was not available **for this study** since the researcher was unable to obtain a complete and up-to-date customer list from mobile ISPs. The main reason these providers were unwilling and unable to provide this information of their customers, is due to the South African Protection of Personal Information Act 4 of 2013, which safeguards personal information when processed by a responsible party.

5.3.8.3 Select the sampling design

Prior to selecting a sampling design or sampling method, the researcher responsible for selecting the suitable design for a particular research project will need to identify a number of sampling criteria and assess the relative significance of each criterion (Babin & Zikmund, 2016:356). When formulating a sample plan, the main consideration should be the selection of a sampling technique that provides more quality results for the specific research under study (Newby, 2014:154). Sampling designs can be categorised as either probability sampling or non-probability sampling (Pride & Ferrell, 2019:88), as summarised in Table 5-6 and further discussed below.

Table 5-6: Probability versus non-probability sampling designs

Probability sampling	Non-probability sampling
Can be generalised to the population defined by the sampling frame.	Cannot be generalised beyond the sample.
Can apply statistical methods, hypothesis testing, confidence bounds.	Exploratory research helps in generating hypotheses, analytical inference.
Can estimate population statistics/parameters from the sample.	Population statistics/parameters are not of interest.
Reduces bias by varying sample design.	Biased, sample adequacy cannot be known.
Selection from the list of the population.	No defined population. Cheaper, easier and more convenient to conduct.

Source: Adopted from Ramasubramanian and Singh (2017:80).

According to Wimmer and Dominick (2014:92), the following four issues should be taken into consideration when deciding whether to use probability or non-probability sampling:

(i) **Purpose of the study:** Some research studies do not aim to generalise the results to the population, but instead to examine variable relationships or gather exploratory data to design questionnaires or measurement instruments. In this case, non-probability sampling is more applicable.

(ii) **Cost versus value:** A sample should produce the greatest value at a low cost. If the type and quality of information or goal of the study result in high costs of conducting probability sampling, alternatively non-probability sampling is appropriate to use.

(iii) **Time constraints:** In several situations, researchers gather data under a limited time due to time frames imposed by sponsoring agents, management orders, or publication guidelines. Considering that probability sampling is usually time-consuming, a non-probability sample may meet the need temporarily.

(iv) **Amount of acceptable error:** In preliminary research studies, or pre-test studies where error control is not the main issue, a non-probability sample is often satisfactory.

5.3.8.3.1 Probability sampling

The main principle of probability sampling is to produce useful descriptions of the entire population. Therefore, a sample drawn from a certain population must essentially demonstrate a similar variation to that population (Murphy *et al*., 2018:172). With probability sampling, every object or element in the target population has the same chance to be included in the sample (Clow & James, 2014:235). Probability sampling allows the researcher to calculate the sampling error, which is an estimate of the degree to which the sample values differ from those of the target population (Monette *et al*., 2014:135). Neelankavil (2015:240) states that the most frequently used probability sampling techniques include simple random sampling, stratified random sampling, cluster sampling, and systematic sampling. These sampling techniques are subsequently described and compared (in terms of benefits and limitations) in Table 5-7.

- **Simple random sampling:** As defined by Johnson and Christensen (2014:251), simple random sampling is a sample drawn by a process whereby every element of the target population has an equal chance of being selected for the research project. Simple random sampling is applicable when the sample is small and the population needs to be the same and easily accessible (Bairagi & Munot, 2019:92). Simple random sampling is attained by randomly choosing elements from the identified sampling frame (Grove *et al*., 2015:259).

- **Stratified random sampling:** Can be used when the researcher has an under-represented group at hand within a specified population. Essentially, the researcher must stratify the sampling frame that is, divide the sampling frame into two mutually exclusive groups, and then obtain two random samples (Schwester, 2015:174). The benefit of stratified sampling is that it allows the researcher to examine the differences that possibly exist between different subgroups of the population (Ary *et al*., 2014:175).

- **Systematic sampling:** This is a probability sampling technique whereby the sample elements are randomly chosen from the target population at pre-set, fixed intervals (Boswell & Cannon, 2018:229). Systematic sampling is efficient sampling because it uses a random starting point, which ensures that there is adequate randomness in the systematic sample to estimate an equal probability of any element of the target population being selected for the sample (Burns *et al*., 2017:246).

- **Cluster sampling:** This is mainly used in two types of research situations, namely (a) when the researcher sees it essential to acquire a geographically dispersed sample but recognises that obtaining a simple random sample will need more travel time and expense, and (b) the researcher is unable to determine the individual elements constituting the population and cannot develop a sampling frame (Grove *et al*., 2015:261). Stufflebeam and Coryn (2014:529) explain that elements within a cluster are usually physically close together and therefore tend to possess the same characteristics and the measurement of one element within a cluster may be associated with measurement on another.

Table 5-7: Probability sampling techniques

Technique	Description	Benefits / limitations
Simple random sampling	Each subject has the same chance to be selected. Strategy used upholds randomisation.	High probability that the sample will represent the population as long as the sample size is sufficient.
Stratified random sampling	Strata must be mutually exclusive, so that a subject can be assigned to only one stratum. Random sampling used to select a subject for each stratum.	High probability that the sample will represent the population if the number of subjects in each stratum is sufficient.
Systematic random sampling	Begin with random sampling and count the nth subject on the list.	If bias occurs, this type of sampling is not as representative as the others.
Cluster sampling	Simple random sampling used first to select clusters and then select subjects within each cluster.	Greater potential that the sample does not represent the population depending on how the initial clusters are selected.

Source: Adopted from Hall and Roussel (2017:7).

5.3.8.3.2 Non-probability sampling

With non-probability sampling, the sample elements in the population do not have an equal chance of being selected for the sample; therefore, non-probability samples are less probable to be representative of the entire population than probability samples (Murphy *et al*., 2018:172). Non-probability sampling techniques are mostly used because it is easy to implement and generally less costly than probability sampling (Mooi *et al*., 2018:45). According to Neelankavil (2015:240), the most frequently used non-probability sampling techniques include convenience sampling, judgement sampling, quota sampling and snowball sampling. These techniques are subsequently described and compared (in terms of benefits and limitations) in Table 5-8.

- **Convenience sampling:** This is the use of readily available individuals or elements as respondents in a research project (Bairagi & Munot, 2019:97). According to Gravetter and Forzano (2018:122), convenience samples are selected based on the sample elements' availability to the researcher and their willingness to respond. In contrast to all the other sampling methods, convenience sampling is the least expensive and less time-consuming (Malhotra *et al*., 2017:421).

- **Judgement sampling:** This involves the researcher making a personal judgement that the sample elements to be selected will provide the most accurate information pertaining to the research topic (Lamb *et al*., 2018:167). Purposive selection can be considered when the sample is small and the researcher can select typical elements, remove unusual elements that could be selected in a simple random sample and informally confirm that the range of elements is represented (Ornstein, 2013:82).

- **Quota sampling:** This involves the respondents being selected based on predetermined quotas related to aspects such as demographics, attitudes, or behaviours (Hair, Wolfinbarger *et al.*, 2017:147). According to Burns *et al.* (2017:256), the quotas are determined using the objectives, and are defined by the main characteristics used to identify the population. The researcher identifies the groups or subgroups to focus on, decides on the number of people to be part of each of these groups, and then chooses a convenience sample from each group (Johnson & Christensen, 2014:264). As a result, quota sampling ensures that every subgroup in the target population is represented in the sample (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016:247).

- **Snowball sampling:** This involves selecting a small number of initial respondents and then work with those respondents to find more respondents (Babin & Zikmund, 2016:350). More precisely, the researcher will ask the initial respondents to ask more respondents to participate in the study whom they think can meet the criteria of the study (Trochim *et al.*, 2016:90). The process of snowball sampling is continued with more respondents until no further significant information can be gathered from additional respondents, or until there are no more respondents available (Sarantakos, 2013:179). Snowball sampling is useful in circumstances where the sample elements are scarce or difficult to identify (Knapp, 2014:23).

Table 5-8: Non-probability sampling techniques

Technique	Description	Benefits / limitations
Convenience sampling	Inclusion criteria identified prior to selecting elements; all elements invited.	May not be representative of the target population.
Judgement sampling	The researcher has sufficient knowledge to select a sample of experts. Identify criteria to include in the selection of elements.	Because the sample is selected by the researcher, cannot generalise to population; generalising the results is not an expected outcome.
Quota sampling	Quotas must be mutually exclusive. Convenience sampling used to select a subject from each subgroup.	Because the sample within each group is selected using convenience sampling, it may not represent the population.
Snowball sampling	The researcher selects initial sample elements for study. Data saturation is reached.	Cannot generalise to population; generalising the results is not an expected outcome.

Source: Adopted from Hall and Roussel (2017:8).

This study implemented non-probability sampling, since a representative and up-to-date sampling frame of the target population was not available. Furthermore, the convenience sampling technique was chosen, as it is less time consuming to facilitate than other sampling methods as well as less costly to implement. Lastly, the convenience sampling technique was chosen in order to access those respondents who were available and willing to participate in the study since the survey was accessible online.

5.3.8.4 Determine the appropriate sample size

When the researcher has identified the sample elements and how the sampling will be conducted, he/she can finally determine the number of sample elements to be included in the sample (Boswell & Cannon, 2018:231). Establishing the sample size is a difficult decision, which involves financial, statistical, and managerial considerations (Hollensen, 2015:633). In order to determine the sample size for non-probability samples, it is generally an outcome of the researcher's subjective, intuitive judgement, which is based either on previous studies, industry standards, or the available budget (Hair, Wolfinbarger *et al.*, 2017:151). In some cases, research is critiqued for using a small sample to justify the researcher's assumptions (Ary *et al.*, 2014:179). Wiid and Diggines (2015:202) postulate that the sample size can be determined by one of the following techniques:

- **Blind guesses:** Involves the researcher making his/her own judgement to decide on the sample size. However, this method is subjective and does not take into consideration the accuracy of the survey results.

- **Statistical method:** The statistical method uses statistical formulae to establish the sample size based on (a) the desired level of confidence, (b) the required degree of accuracy or precision of the sample results and (c) the standard deviation of the target population.

Burns *et al*. (2017:278) further suggest that a sample size can be based on the statistical analysis approach, which implies the researcher desires to perform a specific type of data analysis that has certain sample size requirements. This statistical analysis approach applies to SEM, where certain sample sizes requirements need to be adhered to. According to Malhotra *et al*. (2017:805), with structural equation models that have five constructs or more – with several constructs being measured with less than three items and with multiple low communalities (less than 0.5) – the minimum required sample size is at least 400 respondents. Normally, the larger the sample size the better the reliability and precision of the survey findings (Veal, 2018:233) and in order to conduct a SEM analysis, a large sample size is required (Kelloway, 2015:16). Considering that a small sample size will limit the generalisability of data collected (Hair, Wolfinbarger *et al*., 2017:119), the sample size **for this study** was determined based on the recommendations of Malhotra *et al*. (2017:805).

As explained above, a sample size can be determined using statistical methods, thus, similarly SEM analysis has specific sample size requirements (Burns *et al*., 2017:278). Consequently, the minimum sample size guideline for this study was based on the above recommendations by Malhotra *et al*. (2017:805), since the conceptual model of this study included six constructs (refer to Figure 4-1).

5.3.8.5 Execute the sample plan

The last stage of the sample plan (as per Figure 5-4) involves the execution of the plan. Kotler and Armstrong (2018:140) recommend that researchers must be vigilant to ensure that the sample plan is correctly executed. The researcher should therefore safeguard against problems that may arise from data collection methods and technologies, data quality and timeliness.

For this study, the researcher considered the abovementioned recommendations in executing the sample plan. Table 5-9 presents a summary of the sampling for this study.

Table 5-9: Sample plan summary for this study

Sampling aspect	Description
Target population	Customers (i.e. individuals) of the main South African mobile ISPs (i.e. Cell C, MTN, Telkom, or Vodacom), who have complained to their mobile ISP (between 2017 and 2019).
Sampling frame	No sampling frame was available.
Sampling design	Non-probability, convenience sampling.
Sample size	400 respondents.
Sample elements	Customers (i.e. individuals) of the main South African mobile ISPs (i.e. Cell C, MTN, Telkom, or Vodacom), who have complained to their mobile ISP and who were accessible to the researcher (from June 2018 to May 2019).

5.3.9 Collect the data

Collecting data is a practical, but in some circumstances challenging phase of the marketing research process (Mooi *et al*., 2018:23) and involves sample elements providing responses to the questions asked by the researcher (Burns *et al*., 2017:290). The primary objective of data collection is to acquire quality evidence that permits the researcher to analyse the formulation of convincing and credible answers to validate the research hypotheses (Bairagi & Munot, 2019:131). Hair, Wolfinbarger *et al*. (2017:250) assert that data collection must be conducted only with qualified respondents. Therefore, to ensure accuracy of the data collected, respondents are screened according to some preselected criteria (i.e. complaining customers of the main South African mobile ISPs).

The researcher can collect data either on his/her own or contract a marketing research agency (Malhotra *et al*., 2017:474) which charges certain fees to collect the data on behalf of the researcher (Bajpai, 2015:190). It is essential for the individuals responsible for the data collection to follow the process that has been prescribed, or else the results can be affected (Clow & James, 2014:360). Descriptive research designs normally use data collection methods that encompass posing structured questions to respondents about what they think, feel, and do. As a result, descriptive research frequently results in the use of survey research methods to gather quantitative data from a number of sample elements (Hair, Wolfinbarger *et al*., 2017:109).

Notably, the data collection phase involves several ethical considerations (Saunders *et al*., 2019:268). The respondents of any research project have the right to their individual privacy or even to remain anonymous. As a result, research should be appropriate and principled and ethical values should be applied in every researcher's plan as an indication of good practice (Brunt *et al*., 2017:11). According to Gravetter and Forzano (2018:83), ethical matters provide guidelines on (a) the type of measurement methods that may be used for particular respondents, (b) the manner in which researchers may select respondents to participate in the research, (c) the research strategies that may be used for certain populations, (d) the type of research design that may be used with a particular population, (e) the manner in which the researcher should conduct the research, (f) how data analysis may be done, and (g) the manner in which the research results should be reported. The researcher is therefore liable for the collection of data that is accurate and unbiased in order to demonstrate integrity and maintain the ethical nature of the research (Burke & Soffa, 2018:202).

The primary data **for this study** was collected by means of an online survey by the researcher (using Google Forms) and by Consulta (a marketing research agency). Initially, the researcher shared the online survey on social networking sites (such as Facebook and Twitter). However, the response rate was low and the researcher was unable to acquire an adequate sample during the initial data collection period. As a result, Consulta was outsourced to assist with the data collection who acquired the majority of the responses. An online survey was used for this study, since it is generally easier to reach a large sample that is geographically dispersed with an online survey (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016:158). The researcher also chose an online survey with the view to eliminate problems of missing data associated with other survey methods (Hair, Wolfinbarger *et al*., 2017:117).

The data was collected from customers of South African mobile ISPs (i.e. Cell C, MTN, Telkom, or Vodacom) who have complained to their service provider, and who were accessible between June 2018 to May 2019. Due to the unavailability of a sampling frame, non-probability convenience sampling was used to collect the data. The final realised sample size for the study was 484 responses, which was above the proposed sample size (as further discussed in section 6.2) and thus adequate for statistical analysis of a structural equation model with five or more constructs (see section 5.3.8.4).

Furthermore, ethical clearance (Ethics number: NWU-00313-18-A4) was obtained for the research (from the North-West University's Research Ethics Regulatory Committee) to provide ethical guidelines for the researcher to adhere to during the research process. This study was classified as a low risk study (refer to Appendix B). The ethical considerations pertained to issues such as the right to privacy of respondents, anonymity, and the reporting of results. The researcher ensured ethical compliance by implementing the ethical guidelines provided by the ethics committee.

5.3.10 Analyse the data

Step 10 of the marketing research process entails the analysis of the collected data. Prior to analysing the data, the dataset must be inspected to address issues such as incomplete responses, biased responses and suspicious responses (Burns *et al*., 2017:310). Data analysis and interpretation is a critical step of the research process, which encompasses the computation of specific measures together with searching for patterns of relationship that exist among different data groups (Sharma, 2014:299).

It is essential for researchers to process and analyse the collected data to identify vital information and obtain additional insight (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018:140). The goal of performing data analysis is to use statistical tools to present data in a format that will attain the research objectives (Burns *et al*., 2017:74). Furthermore, Lamb *et al*. (2018:167) posit that the goal of data analysis is to interpret and make conclusions from the collected data. In the preparatory phases of a research project, the type of data analysis should have been identified in general terms and reinforced after the questionnaire pre-testing phase (Brunt *et al*., 2017:65). The researcher needs to adopt different analytical tools and methods during statistical analysis and to verify the accuracy of the acquired results (Bairagi & Munot, 2019:23).

Aaker *et al*. (2013:413) posit that various aspects could influence the selection of the applicable method for data analysis, including (a) the nature of the data, (b) the research design, and (c) assumptions fundamental to the test statistic and related considerations. The data analysis results will further lead the researcher in deciding whether to support or reject the proposed hypotheses (Pride & Ferrell, 2019:95).

After the data is collected, coded, and verified, the researcher can analyse the information (Marshall & Johnston, 2015:81). Researchers can transfer data from the questionnaires into software packages to help them in the data analysis process (Burns *et al*., 2017:73). Conclusions and recommendations are drawn from the analysed data and corresponding research findings (Clow & James, 2014:441).

For this study, IBM SPSS with AMOS version 25 was used for data analysis. The data was initially captured in Excel, as it was obtained from two sources (i.e. Google Forms and Consulta). Thereafter, the data was coded and the two data sets were combined and transferred to SPSS for statistical analysis. The data was analysed by the North-West University's Statistical Consultation Services (see Appendix C), which also proofread the empirical results (in Chapter 6) to ensure the correct interpretation and reporting of findings.

The following sections elaborate on the basic available data analysis techniques, with specific reference to the techniques implemented in this study.

5.3.10.1 Reliability and validity

Irrespective of whether the research is experimental or non-experimental in nature, the results must be reliable and valid in order to make inferences (Johnson & Christensen, 2014:279). Consequently, the reliability and validity of all measurement scales must be assessed (Hair, Wolfinbarger *et al*., 2017:167).

- **Reliability**

  Reliability refers to the degree to which a scale generates consistent results from repeated measurements (Pride & Ferrell, 2019:87). Reliability can affect construct validity. If a questionnaire fails to produce reliable results, it cannot meaningfully or properly reflect behaviour, belief, feeling, or motivation (Fallon, 2016:11). When the same respondent is measured twice under similar conditions and a constant relationship exists between the two measurements, then it can be concluded that the measurement scale is reliable (Gravetter & Forzano, 2018:306). Pallant (2016:6) identifies two indicators of a scale's reliability, namely test-retest reliability (also called temporal stability) and internal consistency reliability.

  To measure *test-retest reliability*, the same measurement instrument must be administered to the same individuals on two different occasions (Rubin & Babbie, 2017:201). With respect to internal consistency reliability, Sirakaya-Turk *et al*. (2017:89) posit that it addresses the level to which the different items of a scale are similar.

  Internal consistency reliability is measured mainly by the Cronbach's alpha coefficient (Mooi *et al*., 2018:289). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient can range from 0.0 to 1.0, where a generally acceptable lower limit for the coefficient is 0.70 (Hair, Wolfinbarger *et al*., 2017:168). The main benefit of using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient is that it identifies items within a construct that are not a good measure and have a low correlation with other items (Clow & James, 2014:269).

- **Validity**

  Researchers should pay attention to the validity of the measurement scales to confirm if it actually measures what it is expected to measure (i.e. if the measurement is meaningful) (Ary *et al*., 2014:435). Feinberg *et al*. (2013:128) define the validity of measure as the degree to which the measurement process is free from systematic and random error. Hence, validity is an assessment of the accuracy of a measurement scale (Hair, Wolfinbarger *et al*., 2017:168). Pallant (2016:7) classifies validity into content, criterion and construct validity. According to Rubin and Babbie (2017:203), *content validity* is the extent to which a measure includes the various meanings included within the concept. C*riterion validity* reflects how a scale performs as expected in relation to other variables chosen as meaningful criteria (criterion variables) (Malhotra *et al*., 2017:362). Kumar (2018:155) defines *construct validity* as a reflection of the quality of a measurement scale to measure exactly what it is intended to.

  For construct validity to be determined, there should be (a) justification of the theoretical relationship between the construct and the measurement scale, (b) an establishment of the relationships that exist between the concepts and other variables, and (c) the existing relationships between the construct and other theoretically associated variables should be analysed (Sirakaya-Turk *et al*., 2017:90). Construct validity is further measured through convergent and discriminant validity (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016:222). *Convergent validity* is the degree to which a scale is positively related to other measurements of the same construct (Malhotra *et al*., 2017:362). Convergent validity is confirmed when the scores obtained of two instruments measuring a similar construct have a high correlation (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016:222). On the other hand, *discriminant validity* is the degree to which one construct is unrelated to other constructs and represents a distinctive construct (Hair, Wolfinbarger *et al*., 2017:169). Discriminant validity indicates a low correlation between the questions that formulate a construct and other questions that formulate another construct (Civelek, 2018:41). Establishing discriminant validity therefore means that a construct is different and it records facts that are not represented by other constructs in the same model (Hair, Hult *et al*., 2017:104).

For this study, the internal consistency reliability of the measures was determined by means of the Cronbach's alpha coefficient. In addition, content and face validity were assessed through the input from expert researchers, peers and literature review. In order to determine construct validity, convergent and discriminant validity were established by conducting a confirmatory factor analysis (see section 5.3.10.2.2).

5.3.10.2 Data analysis strategy for this study

Statistics are used to analyse quantitative data through description (using descriptive statistics) and prediction (using inferential statistics) (Quinlan *et al.*, 2015:359). The data analysis conducted for this study are subsequently discussed.

5.3.10.2.1 Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics assist in describing the data collected (Quinlan *et al.*, 2015:359). Furthermore, descriptive statistics assist researchers to arrange, summarise, and simplify the research results (Gravetter & Forzano, 2018:375). Trochim *et al*. (2016:280) note that descriptive statistics provide valuable summaries of the sample so that potential patterns may be identified.

For this study, the descriptive statistical methods that were used are briefly described below.

- **Frequency** is a systematic grouping of data values through which the data are rank ordered and the frequencies of each distinct data value are shown (Johnson & Christensen, 2014:520). Moreover, a frequency refers to how many times an entry (response) appears in the dataset (Hair, Wolfinbarger *et al*., 2017:265). Frequencies are used to identify outliers, which refer to those observations that are distinct from all other observations that must be treated as a special case (Brown *et al*., 2018:255). **In this study**, frequencies were reported in order to compile the sample profile (and subsequently address secondary objective 2).

- **Percentage** refers to a frequency expressed as a fraction of 100 (Aaker *et al*., 2013:410). Percentages are frequently used in marketing research since they indicate the relative significance of figures more visible in contrast to the original data (Wiid & Diggines, 2015:252). Percentages can be classified as valid percentages or cumulative percentages. *Valid percentages* establish the frequency for each category calculated with respect to the valid number of total responses, excluding those responses without answers (i.e. missing values) (Benzo *et al*., 2018:354). The *cumulative percentage* is the total of the valid percentages (Rudestam & Newtown, 2014:190). **In this study**, the valid percentages were used to express the frequencies (as part of the sample profile) because it is a more accurate indicator of the frequency ratio (Benzo *et al*., 2018:354).

- A **mean** is the average of the total observations made. It is acquired by adding up all scores and dividing the sum by the number of scores (Sarantakos, 2013:418). **For this study**, individual mean values (for each statement measuring the constructs) and overall means (for each construct) were calculated.

- **Standard deviation** is the measure of differences around the mean of a distribution (George & Mallery, 2019:375). According to Hair, Wolfinbarger *et al*. (2017:266), standard deviation is the evaluation of the average dispersion of the values in a set of responses with regard to its mean. The standard deviation is a vital descriptive statistics concept since it reflects the extent of variation within a data set (Schindler, 2019:355). The standard deviation was calculated for each statement measuring the constructs as well as for each overall construct.

5.3.10.2.2 Confirmatory factor analysis

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is usually conducted through SEM (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2014:662). The purpose of a CFA is to confirm if measurements are reliable and valid (Hackett, 2019:233). In a CFA model, the R^2-value signifies the degree to which a measured variable's variance is explained by a latent variable. From a measurement perspective, the R^2-value signifies the extent to which an item measures a construct (Hair *et al*., 2014:617). The CFA output can therefore provide plausible evidence to confirm the convergent and discriminant validity of constructs (Brown, 2015:2). Based on the CFA results, the fitness indexes represent the construct validity (Shau, 2017:222), which can include the Adjusted GFI (AGFI), the Chi-square (χ^2) statistic, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), the Standardised Root-mean square residual (SRMR), the Normed Fit Index (NFI), and the Parsimony Normed Fit Index (PNFI) (Hair *et al*., 2014:630) as further indicated in Table 5-10. The goal of a CFA is to validate if the sum of factors (or constructs) and the loadings of the observed (indicator) variables on them observe what it is expected to on a theoretical basis (Malhotra *et al*., 2017:798). According to Schumacker and Lomax (2016:93), CFA assesses a hypothesised theoretical model, which implies that it establishes if the hypothesised model yields a variance-covariance matrix, which is similar to the sample variance-covariance matrix. **For this study**, the CFA was conducted to assess the convergent validity and discriminant validity of the model.

(i) Assessment of convergent validity

Convergent validity measures the magnitude to which a scale positively correlates with other measures of the similar construct. Convergent validity can be established based on the size of the factor loadings of the variable (Malhotra *et al*., 2017:808). Therefore, high factor loadings imply that a certain factor is well-represented by a variable (Mooi *et al*., 2018:280). In general, the minimum cut-off point for all factor loadings should be statistically significant and higher than 0.5 and ideally above 0.7. A loading of 0.7 or above indicates that the construct explains 50% or more the variation in the observed variable as $(0.71)^2 = 0.5$ (Malhotra *et al*., 2017:808).

Convergent validity of the construct can also be established through average variance extracted (AVE) (Hair, Hult *et al*., 2017:111). The AVE represents the average amount of variance that is explained by a construct in its indicator variables as compared to the total variance of its indicators (Henseler *et al*., 2015:116). The AVE values range from 0 to 1 and it represents the ratio of the total variance as a result of the latent variable. An AVE value of 0.5 or higher indicates good convergent validity as this implies that the latent construct accounts for 50% or more of the variance in the observed variables on average. However, if the AVE value is less than 0.5, the variance caused by the measurement error will be higher than the variance captured by the construct. This means the validity of the different indicators and the construct is questionable (Malhotra *et al*., 2017:808).

(ii) Assessment of discriminant validity

Discriminant validity indicates a low correlation between constructs that are supposed to be different (McDaniel & Gates, 2015:237). In order to establish discriminant validity, it is important that the AVE values for each construct in the data set are larger than the correlation coefficients of that respective construct with other constructs (Civelek, 2018:41). According to Malhotra *et al*. (2017:809), discriminant validity can be determined based on how a construct explains its observed variables more than it does explain other constructs. Therefore, in order to establish discriminant validity, the square root of each construct's AVE must be greater than its correlation with other constructs (Hair, Hult *et al*., 2017:117).

5.3.10.2.3 Structural equation modelling

SEM is a statistical method that enables the researcher to examine different models concerning the interrelationships that exist among a set of variables (Pallant, 2016:108). The term structural equation modelling bears two essential aspects of the process, namely (a) that the causal processes under investigation are represented by a series of structural equations, and (b) that the respective structural relations can be modelled by picture presentation to allow a visible conceptualisation of the theory (Byrne, 2016:3). The objective of SEM is to test if the conceptual model is supported by the data collected from the sample. If the collected data support the conceptual model, then the hypothesised relationships are confirmed (Schumacker & Lomax, 2016:1). According to Hu and Bentler (1999:2), the use of SEM commences with the specification of the model to be assessed. SEM allows various relationships to be tested at once using a single model with different relationships rather than individually testing each relationship (Hussain *et al*., 2018:10). SEM models usually present the squared multiple correlations (R^2-value) for each variable measured (Hair *et al*., 2014:617).

When researchers conduct SEM, they typically follow three steps, namely (a) hypothesising a theoretical (conceptual) model, (b) determining the overall fit of the data to the model, and (c) testing the particular parameters of the proposed theoretical model (Hancock & Mueller, 2013:3). The hypothesised or conceptual model can be statistically tested through a simultaneous analysis of the overall system of variables to determine the degree to which it is consistent with the available data (Byrne, 2016:3). SEM does not only provide a means of assessing each of the relationships simultaneously, but also allows the integration of multi-item scales to account for measurement error related to each of the scales (Hair *et al*., 2014:20).

In SEM, the relationship that exists between variables can be a path series, whether those variables are observed or latent (Gerrard & Johnson, 2015:253). SEM illustrates the relationship between the observed and latent variables in different types of theoretical models, which yields a quantitative test of hypotheses by the researcher (Schumacker & Lomax, 2016:1). Different structural parameters (e.g. factor loadings, regression paths) that are smaller compared to the number of observed parameters are used to signify the hypotheses (Bowen & Guo, 2012:7). SEM can function as a mediating variable when analysing several mediator variables or several independent or dependent variables (Civelek, 2018:55). This results in a mediation effect being created when a third variable intervenes the relationship between two other interrelated constructs (Hair, Hult *et al*., 2017:228). From a theoretical viewpoint, the use of mediation is to explain the reason for the existence of a relationship between an exogenous and endogenous construct (Hair, Hult *et al*., 2017:40).

When the relationships that exist among variables are tested, the relationships are measurement error free since the error has been estimated and eliminated, leaving only common variance (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2014:734). Even though structural equation models can be statistically tested using different methods, all the models are differentiated by three features, namely (a) the estimation of various and interrelated dependencies in relationships, (b) the ability of the model to signify unobserved concepts in the relationships and account for measurement errors that might exist in the estimation process, and (c) defining a model to explain the overall set of relationships (Hair *et al*., 2014:547). SEM model is therefore a more preferred method used to confirm (or disconfirm) theoretical models (Schumacker & Lomax, 2016:6).

Mooi *et al*. (2018:289) suggest two approaches that can be used for estimating structural models, which include covariance-based SEM (also called linear structural relations because of its corresponding software application) and partial least squares SEM. Both estimation methods are based on the notion of an underlying model that enables the researcher to model, validate, and measure causal relationships that exist between various items and constructs.

The main concern in the practical use of SEM is a model fit assessment (Marcoulides & Moustaki, 2002:121). Model fit is the degree to which a hypothesised model is consistent with the sample data (Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2000:82). According to Gerrard and Johnson (2015:267), there are multiple indices, but the most commonly reported on model fit indices and interpretations include the following:

- **Adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI):** This index explains the degrees of freedom found within a model (Malhotra *et al*., 2017:806). The AGFI has values that range between 0 and 1 and values of 0.90 or above generally indicate a good model fit (Hooper *et al*., 2008:54).
- **Chi-square statistic (χ^2):** It provides the statistical discrepancy between covariance matrices (Malhotra *et al*., 2017:806). The Chi-square static is used to measure the variations in the data pattern (i.e. to determine whether the observed pattern differs from the normal pattern) (Burke & Soffa, 2018:63).
- **Comparative Fit Index (CFI):** With CFI, a higher value is better. Usually, a value above 0.90 is considered reflective of a good model fit, but some researchers might argue that a value of more than 0.95 is required. The CFI is not sensitive to sample size (Gerrard & Johnson, 2015:266) which means the CFI results cannot be affected by the size of sample.
- **Normed Fit Index:** This index evaluates the model by making a comparison between the χ^2 of the fitted model and the χ^2 value of the null model (Hooper *et al*., 2008:54). NFI has values that range between 0 and 1, where the value of 1 represents a perfect model fit (Hair *et al*., 2014:580).
- **Parsimony normed fit index (PNFI):** This index takes into consideration the amount of degrees of freedom used to acquire a certain level of model fit (Schumacker & Lomax, 2016:116). The PNFI values range between 0 and 1 and a better model fit as well as parsimony are achieved when there are higher values (Malhotra *et al*., 2017:807).
- **The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA):** A value of 0.05 is considered a good fit and a value above 0.10 is usually perceived to be unacceptable model fit (Blunch, 2013:120). However, RMSEA is sample size sensitive, hence negatively affecting small sample research studies (Gerrard & Johnson, 2015:266).
- **The Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR):** This is the average variation between the correlations observed in the input matrix and the correlations implied by the model (Brown, 2015:70). An SRMR value of 0 signifies a perfect model fit, but the SRMR will be lower when the model has many parameters and when the model has a large sample size (Hooper *et al*., 2008:55).

- **Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI):** This index is theoretically the same as CFI, but it is not normed. Thus, its values can fall outside the range values of 0 and 1 (Malhotra *et al.*, 2017:807). The TLI can be used to make a comparison between the lack of fit of a specified model and the lack of fit of the null model (Wang & Wang, 2020:21).

The fit indices reported in this study, are summarised in Table 5-10 with an indication of their recommended cut-off values.

Table 5-10: List of fit indices

Fit indices	Description	Recommended cut-off value
χ^2/df	It reveals the relationship between the observed model and the predicted model with regard to their hypothesised relationship (Sahoo, 2019:271).	< 5.00 (Wheaton *et al.*, 1977:99)
CFI	Compares the χ^2/df to a baseline model (Bagozzi & Yi, 2012:34).	> 0.90 (Hoe, 2008:78; Hu & Bentler, 1999:27)
RMSEA	Selects the model with the smallest number of estimate parameters (Schreiber, 2008:89).	< 0.10 (Blunch, 2013:120; Brown, 2015:74)
TLI	Used for comparing alternative models or to make a comparison between a proposed model and a null model (Schumacker & Lomax, 2016:115)	> 0.90 (Hoe, 2008:77)

For this study, the aim is to develop a service recovery model for South African mobile ISPs. Therefore, SEM was conducted in order to test the statistical relationships in the conceptual model (refer to Figure 4-1). The mediation of perceived justice on the relationship between service recovery attributes and satisfaction with service recovery was established by measuring the indirect effect (classified as the mediating effect) (Hair, Hult *et al.*, 2017:232).

5.3.11 Prepare and present the final research report

The final step of the marketing research process entails preparing and presenting the research report (Burns *et al.*, 2017:68). Upon completion of data analysis, the researcher should prepare and present the conclusions and recommendations to managers (Lamb *et al.*, 2018:168). The researcher should report the key findings and insights that are valuable to the main decisions faced by managers (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018:140). Clow and James (2014:437) suggest that the recommendations must be based on the research insights that were acquired from the data analysis and the conclusions that were made and the recommendations must be linked to the research objectives as well. Moreover, the researcher should link the recommendations to the research problem and the respective recommendations should be based on empirical data and existing literature (Burke & Soffa, 2018:226).

For this study, this step is presented in Chapters 6 and 7 of this study, where the empirical results of the research are presented, and the findings of the results are interpreted and discussed. It is expected that the literature findings can be integrated with the empirical findings to provide meaningful and practical managerial recommendations, which are presented in the conclusions and recommendations chapter (i.e. the concluding Chapter 7). The conclusions and recommendations are based on the extensive literature investigation and empirical results.

5.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the different research methods that can be implemented when conducting marketing research, as well as the specific research methodology used in this study. The chapter therefore began with a literature review on the marketing research concept, which was followed by a presentation of the eleven-step marketing research process that was adopted for this study. The marketing research process consisted of establishing the need for marketing research, defining the research problem, establishing the research objectives, determining the research design, determining the types and sources of information, determining methods of acquiring data, designing the data collection forms, determining the sample plan and size, gathering the data, analysing the data and lastly, preparing and presenting the final research report. A detailed discussion was therefore provided for each of these steps of the marketing research process.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 5 provided a comprehensive review of the marketing research process, by specifically considering the research methods pertinent to this study. Chapter 6 elaborates on step 10 of the marketing research process, entailing the analysis and interpretation of the empirical data obtained from the sample. Subsequently, this chapter commences with an indication of the sample composition, followed by a profile of the respondents who were included in the sample. The reliability and validity of the measures used in the study are established, followed by an account of the descriptive results for each construct. The data analysis process concludes with a discussion of the results of the structural equation modelling, in order to test the formulated hypotheses.

6.2 SAMPLE COMPOSITION

The target population of this study was identified (in section 5.3.8.1) as individual customers of one of the main South African mobile ISPs (i.e. Cell C, MTN, Telkom, or Vodacom) who have made complaints to their respective service provider between 2017 and 2018. As discussed (in section 5.3.8.5), the researcher aimed to collect at least 400 responses, based on the minimum SEM sample size guidelines provided by Malhotra *et al*. (2017:805). The final sample size obtained was 484 respondents, with a sample realisation rate of 121% $\left(\frac{484}{400} \times 100\right)$. Table 6-1 presents the distribution of the realised sample – as count (N) and percentage (%) – among the different mobile ISPs.

Table 6-1: Distribution of the realised sample

Mobile ISP	N	%
Vodacom	218	45.0
MTN	121	25.0
Telkom	75	15.5
Cell C	70	14.5
Total	**484**	**100.0**

6.3 SAMPLE PROFILE

In order to compile a sample profile of the respondents who participated in the study, respondents' socio-demographic information and patronage habits were determined.

6.3.1 Socio-demographic information

The part of the questionnaire measuring respondents' socio-demographic information was optional for respondents to complete, since the aim of this part was only to obtain an indication of the characteristics of respondents (i.e. socio-demographic information of the sample) and did not influence the overall objective of the study (i.e. to develop a service recovery model for the South African mobile ISP industry). Unanswered questions pertaining to socio-demographic information were, therefore, not discarded if their responses on the vital parts of the questionnaire (i.e. construct measurement) were complete and usable. Subsequently, the valid percentages (thus excluding missing values) were reported for the sample profile. Table 6-2 provides the results pertaining to the socio-demographic information of the sample in frequencies (F) and valid percentages (%).

Table 6-2: Socio-demographic information

Variable	F	%
Gender		
Male	268	55.6
Female	214	44.4
Age		
21 to 30 years	69	14.7
31 to 40 years	99	21.1
41 to 50 years	93	19.8
51 to 60 years	108	23.0
Older than 60	101	21.5
Employment status		
Full-time student	16	3.3
Unemployed	11	2.3
Self-employed	89	18.5
Part-time employed	37	7.7
Full-time employed	269	56.0
Housewife or househusband	11	2.3
Retired	47	9.8

Table 6-2: Socio-demographic information (continues)

Variable	F	%
Ethnicity		
Asian	5	1.1
Black	149	32.0
Coloured	39	8.4
Indian	33	7.1
White	238	51.1
Other	2	0.4
Highest level of education		
Some primary school	1	0.2
Some high school	7	1.5
Matric / Grade 12	82	17.1
Technical college diploma	69	14.4
University or technology diploma	75	15.6
University degree (B-degree/honours)	140	29.2
Post-graduate degree (Masters/Doctorate)	106	22.1
Personal average net income per month (after deductions)		
R5 000 p.m. or less	33	7.2
R5 001 to R10 000 p.m.	43	9.5
R10 001 to R15 000 p.m.	53	11.5
R15 001 to R20 000 p.m.	53	11.5
R20 001 to R25 000 p.m.	52	11.3
R25 001 to R30 000 p.m.	35	7.6
R30 001 to R35 000 p.m.	44	9.5
More than R35 000 p.m.	147	31.9

As evident from Table 6-2, more male (55.6%) than female respondents (44.4%) participated in the research. Concerning the age of respondents, the sample was relatively well represented by respondents of all age groups, with the majority of respondents (85.4%) being older than 30. Most respondents (56.0%) were full-time employed, with the majority being either White (51.1%) or Black (32.0%). The sample was relatively well educated, with more than 80% of respondents having some form of tertiary education. Concerning personal average net income, most respondents (31.9%) indicated that they earn more than R35 000 per month.

Based on Table 6-2 and the preceding discussion, the following main finding pertaining to the socio-demographic information of the sample can be formulated:

Main finding 1: The sample comprised mainly White and Black male respondents, aged 31 or older. The majority of respondents have a tertiary qualification, are full-time employed and earn a monthly personal net income of more than R35 000.

6.3.2 Patronage habits

The part of the questionnaire measuring respondents' patronage habits were compulsory for respondents to answer and assisted in formulating a more descriptive image about respondents' mobile ISP behaviours and preferences. Table 6-3 provides the results pertaining to the patronage habits of the sample in frequencies (F) and valid percentages (%).

Table 6-3: Patronage habits

Variable	F	%
Duration with ISP		
5 years or shorter	148	30.6
6 to 10 years	137	28.3
11 to 15 years	91	18.8
16 to 20 years	71	14.7
Longer than 20 years	37	7.6
Time spent on the internet		
Less than 9 hours per week	83	17.1
9 to 30 hours per week	220	45.5
More than 30 hours per week	180	37.2
1st main purpose of mobile internet usage		
Banking	272	56.2
Entertainment	47	9.7
Games or gaming	5	1.0
Shopping	12	2.5
Social and communication	88	18.2
Research	17	3.5
Work	43	8.9

Table 6-3: Patronage habits (continues)

Variable	F	%
2nd main purpose of mobile internet usage		
Banking	19	4.9
Entertainment	59	13.1
Games or gaming	31	6.9
Shopping	42	9.3
Social and communication	185	41.0
Research	90	20.0
Work	25	5.5
3rd main purpose of mobile internet usage		
Banking	28	6.4
Entertainment	17	3.9
Games or gaming	10	2.3
Shopping	16	3.7
Social and communication	92	21.1
Research	93	21.4
Work	179	41.1
Service failure experienced		
Billing issues	132	27.3
Internet downtime	100	20.7
Internet speed fluctuations	120	24.8
Poor customer support	74	15.3
Top-up issues	30	6.2
Other	28	5.8

As from Table 6-3, most of the respondents (30.6%) have been making use of their mobile ISP's services for 5 years or less, whereas 28.3% of respondents have been using their ISP's services for 6 to 10 years. The majority of respondents (45.5%) are moderate internet users, spending 9 to 30 hours per week on the internet, with 37.2% of respondents spending more than 30 hours per week on the internet. Respondents indicated that the three main purposes of their mobile internet usage were firstly for banking purposes (56.2%), secondly for social and communication purposes (41.0%), and thirdly for work purposes (41.1%). Lastly, respondents identified billing issues (27.3%) as one of the main service failures experienced from their mobile ISP, followed by unstable internet speed (24.8%), and internet downtime (20.7%).

Based on Table 6-3 and the preceding discussion, the following main findings pertaining to the sample's patronage habits can be formulated:

Main finding 2: Most respondents have been making use of their mobile ISP's services for five years or less, are moderate internet users (spending 9 to 30 hours per week online) and are using the internet for online banking, social and communication purposes, or for work.

Main finding 3: The most notable mobile ISP service failures experienced by respondents have been identified as billing issues and internet speed fluctuations.

6.4 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY TESTING

In order to assess the reliability and validity of the scales used to measure the variables of this study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient test, and a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) were conducted respectively. The following sections elaborate on the results of the reliability and validity testing.

6.4.1 Reliability testing

Although the measures used in this study were either adopted or adapted from existing research, the scale items were tested to confirm their reliability. According to George and Mallery (2019:235), the reliability of a measurement scale indicates the extent to which it yields similar results every time it is administered to the same person in a similar setting.

Marketing researchers mostly use internal consistency reliability to evaluate the reliability of a scale. Internal consistency refers to the level to which the questions (i.e. items) that forms a measurement scale are correlated (Hair, Wolfinbarger *et al*., 2017:168). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient test is the most generally implemented method to assess a scale's internal consistency reliability (Mooi *et al*., 2018:289), thus to determine whether the set of items within a scale measures the same variable (George & Mallery, 2019:236) Table 6-4 presents the Cronbach's alpha values for each of the variables of this study.

Table 6-4: Cronbach's alpha values

Variable	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha values
Service recovery attributes		
Compensation	5	0.964
Response speed	4	0.958
Apology	4	0.958
Explanation	4	0.941
Perceived justice	10	0.825
Satisfaction with service recovery	4	0.927
Trust	3	0.903
eWOM	3	0.702
Repurchase intention	3	0.953

According to Hair, Wolfinbarger *et al*. (2017:168), the Cronbach's alpha coefficient value can range from 0.0 to 1.0 and in most cases, a value of less than 0.7 generally indicates poor internal consistency. On the other hand, Malhotra *et al*. (2017:360) suggest that the Cronbach's alpha coefficient values can range from 0.0 to 1.0, with a value of 0.6 or more indicating internal consistency in a measurement scale since the Cronbach's alpha value tends to increase with an increase in the number of scale items. As from Table 6-4, it can be concluded that all of the scales used to measure the variables of this study have internal consistency reliability, as all of the Cronbach's alpha values were above 0.7.

Main finding 4: All the measurement scales used to measure the variables of this study are reliable.

6.4.2 Confirmatory factor analysis

In order to assess the validity of the measurement scales used in this study, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed whereby model fit, discriminant validity, and convergent validity were assessed. In a CFA, the researcher must specify the constructs and their relationship with the variables, which should be based on existing theory or on existing measurements (Mooi *et al*., 2018:284). The use of CFA primarily involves assessing the degree to which a set of items in a specific instrument actually measures the constructs it was designed to measure (Wang & Wang, 2020:33).

6.4.2.1 Fit statistics

Model fit statistics or indices permit the assessment of how well a hypothesised model reproduces the empirical data and thus assist in detecting any model misspecifications (Hair, Hult *et al.*, 2017:193). Table 6-5 presents the model fit statistics.

Table 6-5: Model fit statistics

Fit indices	X^2	p-value	df	X^2/df	TLI	CFI	RMSEA
	1180.295	0.000	215	5.590	0.98	0.92	0.066
Recommended values				< 5.00	> 0.90	> 0.90	< 0.10

Note: X^2 = Chi-square; df = degrees of freedom; TLI = Tucker-Lewis Index; CFI = Comparative Fit Index; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation

Based on Table 6-5, the structural model yielded a X^2/df-value of 5.590, which is slightly above the suggested cut-off value of 5.00 proposed by Wheaton *et al.* (1977:99). Considering that the chi-square (X^2) value is sensitive to sample size, it is frequent that large samples (200 or more respondents) almost always have large, significant X^2/df values (Hair *et al*., 2014:323; Hooper *et al*., 2008:54, 55). According to Hair *et al*. (2014:630), the rule of thumb is to rely on at least one absolute fit index and one incremental fit index, in addition to the X^2 results.

This study relies on the RMSEA, which is an absolute fit index and the CFI as well as the TLI, which are incremental fit indexes. The CFI and TLI-values are both above the suggested cut-off points of 0.90, indicating good model fit (Malhotra *et al*., 2017:807). The RMSEA is 0.066, which is below the recommended threshold of < 0.10 (Hair *et al*., 2014:630; Hooper *et al*., 2008:54), thus indicating an acceptable model fit.

6.4.2.2 Convergent validity

Convergent validity is attained when the items within a construct are highly correlated (Civelek, 2018:32). Therefore, convergent validity was established by testing the value of the factor loadings. According to Malhotra *et al*. (2017:808), the factor loadings should be statistically significant and above than 0.5. Factor loadings that are high and statistically significant are evidence of convergent validity (Brown, 2015:197). The standardised factor loadings of the items used to measure the constructs of this study are presented in Table 6-6, as well as the standard errors (S.E.) and p-values (indicating significance).

Table 6-6: Standardised factor loadings

Variable	Items	Standardised factor loadings	S.E.	p-value*
Compensation	CC1	0.857	0.000	0.001*
	CC2	0.926	0.033	0.001*
	CC3	0.898	0.035	0.001*
	CC4	0.959	0.030	0.001*
	CC5	0.953	0.032	0.001*
Response speed	RS1	0.911	0.000	0.001*
	RS2	0.948	0.029	0.001*
	RS3	0.945	0.030	0.001*
	RS4	0.893	0.034	0.001*
Apology	AP1	0.909	0.031	0.001*
	AP2	0.933	0.029	0.001*
	AP3	0.935	0.029	0.001*
	AP4	0.916	0.000	0.001*
Explanation	EX1	0.863	0.042	0.001*
	EX2	0.934	0.036	0.001*
	EX3	0.944	0.037	0.001*
	EX4	0.843	0.000	0.001*
Perceived justice	PJ1	0.826	0.000	0.001*
	PJ3	0.892	0.043	0.001*
	PJ4	0.898	0.062	0.007
	PJ5	0.868	0.042	0.001*
	PJ6	0.951	0.062	0.010
	PJ7	0.824	0.043	0.001*
	PJ8	0.797	0.046	0.001*
	PJ9	0.836	0.043	0.001*
Satisfaction with service recovery	SAT1	0.692	0.000	0.001*
	SAT2	0.935	0.072	0.001*
	SAT3	0.934	0.070	0.001*
	SAT4	0.945	0.071	0.001*
Trust	TR1	0.953	0.000	0.001*
	TR2	0.918	0.026	0.001*
	TR3	0.929	0.032	0.001*

Table 6-6: Standardised factor loadings (continues)

Variable	Items	Standardised factor loadings	S.E.	p-value*
eWOM	EW1	0.832	0.000	0.001*
	EW2	0.841	0.048	0.001*
	EW3	0.928	0.057	0.001*
Repurchase intention	RI1	0.794	0.000	0.001*
	RI2	0.965	0.020	0.001*
	RI3	0.920	0.095	0.001*

Note: CC = Compensation; RS = Response speed; AP = Apology; EX = Explanation; PJ = Perceived justice; SAT = Satisfaction with service recovery; TR = Trust; EW = Electronic word-of-mouth; RI = Repurchase intention; * = Statistically significant at $p < 0.001$

As from Table 6-6, the factor loadings for the items ranged from 0.692 to 0.965, with all items having loadings above the recommended cut-off value of 0.5 (Malhotra *et al*., 2017:808). In addition, the measurement items were all significant at $p < 0.001$. According to Hair *et al*. (2014:619) and Malhotra *et al*. (2017:808), convergent validity is further tested by calculating the average variance extracted (AVE) and construct reliability (CR). Table 6-7 therefore presents the AVE and CR values of the measurement model.

Table 6-7: AVE and CR of the measurement model

Variable	AVE	CR
Compensation	0.664	0.969
Response speed	0.855	0.959
Apology	0.853	0.959
Explanation	0.805	0.943
Perceived justice	0.744	0.959
Satisfaction with service recovery	0.780	0.933
Trust	0.871	0.953
eWOM	0.754	0.901
Repurchase intention	0.803	0.924

As from Table 6-7, the AVE values range from 0.664 to 0.871, which are above the suggested cut-off value of 0.5 (Malhotra *et al*., 2017:808). AVE values of less than 0.5 indicate that on average, more variance remains in the error of the measurement items than in the variance explained by the variable (Hair, Hult *et al*., 2017:115). Furthermore, the CR values range from 0.901 to 0.969, which are above the recommended cut-off value of 0.7, thus indicating good reliability (Hair *et al*., 2014:619). Based on the above results and findings, it can be concluded that all the constructs of the measurement model have convergent validity.

6.4.2.3 Discriminant validity

Discriminant validity refers to the extent to which the items measuring one variable are unique from other variables (Wang *et al.*, 2015:87). In order to establish discriminant validity, the square root of the AVE value for each construct must be higher than the inter-dimensional correlation value (Civelek, 2018:41). Table 6-8 therefore presents the correlation matrix of the measurement model, which indicates intercorrelation estimates of the variables of this study, with the AVE values (from Table 6-7) indicated in brackets and bold on the diagonal.

Table 6-8: Correlation matrix and AVE

Variable	CC	RS	AP	EP	PJ	SAT	TR	EW	RI
Compensation	**(0.664)**								
Response speed	0.627	**(0.855)**							
Apology	0.596	0.680	**(0.853)**						
Explanation	0.5.65	0.731	0.701	**(0.805)**					
Perceived justice	0.408	0.587	0.440	0.423	**(0.744)**				
Satisfaction with service recovery	0.507	0.661	0.534	0.541	0.486	**(0.780)**			
Trust	0.341	0.512	0.397	0.434	0.337	0.702	**(0.871)**		
eWOM	0.294	0.384	0.357	0.340	0.224	0.561	0.674	**(0.754)**	
Repurchase intention	0.184	0.342	0.317	0.300	0.251	0.460	0.596	0.479	**(0.803)**

Note: Off-diagonal values represent the inter-correlation between the constructs.
All correlations are statistically significant at $p < 0.001$.
CC = Compensation; RS = Response speed; AP = Apology; EP = Explanation; PJ = Perceived justice; SAT = Satisfaction with service recovery; TR = Trust; EW = Electronic word-of-mouth; RI = Repurchase intention

An analysis of the correlations between the variables of the study confirms that all correlations are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). Furthermore, the square root of the AVE value for each variable is greater than the correlation between any two variables. Hair *et al*. (2014:620) suggest that the variance extracted estimates of the variables should be above the squared correlation estimate. Based on the above results and findings, it can be concluded that all the constructs of the measurement model have discriminant validity.

Based on the above results and discussion pertaining to convergent and discriminant validity, the following main finding can be formulated:

Main finding 5: The measurement model proved to have construct validity, since both convergent and discriminant validity were achieved.

6.5 DESCRIPTIVE RESULTS OF THE CONSTRUCTS

The main objective of parts 4 to 7 of the questionnaire (see Table 5-5) was to determine respondents' perceptions of the service recovery attributes, perceived justice, satisfaction with service recovery, trust, eWOM and repurchase intention. The subsequent sections therefore report on the descriptive results for each of these constructs.

6.5.1 Perceptions of service recovery attributes

The variables measuring the service recovery attributes (i.e. compensation, response speed, apology, and explanation) comprised seventeen items, which were adopted from the research of Liao (2007) and Mostafa *et al*. (2014). In order to capture the respondents' perceptions, they were required to indicate their level of agreement with each item measuring their service recovery attributes perceptions on a five-point unlabelled Likert scale (with 1 representing 'strongly disagree' and 5 representing 'strongly agree'). Accordingly, Table 6-9 presents the descriptive results – as means and standard deviations (SD) – for the items measuring respondents' perceptions of the service recovery attributes (i.e. compensation, response speed, apology and explanation) of their mobile ISP.

Table 6-9: Respondents' perceptions of the service recovery attributes

Statement	Mean	SD
After the service failure, my mobile ISP…		
Compensation	**1.80**	**1.080**
…offered me adequate compensation for the loss incurred.	1.89	1.254
…adequately compensated me for all the time I spent dealing with the service failure.	1.77	1.141
…adequately compensated me to cover my financial losses.	1.80	1.152
…adequately compensated me for all the hard times I had due to the service failure.	1.75	1.082
…adequately compensated me for the inconvenience I went through due to the service failure.	1.77	1.141
Response speed	**2.23**	**1.174**
…reacted promptly to my inquiries regarding the service failure.	2.16	1.174
…quickly attended to my service failure-related problem.	2.23	1.255
…responded promptly to my complaint regarding the service failure.	2.25	1.257
…did not take long to solve the service failure.	2.27	1.293

Table 6-9: Respondents' perceptions of the service recovery attributes (continues)

Statement	Mean	SD
Apology	**2.40**	**1.245**
…apologised to me for what had happened.	2.44	1.335
…expressed regret for the mistake that occurred.	2.41	1.327
…apologised for the inconvenience the problem had brought to me.	2.47	1.335
…apologised for what I had suffered because of the problem.	2.27	1.287
Explanation	**2.44**	**1.200**
…explained why the problem might have occurred.	2.45	1.342
…explained which factors might have caused the problem.	2.52	1.297
…explained what might have gone wrong.	2.53	1.310
…offered a convincing explanation for the reason of the problem.	2.26	1.258

With regard to the *compensation* dimension of service recovery attributes, respondents agreed most with the statement "After the service failure, my mobile ISP offered me adequate compensation for the loss incurred" (mean = 1.89; SD = 1.254); whereas the least agreed with statement was "After the service failure, my mobile ISP adequately compensated me for all the hard times I had due to the service failure" (mean = 1.75; SD = 1.082). Overall, respondents scored their perceptions of the compensation dimension below average (mean = 1.80; SD = 1.080) on the five-point Likert scale. Based on the above results, the main findings concerning *compensation* as a service recovery attribute can be stated as:

Main finding 6: The respondents agreed the most that after the service failure, their mobile ISP offered them adequate compensation for the loss incurred.

Main finding 7: The respondents agreed the least that after the service failure, their mobile ISP adequately compensated them for all the hard times they had due to the service failure.

Main finding 8: The respondents rated their overall perceptions of their mobile ISP's compensation attribute as well below average.

With respect to the *response speed* dimension of service recovery attributes, respondents agreed the most with the statement "After the service failure, my mobile ISP did not take long to solve the service failure" (mean = 2.27; SD = 1.293); whereas respondents agreed the least with the statement "After the service failure, my mobile ISP reacted promptly to my inquiries regarding the service failure" (mean = 2.16; SD = 1.174). Overall, respondents scored their perceptions of the response speed dimension below average (mean = 2.23; SD = 1.174) on the five-point Likert scale. Based on the above results, the main findings about *response speed* as a service recovery attribute can be stated as:

Main finding 9: The respondents agreed the most that after the service failure, their mobile ISP did not take long to solve the service failure.
Main finding 10: The respondents agreed the least that after the service failure, their mobile ISP reacted promptly to their inquiries regarding the service failure.
Main finding 11: The respondents rated their overall perceptions of their mobile ISP's response speed attribute as below average.

With regard to the *apology* dimension of service recovery attributes, respondents agreed most with the statement "After the service failure, my mobile ISP apologised for the inconvenience the problem had brought to me" (mean = 2.47; SD = 1.335). However, respondents agreed the least with the statement "After the service failure, my mobile ISP apologised for what I had suffered because of the problem" (mean = 2.27; SD = 1.287). Overall, respondents scored their perceptions of the apology dimension below average (mean = 2.40; SD = 1.245) on the five-point Likert scale. Based on this information, the main findings concerning *apology* as service recovery attribute can be stated as:

Main finding 12: The respondents agreed the most that after the service failure, their mobile ISP apologised for the inconvenience the problem had brought to them.
Main finding 13: The respondents agreed the least that after the service failure, their mobile ISP apologised for what they had suffered because of the problem.
Main finding 14: The respondents rated their overall perceptions of their mobile ISP's apology attribute as below average.

With respect to the *explanation* dimension of service recovery attributes, respondents agreed the most with the statement "After the service failure, my mobile ISP explained what might have gone wrong" (mean = 2.53; SD = 1.310). On the other hand, respondents agreed the least with the statement "After the service failure, my mobile ISP offered a convincing explanation for the reason of the problem" (mean = 2.26; SD = 1.258). Overall, respondents scored their perceptions of the explanation dimension below average (mean = 2.44; SD = 1.200) on the five-point Likert scale.

Based on the above results, the main findings of *explanation* as a service recovery attribute can be stated as:

Main finding 15: The respondents agreed the most that their mobile ISP explained what might have gone wrong after the service failure.
Main finding 16: The respondents agreed the least that after the service failure, their mobile ISP offered a convincing explanation for the reason of the problem.
Main finding 17: The respondents rated their overall perceptions of their mobile ISP's explanation attribute as below average.

6.5.2 Respondents' perceived justice

The perceived justice construct was adapted from the existing research of Huang (2011) as well as Ozkan-Tektas and Basgoze (2017). The construct contained ten items measuring perceived justice. Respondents were requested to indicate their level of agreement with each item about perceived justice on a five-point unlabelled Likert scale (with 1 representing 'strongly disagree' and 5 representing 'strongly agree'). Subsequently, Table 6-10 presents the descriptive results – as means and standard deviations (SD) – for the items measuring respondents' perceptions of justice pertaining to their mobile ISP.

Table 6-10: Respondents' perceived justice

Statement	Mean	SD
Perceived justice	**2.74**	**0.819**
In resolving the service failure, my mobile ISP gave me what I needed.	2.52	1.267
I did not get what I deserved.	3.02	1.413
The outcome I received from my mobile ISP in response to the problem was fair.	2.44	1.244
The outcome of addressing the service failure was not up to expectation. (R)	3.04	1.392
My mobile ISP showed adequate flexibility in dealing with my problem.	2.32	1.204
The length of time taken to resolve my problem was longer than necessary. (R)	3.18	1.379
My mobile ISP was appropriately concerned about my problem.	2.33	1.203
My mobile ISP did not put the proper effort into resolving my problem.	3.01	1.386
My mobile ISP's communications with me were appropriate.	2.52	1.258
My mobile ISP did not give me the courtesy I was due. (R)	3.01	1.370

Note: (R) means reversed question.

Concerning perceived justice, respondents agreed most with the statement “The length of time taken to resolve my problem was longer than necessary” (mean = 3.18; SD = 1.379); whereas respondents agreed the least with the statement “My mobile ISP showed adequate flexibility in dealing with my problem” (mean = 2.32; SD = 1.204). Overall, respondents scored their perceptions of justice above average (mean = 2.74; SD = 0.814) on the five-point Likert scale.

Based on the above results, the main findings with respect to respondents’ *perceived justice* can be stated as:

Main finding 18: The respondents agreed the most that after the service failure, the length of time taken to resolve their problem was longer than necessary.
Main finding 19: The respondents agreed the least that after the service failure, their mobile ISP showed adequate flexibility in dealing with their problem.
Main finding 20: The respondents rated their overall perceptions of their mobile ISP’s justice as above average.

6.5.3 Respondents’ satisfaction with service recovery

The items used to measure satisfaction with service recovery were adopted from the research of Huang (2011). Respondents were requested to indicate their level of agreement with each item measuring satisfaction with service recovery on a five-point unlabelled Likert scale (with 1 representing ‘strongly disagree’ and 5 representing ‘strongly agree’). Accordingly, Table 6-11 presents the descriptive results – as means and standard deviations (SD) – for the items measuring respondents’ satisfaction with the service recovery of their mobile ISP.

Table 6-11: Respondents’ satisfaction with service recovery

Statement	Mean	SD
Satisfaction with service recovery	**2.34**	**1.117**
I am satisfied with the way in which my problem was dealt with.	2.30	1.222
I am satisfied with the way my problem was resolved.	2.33	1.251
In general, my mobile ISP provided a satisfactory solution to this particular problem.	2.42	1.226
I am happy with the way my problem was solved.	2.33	1.238

It is evident from Table 6-11 that respondents agreed the most with the statement “In general, my mobile ISP provided a satisfactory solution to this particular problem” (mean = 2.42; SD = 1.226), whereas the respondents agreed the least with the statement “I am satisfied with the way in which my problem was dealt with” (mean = 2.30; SD = 1.222). Overall, respondents scored their satisfaction with service recovery as below average (mean = 2.34; SD = 1.117) on the five-point Likert scale.

Based on the above results, the main findings concerning respondents’ *satisfaction with the service recovery* of their mobile ISP can be stated as:

Main finding 21: The respondents agreed the most that after the service failure, their mobile ISP provided a satisfactory solution to their particular problem.
Main finding 22: The respondents agreed the least that after the service failure, they were satisfied with the way in which their problem was dealt with.
Main finding 23: The respondents rated their overall satisfaction with their mobile ISP’s service recovery as below average.

6.5.4 Respondents’ trust

The trust construct was measured with three items, which were adapted from the research of Crosby *et al*. (1990) as well as Ding and Lii (2016). Respondents were required to indicate their level of agreement with each item measuring trust on a five-point unlabelled Likert scale (with 1 representing ‘strongly disagree’ and 5 representing ‘strongly agree’). Table 6-12 presents the descriptive results – as means and standard deviations (SD) – for the items measuring respondents’ trust in their mobile ISP.

Table 6-12: Respondents’ trust in their mobile ISP

Statement	Mean	SD
Trust	**2.64**	**1.089**
My mobile ISP can be relied upon to keep its promises.	2.46	1.211
I believe that my mobile ISP is trustworthy.	2.50	1.222
I find it necessary to be cautious in dealing with this mobile ISP. (R)	2.96	1.138

Note: (R) means reversed question.

It is apparent from Table 6-12 that respondents agreed the most with the statement "I find it necessary to be cautious in dealing with this mobile ISP" (mean = 2.96; SD = 1.138); whereas respondents agreed the least with the statement "My mobile ISP can be relied upon to keep its promises" (mean = 2.46; SD = 1.211). Overall, respondents indicated their overall trust as slightly above average (mean = 2.64; SD = 1.089).

Based on the above results, the main findings concerning respondents' *trust* in their mobile ISP can be stated as:

Main finding 24: The respondents agreed the most that they find it necessary to be cautious in dealing with their mobile ISP.
Main finding 25: The respondents agreed the least that their mobile ISP can be relied upon to keep its promises.
Main finding 26: The respondents rated their overall trust in their mobile ISP as slightly above average.

6.5.5 Respondents' eWOM intentions

The eWOM construct was measured with three items that were adapted from the research of Ding and Lii (2016). Respondents were required to indicate their level of agreement with each item measuring eWOM on a five-point unlabelled Likert scale (with 1 representing 'strongly disagree' and 5 representing 'strongly agree'). Table 6-13 presents the descriptive results – as means and standard deviations (SD) – for the statements measuring respondents' eWOM intentions towards their mobile ISP.

Table 6-13: Respondents' eWOM intentions towards their mobile ISP

Statement	Mean	SD
eWOM	**2.64**	**0.959**
I will share my service experience with my mobile ISP through social networking sites or mobile technology.	3.03	1.264
I will say positive things about my mobile ISP through social networking sites or mobile technology.	2.41	1.139
I will recommend my mobile ISP if someone ask me for information on social networking sites or mobile technology.	2.48	1.228

It is evident from Table 6-13 that respondents agreed the most with the statement “I will share my service experience with my mobile ISP through social networking sites or mobile technology” (mean = 3.03; SD = 1.264). On the other hand, respondents agreed the least with the statement “I will say positive things about my mobile ISP through social networking sites or mobile technology” (mean = 2.41; SD = 1.139). Overall, respondents indicated their eWOM intentions as above average (mean = 2.64; SD = 0.959) on the five-point Likert scale.

Based on the above results, the main findings concerning respondents’ *eWOM* intentions towards their mobile ISP can be stated as:

Main finding 27: The respondents agreed the most with the statement that they will share their service experience with their mobile ISP through social networking sites or mobile technology.
Main finding 28: The respondents agreed the least with the statement that they will say positive things about their mobile ISP through social networking sites or mobile technology.
Main finding 29: The respondents rated their overall eWOM intentions towards their mobile ISP as above average.

6.5.6 Respondents’ repurchase intention

The repurchase intention construct was measured with three items that were adapted from the research of Ding and Lii (2016). Respondents were required to indicate their level of agreement with each item measuring repurchase intention on a five-point unlabelled Likert scale (with 1 representing ‘strongly disagree’ and 5 representing ‘strongly agree’). Table 6-14 presents the descriptive results – as means and standard deviations (SD) – for the statements measuring respondents’ repurchase intention.

Table 6-14: Respondents’ repurchase intention towards their mobile ISP

Statement	Mean	SD
Repurchase intention	**3.17**	**1.145**
After the service failure I have experienced, I will not use my current mobile ISP in the near future. (R)	3.09	1.185
I intend to use my mobile ISP’s services in the future.	3.16	1.236
I will keep using the services of my mobile ISP.	3.26	1.172

Note: (R) means reversed question.

With respect to repurchase intention, it is evident from Table 6-14 that respondents agreed the most with the statement "I will keep using the services of my mobile ISP" (mean = 3.26; SD = 1.172). In addition, respondents agreed the least with the statement "After the service failure I have experienced, I will not use my current mobile ISP in the near future" (mean = 3.09; SD = 1.185). Overall, respondents scored their intentions to repurchase from their mobile ISP as relatively high (mean = 3.17; SD = 1.145) on the five-point Likert scale.

Based on the above results, the main findings concerning respondents' *repurchase intention* can be stated as:

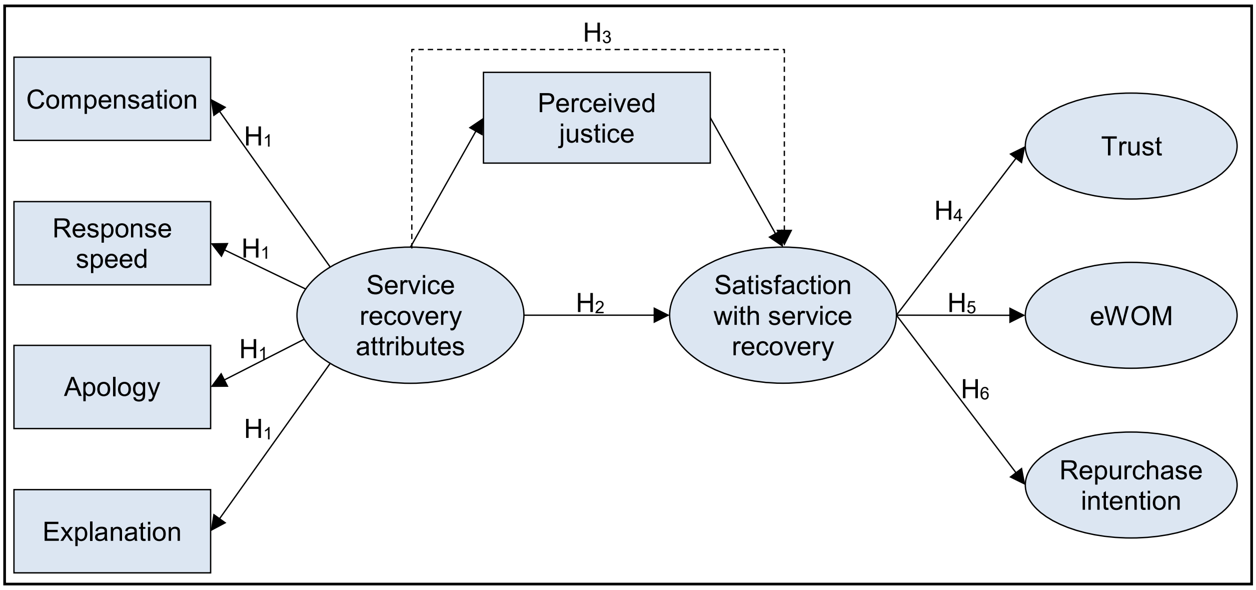
Main finding 30: The respondents agreed the most that they will keep using the services of their mobile ISP.
Main finding 31: The respondents agreed the least that after the service failure they have experienced, they will not use their current mobile ISP in the near future.
Main finding 32: The respondents rated their overall intentions to repurchase from their mobile ISP as relatively high.

6.6 STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODELLING

Structural equation modelling (SEM) can assist researchers in evaluating the measurement properties and testing the hypothesised relationships by utilising only one technique (Malhotra *et al*., 2017:797). According to Cangur and Ercan (2015:152), SEM helps the researcher determine how the conceptual model (i.e. Figure 6-1) is supported by the empirical data.

For this study, the conceptual model was empirically tested by using SEM with AMOS (Analysis of Moment Structures) version 25.0, to test the hypothesised relationships between constructs. This section provides an interpretation of the empirical results about the SEM model and the model results are respectively shown in Figure 6-2. Maximum likelihood estimation was used to determine the estimates of the relationships between the constructs.

Figure 6-1: The proposed conceptual model



The proposed conceptual model (Figure 6-1) depicts the hypothesised relationships (H_1 to H_6), which are further outlined below in Table 6-15.

Table 6-15: Alternative hypotheses formulated for the conceptual model

Hypotheses
H_1: Service recovery attributes underlies compensation, response speed, apology and explanation.
H_2: Service recovery attributes have a positive effect on satisfaction with service recovery.
H_3: Service recovery attributes have a positive indirect effect on satisfaction with service recovery, as mediated by perceived justice.
H_4: Satisfaction with service recovery has a positive effect on trust.
H_5: Satisfaction with service recovery has a positive effect on eWOM.
H_6: Satisfaction with service recovery has a positive effect on repurchase intention.

6.6.1 Structural model evaluation

SEM assesses a set of relationships among variables that are represented by multiple equations. Consequently, the fit for the model must be determined and not only for a single relationship (Malhotra *et al*., 2017:801). Generally, utilising three to four indices provide sufficient statistical evidence of model fit (Hair *et al*., 2014:583). Thus, in order to assess the structural model's fit of this study, various model fit indices were calculated, including Chi-square (X^2), degrees of freedom (df), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) and Comparative Fit Index (CFI). Table 6-16 provides the results of the model fit indices, as well as the recommended values for each index. Model fit indices indicate the differences between observed data and the estimates implied by the model (Stanley & Edwards, 2016:977).

Table 6-16: Structural model fit statistics

Fit indices	p-value	X^2	df	χ^2/df	TLI	CFI	RMSEA
	0.000	615.782	111	5.548	0.915	0.930	0.097
Recommended values				< 5.00	> 0.90	> 0.90	< 0.10

Note: X^2 = Chi-square; df = degrees of freedom; TLI = Tucker-Lewis Index; CFI = Comparative Fit Index; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation.

Based on the results presented in Table 6-16, the structural model yielded a X^2/df value of 5.548, which is slightly above the recommended value (of 5.00) proposed by Wheaton *et al.* (1977:99). Since the chi-square (X^2) value is sensitive to sample size, it is not uncommon that large samples (200 or more respondents) almost always result in large, significant X^2/df values (Hair *et al*., 2014:323; Hooper *et al*., 2008:54, 55). This slightly higher X^2/df-value is, therefore, regarded as acceptable, providing that the additional fit indices (i.e. CFI, TLI and RMSEA) meet the recommended cut-off points (Gerrard & Johnson, 2015:266).

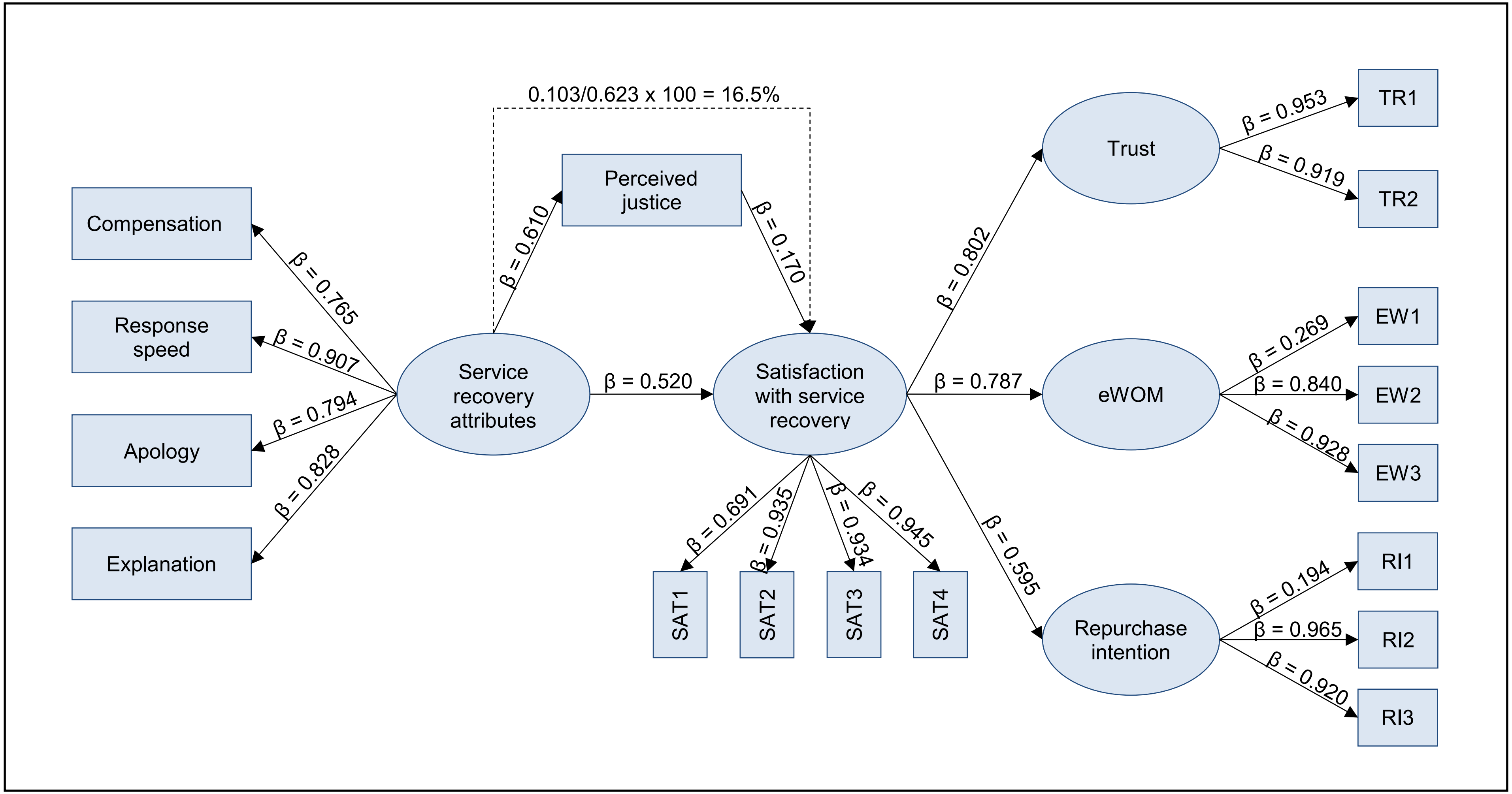
The CFI-value of 0.930 and the TLI-value of 0.915 were both above the recommended cut-off points (> 0.90), indicating good model fit (Malhotra *et al*., 2017:807). The RMSEA value was 0.097, which is below the maximum allowed threshold of < 0.10 (Blunch, 2013:120; Brown, 2015:74). Thus, the RMSEA value indicates an acceptable model fit for the study.

Main finding 33: The fit statistics of the structural model indicate an acceptable model for this study.

6.6.2 Hypothesis testing

After the model fit has been confirmed, the researcher can statistically test the formulated hypotheses. As such, Figure 6-2 indicates the structural path relationships of the model.

Figure 6-2: The structural path relationships



In addition to the structural model (illustrated in Figure 6-2), Table 6-17 presents the structural model results with the standard regression weights (β-weights) and statistical significance (p-values) of the alternative hypotheses (H_1 to H_6).

Table 6-17: Hypothesis testing

Relationship between constructs	Hypothesis	β-weight	p-value
Service recovery attributes → Compensation	H_1	0.765	0.001*
Service recovery attributes → Response speed	H_1	0.907	0.001*
Service recovery attributes → Apology	H_1	0.794	0.001*
Service recovery attributes → Explanation	H_1	0.828	0.001*
Service recovery attributes → Satisfaction with service recovery	H_2	0.520	0.001*
Service recovery attributes → Perceived justice → Satisfaction with service recovery	H_3	0.165	0.001*
Satisfaction with service recovery → Trust	H_4	0.802	0.001*
Satisfaction with service recovery → eWOM	H_5	0.787	0.001*
Satisfaction with service recovery → Repurchase intention	H_6	0.595	0.001*

Note: β-weight is the standardised regression weight; *Relationship is statistically significant at $p < 0.001$

As is evident from Table 6-17, all the relationships between the constructs are statistically significant (at $p < 0.001$). The β-weights range from 0.165 to 0.907. The larger the β-weight, the stronger the relationship between the two variables (Hair, Wolfinbarger *et al.*, 2017:342).

With regard to H_1, it is evident from Table 6-17 that service recovery attributes underlies compensation (β-weight = 0.765; $p < 0.001$), response speed (β-weight = 0.907; $p < 0.001$), apology (β-weight = 0.794; $p < 0.001$) and explanation (β-weight = 0.828; $p < 0.001$). Therefore, H_1 is supported. H_2, which aimed to determine whether service recovery attributes have a positive effect on satisfaction with service recovery (β-weight = 0.520; $p < 0.001$), is also supported.

H_3 further set out to establish if perceived justice mediates the relationship between service recovery attributes and satisfaction with service recovery. The mediation test was acquired through an indirect effect result and assessing the 'variance accounted for' (VAF). Perceived justice has a VAF of 16.5% $\left(\frac{0.103}{0.623} \times 100\right)$ on the relationship between service recovery attributes and satisfaction with service recovery. However, the level of mediation VAF is less than 20%. Therefore, no mediation occurred, since a VAF less than 20% interval is regarded as no mediation, VAF between 20% and 80% interval is considered partial mediation and VAF beyond 80% interval is full mediation (Younas & Bari, 2020:1345). Accordingly, it can be concluded that H_3 is not supported.

The results further indicate that satisfaction with service recovery has a positive effect on trust (β-weight = 0.802; $p < 0.001$), thus supporting H_4. Hypothesis H_5, which determined whether satisfaction with service recovery has a positive effect on eWOM (β-weight = 0.787; $p < 0.001$), is also supported. Lastly, H_6, indicating that satisfaction with service recovery has a positive effect on repurchase intention (β-weight = 0.595; $p < 0.001$), is supported. Table 6-18 summarises the outcomes of the alternative hypotheses.

Table 6-18: Outcomes of the hypotheses of the study

Hypotheses	Outcome
H_1: Service recovery attributes underlies compensation, response speed, apology and explanation.	Supported
H_2: Service recovery attributes have a positive effect on satisfaction with service recovery.	Supported
H_3: Service recovery attributes have a positive indirect effect on satisfaction with service recovery, as mediated by perceived justice.	Rejected
H_4: Satisfaction with service recovery has a positive effect on trust.	Supported
H_5: Satisfaction with service recovery has a positive effect on eWOM.	Supported
H_6: Satisfaction with service recovery has a positive effect on repurchase intention.	Supported

As evident from the above results and Table 6-18, H_1, H_2, H_4, H_5 and H_6 of this study are supported, indicating statistically significant and positive relationships between the constructs. H_3, however, is not supported, as there was not positive indirect effect of service recovery attributes on satisfaction with service recovery as mediated by perceived justice. Based on the structural model results shown in Figure 6-2 and outcomes of the hypotheses (presented in Table 6-18), the following main findings can be stated with regard to the alternative hypotheses of this study:

Main finding 34: The service recovery attributes of mobile ISPs underlies compensation, response speed, apology and explanation.
Main finding 35: The service recovery attributes of mobile ISPs have a positive effect on respondents' satisfaction with service recovery.
Main finding 36: The service recovery attributes of mobile ISPs do not have a positive indirect effect on respondents' satisfaction with service recovery, as mediated by perceived justice.
Main finding 37: Respondents' satisfaction with service recovery has a positive effect on their trust in their mobile ISP.
Main finding 38: Respondents' satisfaction with service recovery has a positive effect on their eWOM intentions about their mobile ISP.
Main finding 39: Respondents' satisfaction with service recovery has a positive effect on their intention to repurchase from their mobile ISP.

6.7 SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

Table 6-19 summarises the findings established in this chapter from the results of the sample profile, descriptive statistics, reliability and validity testing, and hypotheses testing. These main findings are indicated in correlation with each of the secondary objectives formulated for the study.

Table 6-19: Main findings according to the secondary objectives

Secondary objective 1: Provide an overview of existing literature pertaining to the constructs of this study, namely service recovery attributes, perceived justice, satisfaction with service recovery, trust, eWOM and repurchase intention.	
Secondary objective 1 of the study was attained through an investigation of extant literature, which was presented in the preceding chapters (Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4).	
Secondary objective 2: Compile a sample profile of the respondents who participated in this study.	
Main finding 1	The sample comprised mainly White and Black male respondents, aged 31 or older. The majority of respondents have a tertiary qualification, are full-time employed and earn a monthly personal net income of more than R35 000.
Main finding 2	Most respondents have been making use of their mobile ISP's services for five years or less, are moderate internet users (spending 9 to 30 hours per week online) and are using the internet for online banking, social and communication purposes, or for work.
Main finding 3	The most notable mobile ISP service failures experienced by respondents have been identified as billing issues and internet speed fluctuations.
Secondary objective 3: Measure respondents' perceptions of the service recovery attributes of their mobile ISP.	
Main finding 6	The respondents agreed the most that after the service failure, their mobile ISP offered them adequate compensation for the loss incurred.
Main finding 7	The respondents agreed the least that after the service failure, their mobile ISP adequately compensated them for all the hard times they had due to the service failure.
Main finding 8	The respondents rated their overall perceptions of their mobile ISP's compensation attribute as well below average.
Main finding 9	The respondents agreed the most that after the service failure, their mobile ISP did not take long to solve the service failure.
Main finding 10	The respondents agreed the least that after the service failure, their mobile ISP reacted promptly to their inquiries regarding the service failure.
Main finding 11	The respondents rated their overall perceptions of their mobile ISP's response speed attribute as below average.
Main finding 12	The respondents agreed the most that after the service failure, their mobile ISP apologised for the inconvenience the problem had brought to them.
Main finding 13	The respondents agreed the least that after the service failure, their mobile ISP apologised for what they had suffered because of the problem.
Main finding 14	The respondents rated their overall perceptions of their mobile ISP's apology attribute as below average.

Table 6-19: Main findings according to the secondary objectives (continues)

Secondary objective 3: Measure respondents' perceptions of the service recovery attributes of their mobile ISP.	
Main finding 15	The respondents agreed the most that their mobile ISP explained what might have gone wrong after the service failure.
Main finding 16	The respondents agreed the least that after the service failure, their mobile ISP offered a convincing explanation for the reason of the problem.
Main finding 17	The respondents rated their overall perceptions of their mobile ISP's explanation attribute as below average.
Secondary objective 4: Measure the justice that respondents perceive they obtain from their mobile ISP.	
Main finding 18	The respondents agreed the most that after the service failure, the length of time taken by their mobile ISP to resolve their problem was longer than necessary.
Main finding 19	The respondents agreed the least that after the service failure, their mobile ISP showed adequate flexibility in dealing with their problem.
Main finding 20	The respondents rated their overall perceptions of their mobile ISP's justice as above average.
Secondary objective 5: Measure respondents' satisfaction with the service recovery of their mobile ISP.	
Main finding 21	The respondents agreed the most that after the service failure, their mobile ISP provided a satisfactory solution to this particular problem.
Main finding 22	The respondents agreed the least that after the service failure, they were satisfied with the way in which their problem was dealt with.
Main finding 23	The respondents rated their overall satisfaction with their mobile ISP's service recovery as below average.
Secondary objective 6: Measure respondents' trust in their mobile ISP.	
Main finding 24	The respondents agreed the most that they find it necessary to be cautious in dealing with their mobile ISP.
Main finding 25	The respondents agreed the least that their mobile ISP can be relied upon to keep its promises.
Main finding 26	The respondents rated their overall trust in their mobile ISP as slightly above average.
Secondary objective 7: Measure respondents' eWOM intentions towards their mobile ISP.	
Main finding 27	The respondents agreed the most with the statement that they will share their service experience with their mobile ISP through social networking sites or mobile technology.
Main finding 28	The respondents agreed the least with the statement that they will say positive things about their mobile ISP through social networking sites or mobile technology.
Main finding 29	The respondents rated their overall eWOM intentions towards their mobile ISP as above average.

Table 6-19: Main findings according to the secondary objectives (continues)

Secondary objective 8: Measure respondents' repurchase intention towards their mobile ISP.	
Main finding 30	The respondents agreed the most that they will keep using the services of their mobile ISP.
Main finding 31	The respondents agreed the least that after the service failure they have experienced, they will not use their current mobile ISP in the near future.
Main finding 32	The respondents rated their overall intentions to repurchase from their mobile ISP as relatively high.
Secondary objective 9: Examine the interrelationships between the constructs of the study.	
Main finding 4	All the measurement scales used to measure the variables of this study are reliable.
Main finding 5	The measurement model proved to have construct validity, since both convergent and discriminant validity were achieved.
Main finding 33	The fit statistics of the structural model indicate an acceptable model for this study.
Main finding 34	The service recovery attributes of mobile ISPs underlies compensation, response speed, apology and explanation.
Main finding 35	The service recovery attributes of mobile ISPs have a positive effect on respondents' satisfaction with service recovery.
Main finding 36	The service recovery attributes of mobile ISPs do not have a positive indirect effect on respondents' satisfaction with service recovery, as mediated by perceived justice.
Main finding 37	Respondents' satisfaction with service recovery has a positive effect on their trust in their mobile ISP.
Main finding 38	Respondents' satisfaction with service recovery has a positive effect on their eWOM intentions about their mobile ISP.
Main finding 39	Respondents' satisfaction with service recovery has a positive effect on their intention to repurchase from their mobile ISP.

6.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided and analysed the empirical data collected from the target population of this study. The total realised sample for this study was 484 respondents, which met the requirements for SEM analysis. This chapter commenced with a description of the sample composition, indicating the distribution of respondents between the four main mobile ISPs. Subsequently, the profile of the sample of this study was described, followed by the confirmation of the reliability and validity of the scales used to measure the constructs of the study as well as the descriptive results for these constructs. Finally, the alternative hypotheses – formulated for the conceptual model – were tested by means of SEM. The chapter concludes with a summary of the main findings, based on the empirical results, as pertaining to each of the secondary objectives. The following chapter (i.e. Chapter 7) presents the conclusions and recommendations for the study.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to address the research objectives that have been formulated for this study (see sections 1.6 and 5.3.3). The chapter commences with a brief overview of the study, followed by addressing each of the secondary objectives of the study. The chapter proceeds by tabulating and summarising the links between the secondary objectives, the literature discussed (in Chapters 2, 3 and 4), the questions in the questionnaire, the main findings, as well as the conclusions and recommendations. The chapter concludes by presenting the contributions, limitations of the study and suggestions for future research.

7.2 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

In order to provide context pertaining to the conclusions and recommendations for each secondary objective addressed in the following section (section 7.3), this section presents an overview of the study's objective, the main aspects addressed in each literature chapter and the research methodology.

This study was conducted in order to address the primary objective of developing a service recovery model for the South African mobile ISP industry. The reason for pursuing this objective is explained as part of the research problem. To recapitulate, it was established (in section 1.2) that the South African mobile telecommunication industry – which includes mobile ISPs – is infamous for its poor service delivery. The mobile ISP industry, in particular, has seen an increase in customer complaints about service failures, accompanied with poor complaint resolution. These service failures expose the industry to potentially negative effects, such as dissatisfied customers, negative WOM, disloyalty and ultimately reduced profitability. In order to minimise these negative effects, Matikiti, Roberts-Lombard *et al*. (2018:512) recommend that service providers should ensure that they have effective service recovery strategies in place. By addressing customers' complaints, providing solutions to their problems and by making sure that their expectations are met, the service provider can enhance its customers' overall satisfaction (with the service as well as the service provider) (Marshall & Johnston, 2015:150). Customers' satisfaction can be further improved, especially if they deem their service provider's recovery efforts to be fair (i.e. satisfaction with service recovery), which in turn could result in positive behaviour on their part (Ding & Lii, 2016:882; Petzer *et al*., 2017:242; Smith & Mpinganjira, 2015:35).

According to Ahmad and Ahmad (2014:62), customers' behaviour may differ based on country of origin, industry type, and even societies. Furthermore, it is suggested that customers' reactions to service failures as well as their recovery expectations may differ depending on their level of involvement in the service delivery (Ayertey, 2018:210). It is against this background that it was deemed necessary to undertake research on service recovery within the South African mobile ISP context, irrespective of previous research that have been conducted on similar constructs in other countries or industries. The aim of this study was, therefore, to develop a service recovery model for South African mobile ISPs, by measuring the identified constructs (i.e. service recovery attributes, perceived justice, satisfaction with service recovery, trust, eWOM, and repurchase intention).

Subsequently, a literature investigation was conducted on the key concepts identified from the research problem and secondary objectives, which were presented in Chapters 2, 3 and 4.

- Chapter 2 provided a discussion on the background and discipline of the study (i.e. services marketing), since the study specifically focuses on the service industry. The chapter provided a detailed discussion on the importance of studying services, as well as the conceptualisation of the services and services marketing concepts. Furthermore, the chapter explored the services marketing mix, ensued by an explanation of the different services marketing strategies that can be implemented. In conclusion, the chapter explored service recovery as a services marketing strategy, since it forms the foundation of this study. Consequently, a more detailed discussion of service recovery was provided by indicating the importance of service recovery, customers' recovery expectations, the service recovery strategies that can be implemented by the business, as well as the behavioural outcomes of service recovery.

- Chapter 3 elaborated on customers' behavioural responses to service recovery, which were identified in Chapter 2. It was explained that the equity theory is essential to identify customers' service recovery expectations and that it influences customers' post-purchase behaviour (following a service failure). Thus, the chapter specifically investigated customers' post-purchase behaviour in terms of satisfaction, trust, and loyalty (i.e. eWOM and repurchase intention) after service recovery.

- Chapter 4 provided theory-based insight into the relationships between the constructs of the study (i.e. service recovery attributes, perceived justice, satisfaction with service recovery, trust, eWOM and repurchase intention). An overview of existing research on each of the hypothesised relationships (between the constructs) was furnished, from which the conceptual model was compiled (see Figure 4-1).

- Chapter 5 elaborated on the available research methods that can be used when conducting marketing research, as well as the specific research methodology followed in this study. Subsequently, the chapter provided a discussion on the marketing research concept, followed by a presentation of each of the steps of the marketing research process used for this study.

- Chapter 6 provided a discussion on the analysis and interpretation of the empirical data collected. The chapter presented the sample results, including the sample composition and sample profile (socio-demographic information and patronage habits). Furthermore, the reliability and validity of the measures used in the study were established, followed by an account of the descriptive results for each construct. Finally, the formulated hypotheses were tested by conducting a SEM analysis. The chapter concluded with a summary of the main findings, based on the empirical results, as pertaining to each of the secondary objectives.

The subsequent section addresses the research objectives of the study, by drawing conclusions and proposing recommendations pertaining to each secondary objective.

7.3 ADDRESSING THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

In order to address the primary objective of the study, nine secondary objectives were formulated (see section 1.6.2). This section aims to address each of these secondary objectives, by presenting the associated main findings, drawing conclusions and proposing recommendations resulting from the preceding literature (i.e. Chapters 2, 3 and 4), and empirical results (from Chapter 6).

7.3.1 Secondary objective 1

Provide an overview of existing literature pertaining to the constructs of this study, namely service recovery attributes, perceived justice, satisfaction with service recovery, trust, eWOM and repurchase intention.

Secondary objective 1 was addressed by conducting an in-depth literature investigation in Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4. As indicated in section 1.7.1, the literature was obtained from a variety of secondary sources, including marketing websites, theses, scholarly journals, conference reports, industry reports, academic textbooks, and business reports. The key literature reviewed pertaining to each of the constructs of the study are outlined in Table 7-1.

Table 7-1: Outline of reviewed literature

Construct	Section	Key literature reviewed
Service recovery attributes	1.4.2	Brief introductory overview of the main service recovery responses that can be initiated by the service provider.
	2.6.3	Comprehensive discussion pertaining to the importance of appropriate and effective responses of service providers during service recovery. Identification, definitions and explanations of the fundamental service recovery actions (attributes).
	4.2.1	Context, explanation, and motivation of its proposed role in the conceptual model of this study.
Perceived justice	1.4.4	Brief introductory overview and distinction between the dimensions of perceived justice.
	2.6.2.2	Clarification of the construct and its role in service recovery, with a specific focus on the Justice Theory. Elaboration on the three dimensions that customers base their judgement of the fairness of service recovery on. Summary of existing research on perceived justice in different settings.
	4.2.3	Context, explanation, and motivation of its proposed role in the conceptual model of this study.
Satisfaction with service recovery	1.4.3	Brief introductory overview of the concept of customer satisfaction with a service recovery effort.
	3.3	Conceptualisation of the concept, in terms of definitions, customer complaint behaviour and the expectation-disconfirmation theory and satisfaction with service recovery. Comprehensive investigation into its importance, as well as the service recovery paradox.
	4.2.2	Context, explanation, and motivation of its proposed role in the conceptual model of this study.
Trust	1.4.5	Brief introductory overview of trust as a response to service recovery.
	3.4	In-depth discussion about the concept and its relationship with satisfaction with service recovery. Conceptualisation of the concept of trust, in terms of definitions, dimensions of trust, types of trust, and the importance of trust.
	4.2.4	Context, explanation, and motivation of its proposed role in the conceptual model of this study.
eWOM	1.4.6	Brief introductory overview of eWOM as a response to service recovery.
	3.5.1	In-depth discussion of eWOM as a form of attitudinal loyalty and its relationship with satisfaction with service recovery. Conceptualisation of the concept of eWOM, including definitions, a comparison of WOM and eWOM, and the importance of eWOM.
	4.2.5	Context, explanation, and motivation of its proposed role in the conceptual model of this study.

Table 7-1: Outline of reviewed literature (continues)

Construct	Section	Key literature reviewed
Repurchase intention	1.4.7	Brief introductory overview of repurchase intention as a response to service recovery.
	3.5.2	In-depth discussion of repurchase intention as a form of behavioural loyalty and its relationship with satisfaction with service recovery. Conceptualisation of the concept of repurchase intentions, which include definitions, theory of planned behaviour and repurchase intention, the importance of repurchase intention and the role of perceived switching costs on repurchase intention.
	4.2.6	Context, explanation, and motivation of its proposed role in the conceptual model of this study.

No main findings are posed concerning secondary objective 1. However, the insights acquired from realising this objective (i.e. the reviewed literature) assisted in addressing the remainder of the secondary objectives and contributed to developing relevant conclusions and recommendations.

7.3.2 Secondary objective 2

Compile a sample profile of the respondents who participated in this study.

In order to address secondary objective 2, a sample profile was compiled to describe the socio-demographic characteristics and patronage habits of the South African mobile ISP customers who participated in this study. Based on **main findings 1, 2 and 3** (see section 6.3), the typical respondent who participated in this study is either White or Black men, aged older than 30, well-educated, full-time employed and from the upper income bracket (Stats SA, 2015:13). Furthermore, most respondents have been making use of their mobile ISP's services for five years or less, are moderate internet users (i.e. spending 9 to 30 hours per week online) and mainly use their mobile internet for online banking, socialising, or work. Lastly, the most notable mobile ISP service failures experienced by respondents have been identified as billing issues and internet speed fluctuations.

Based on these main findings, a number of conclusions and recommendations can be noted pertaining to secondary objective 2, as indicated in Table 7-2.

Table 7-2: Secondary objective 2: Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions
Conclusion 1: The sample included mature and educated individuals from the upper income bracket who understood the notions of service failure and complaining, specifically with reference to their respective mobile ISPs.
Conclusion 2: The typical respondent who participated in this study has been using his/her mobile ISP's services for five years or less, spend a moderate amount of time online and mainly use their mobile internet for online banking, socialising, or work purposes.
Conclusion 3: The most notable service failures experienced from mobile ISPs are billing issues and internet instability.
Recommendations
Recommendation 1: Mobile ISPs should be genuine in resolving service failures in a just manner without attempting to deceive their customers. Furthermore, mobile ISPs should actively and continuously engage with their customers to keep up to date with their changing needs through service recovery research and co-creation.
Recommendation 2: According to Vilkaite-Vaitone and Skackauskiene (2020:5), customers from lower income brackets mostly prefer a certain service provider, as they are generally (financially) limited to affordable options. On the other hand, customers from the upper income bracket can easily choose from a variety of service providers. As such, mobile ISPs should strive for exceptional service recovery to retain all customers, especially those from the upper income bracket, as they have the means to easily switch to different service providers.
Recommendation 3: The typical respondents have been with their mobile ISP for five years or less. It is therefore advised that mobile ISPs pay special attention to these customers and provide effective service recovery resolution in order to retain them, as they are more likely to switch service providers compared to those who have been with their provider for longer.
Recommendation 4: Mobile ISPs should adapt their internet offerings (i.e. data deals) based on the purpose of use and the amount of time spent on the internet by the customers. For example, mobile ISPs could offer data deals to use on the internet specifically for work purposes.
Recommendation 5: As discussed in the literature (see section 2.6.3), the first rule of service quality is to deliver the service correctly during the first encounter with the customer. Thus, service providers can implement Poka-Yokes to eliminate frequent service failures and to make sure that specific service steps or service standards are followed. In so doing, the Poka-Yoke technique will assist mobile ISPs in designing an error free service delivery system and eliminating the mistakes that occur during billing of services. In so doing, this will ensure reliable service billing.

Table 7-2: Secondary objective 2: Conclusions and recommendations (continues)

Recommendations
Recommendation 6: As from the literature (see section 1.3), South African mobile ISPs should move swiftly towards the implementation of fifth-generation wireless technology in order to address service failures related to internet speed fluctuations. The fifth-generation wireless technology network service is engineered to increase internet speed, responsiveness and signal strength, thus improving internet service reliability as well as connectivity (Fourie, 2019). As such, mobile ISPs should advance their mobile wireless technologies and infrastructures to all South African provinces, specifically within the areas with higher internet demand. Furthermore, mobile ISPs should to engage more with the South African government and ICASA in order to negotiate and receive more spectrum at better prices, thus reducing internet speed fluctuations that might be related to increased demand and internet use.
Recommendation 7: It is also important for the mobile ISPs customers to be educated about the mobile devices that are compatible with certain network standards. As such, customers become informed of the mobile devices to purchase in order to access better network standards. For instance, some mobile devices only support third-generation wireless technology and therefore are not compatible with the fourth-generation or fifth-generation wireless technology.

7.3.3 Secondary objective 3

Measure respondents' perceptions of the service recovery attributes of their mobile ISP.

Service recovery attributes are the factors that characterise the service provider's service recovery actions following a service failure (Smith *et al*., 1999:358). In Chapter 4 (section 4.2.1), it was established that existing research has not yet measured service recovery attributes as a multi-dimensional construct, but rather measured these actions as single-dimensional constructs (Awa *et al*., 2014:6; Davidow, 2000:475; Liao, 2007:485; Odoom *et al*., 2019:11; Shin *et al*., 2018:8; Smith *et al*., 1999:358). It was further established that the most commonly investigated service recovery attributes include compensation (Doaei *et al*., 2012:94; Shin *et al*., 2018:8), response speed (Park & Park, 2016:235; Varela-Neira *et al*., 2010:41), apology (Sadaghashvili & Correia, 2019:10; Smith *et al*., 1999:368) and explanation (Liao, 2007:485; Mostafa *et al*., 2014:305). As established in the literature, these attributes generally result in favourable outcomes, including positive customer perceptions of the business' image (Park & Park, 2016:237), positive evaluation of the perceived justice in service recovery (Smith *et al*., 1999:358) and satisfaction with service recovery (Quy, 2014:75). Therefore, to address secondary objective 3, the study measured respondents' perceptions concerning the four service recovery attributes, namely compensation, response speed, apology, and explanation.

7.3.3.1 Compensation

Compensation, as explained in Chapter 2 (section 2.6.3), relates to the service provider's provision of financial or physical resources to the customer after a service failure (Hübner *et al*., 2018:297). It is argued that after a service failure occurs, customers develop expectations about what the service provider should do in order to compensate them. Consequently, those predetermined expectations will either positively or negatively impact customers' satisfaction with the service recovery effort, depending on whether they are fulfilled or not (Matikiti, Mpinganjira *et al*., 2019:101). According to Farzianpour *et al*. (2016:1), compensation permits the service provider to appease dissatisfied customers, increase customer retention rates, and potentially develop long-term relationships with these customers, eventually transforming them into loyal customers.

The following **literature findings** pertaining to compensation as service recovery attribute can be summarised:

- Customers have predetermined expectations of the compensation they should receive from the service provider in a service recovery encounter (Bambauer-Sachse & Rabeson, 2015b:119).
- Customers' expectations of compensation can be influenced by the service failure severity and the context in which the service failure occurs (Goode *et al*., 2017:706).
- The compensation required by customers should equate to the magnitude of the loss caused by the service failure (Sembada *et al*., 2016:340).
- A higher level of compensation can result in a higher level of customer satisfaction (Albrecht *et al*., 2019:62).

Based on **main findings 6, 7 and 8** (see section 6.5.1), it was established that the respondents perceived the compensation provided by their mobile ISP (after a service failure) as well below average. Based on these main findings, the following conclusion and recommendations can be noted pertaining to secondary objective 3, as indicated in Table 7-3.

Table 7-3: Secondary objective 3: Conclusion and recommendations for compensation

Conclusion
Conclusion 4: The respondents were discontent with the compensation received from their mobile ISP, in particular for the hard times they endured because of the service failure experienced.

Table 7-3: Secondary objective 3: Conclusion and recommendations for compensation (continues)

Recommendations
Recommendation 8: As established from the literature (see section 2.6.3), knowing customers' expectations will help a business to provide a solution that facilitates service recovery by compensating the failed customers in a manner that corresponds with their preferences. Therefore, mobile ISPs should determine their customers' compensation expectations in order to compensate the failed customers in a manner that matches their preferences. As such, mobile ISPs can conduct further research (through electronic suggestion boxes on their websites or through surveys) to determine customers' needs and preferences of compensation. Alternatively, mobile ISPs can engage with market research agencies such as BMi Research, Consulta, or BrandsEye to conduct research on their behalf in order to establish standardised and fair compensation strategies. In so doing, mobile ISPs can match customer compensation preferences and ensure fair compensation that equates to the type or magnitude of the service failure experienced. For instance, mobile ISPs could refund their customers to compensate for any billing issues, or provide customers with vouchers and discounted data deals for a certain period in the case of internet speed fluctuations.
Recommendation 9: It was noted in section 2.6.3 that although it is important for the service provider to offer compensation, it is necessary first to explain the cause of the service failure, as customers desire to know why the service failure occurred. Thus, prior to compensating customers, mobile ISPs should ensure that they provide an explanation for the causes of the service failure.
Recommendation 10: Service providers should ensure they provide the same level of compensation to all customers for the same level or type of service failure experienced (see section 2.6.2.2), as customers' assessment of fairness may be prejudiced to their knowledge of how other customers were previously treated in the same situations (Ngahu *et al*., 2016:55). Accordingly, when compensating customers, mobile ISPs should ensure that the compensation offered to one customer is similar to the level of compensation offered to another customer who experienced a similar type of service failure.

7.3.3.2 Response speed

With regard to response speed as service recovery attribute, the literature discussed in Chapter 2 (section 2.6.3) established that it refers to the speed at which employees respond to a customer's complaint (El-Helaly *et al*., 2015:7). According to Mandina and Kurwiravamwe (2016:85), the service provider should avoid delays when rectifying problems encountered by the customer, as this may aggravate their problems and in turn, negatively affect their patronage intentions. During the service encounter, response speed is generally related to the effectiveness of the service provider and often becomes a distinguishing aspect in determining satisfaction with service recovery among dissatisfied customers (Odoom *et al*., 2019:2). Hübner *et al*. (2018:293) suggest that in order to process customer complaints effectively, it is necessary for service providers to minimise their response time by having policies, procedures and employees to receive, process, investigate, and manage complaints.

The following **literature findings** pertaining to response speed as service recovery attribute can be summarised:

- Although service failure is inevitable, its detrimental effects are controllable through timely responses by the service provider (Sreejesh *et al.*, 2019:712).
- Complaints should be responded to in a timely manner and be resolved even though they might be frustrating, time-consuming or costly, otherwise it can result in the service provider's reputational damage from bad publicity (Ramphal, 2016:1).
- A business that promptly delivers and responds to its customers will outperform its competitors (Atuo & Kalu, 2017:37).

Based on **main findings 9, 10 and 11** (see section 6.5.1), it was established that the respondents perceived their mobile ISP's response speed as below average, specifically when inquiries were made about the service failure. Based on these main findings, the following conclusion and recommendations can be noted pertaining to secondary objective 3, as indicated in Table 7-4.

Table 7-4: Secondary objective 3: Conclusion and recommendations for response speed

Conclusion
Conclusion 5: The respondents considered their mobile ISP's response speed to the service failure to be relatively slow, particularly pertaining to their reactions to service failure inquiries.
Recommendations
Recommendation 11: As from the literature (see section 2.6.3), service providers can ensure prompt response to complaints or problems by establishing systems that permit customers to solve their service needs and resolve problems on their own. As such, mobile ISPs should implement self-service technologies (through online platforms or mobile apps) that customers can use to rectify service failures on their own without having to wait for assistance from the mobile ISP's employees. For example, when customers have internet problems, they may use a self-service mobile phone application or a 'frequently asked questions' page on the service provider's website in an attempt to promptly fix the problem on their own. Mobile ISPs should also inform their customers about these self-service technologies and encourage them to use it to resolve service failures on their own.
Recommendation 12: As explained in section 2.6.3, service providers can reduce response time to customer complaints by having policies, procedures and employees to receive, process, investigate and address complaints. Accordingly, mobile ISPs should simplify the complaint process for customers and enable them to complain through social network platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, or their official websites. Mobile ISPs should also ensure that they have enough employees (i.e. enough capacity) available in the complaints department to respond to customer complaints. Mobile ISPs should consider issuing a waiting ticket number, indicating approximately how many minutes it will take before a customer gets assistance (e.g. a physical waiting ticket during physical store visits, or a digitally assigned ticket number during automated online responses).

Table 7-4: Secondary objective 3: Conclusion and recommendations for response speed (continues)

Recommendations
Recommendation 13: Service providers should have continuous systematic service training workshops to ensure that their employees are able and willing to manage service failures without having to refer customers to other employees for further assistance (see section 2.6.3). In the same manner, mobile ISPs should conduct continuous systematic training workshops for their employees, which may be done on a monthly basis or twice per year depending on the need for it. It is also crucial that new employees should undergo sufficient training in managing service failures before being allowed to interact with customers.
Recommendation 14: As established from the literature (see section 2.6.3), when the service provider does not have any immediate solutions available to solve a problem, they should notify customers the approximate time they can expect to be attended to with regard to their problem. Thus, mobile ISPs should communicate with their customers and let them know when they may expect to contact the customer to provide further assistance and feedback. Moreover, it is crucial that mobile ISPs should keep the promise to contact the customer within the promised time even when the solution is not yet available and keep the customer updated on what is being done to resolve his/her problem.

7.3.3.3 Apology

As explained in section 2.6.3, an apology relates to an acknowledgement of responsibility and regret for the service failure to the customer and can also express the service provider's intention to reconcile and continue the relationship (Cui *et al*., 2018:38). Kruger (2016:162) suggests that apologies can alleviate customer anger when the service provider acknowledges the psychological loss experienced due to a service failure. When apologising, both the verbal and non-verbal aspects of the message can influence the customer's judgement of the sincerity of the apology and it determines whether the customer accepts or rejects the apology (Song *et al*., 2018:31). However, Shin *et al*. (2018:5) argue that the manner in which customers assess the justice of a service provider's apology is highly personal and subjective.

The following **literature findings** pertaining to apology as service recovery attribute can be summarised:

- Although offering an apology can alleviate customers' anger elicited by the service failure, it is apparent that businesses frequently do not apologise to dissatisfied customers (Phabmixay *et al*., 2018:8).
- When a service provider apologises, it takes responsibility for causing the service failure and expresses regret for what had happened (Rasoulian *et al*., 2017:784).

- The service provider should be polite when apologising to customers (Atuo & Kalu, 2017:36).
- It requires minimal effort to make an apology as well as less time to implement it (Pacheco *et al.*, 2019:4).

Based on **main findings 12, 13 and 14** (see section 6.5.1), it was established that the respondents perceived their mobile ISP's apology attribute as below average, specifically when it came to what they had suffered because of the service failure. Based on these main findings, the following conclusion and recommendations can be noted pertaining to secondary objective 3, as indicated in Table 7-5.

Table 7-5: Secondary objective 3: Conclusion and recommendations for apology

Conclusion
Conclusion 6: The respondents experienced the apologies made by their mobile ISP as inadequate.
Recommendations
Recommendation 15: As from the literature (see section 2.6.3), the service provider should be polite when making an apology to customers. Likewise, mobile ISPs can also enforce or encourage their employees to be polite towards customers through employee ratings of the service encounters to ensure employees behave and act in a polite manner towards customers. Alternatively, mobile ISP employees, especially within the complaints handling department or frontline employees who are frequently in contact with customers, should be trained to improve their interpersonal accuracy skills. This should equip employees to relate with customers and empathise with them and thus, be more polite and understandable during the service recovery process.
Recommendation 16: As indicated in section 2.6.3, employees should not be defensive when making an apology. As such, mobile ISP employees should be attentive, genuinely listen to customers, and be willing to accept responsibility for the problems caused.
Recommendation 17: Service providers should develop personalised relationships with their customers through relationship marketing efforts, as this will help to nurture customers who can easily forgive when service failures occur (see section 2.6.3).
Recommendation 18: As from the literature (see section 2.6.3), in case of a serious problem, employees should escalate the matter to their supervisor or manager, as customers feel that their complaints have been heard by important employees and are justified. Thus, mobile ISP managers should also be available to assist their employees with any serious problems.
Recommendation 19: As noted in section 2.6.3 service providers should make genuine apologies to its customers during service recovery. Therefore, mobile ISPs should invest in employee training and development to ensure their employees become knowledgeable on how to make genuine apologies either during face-to-face interactions, telephonically, via emails, or through social media platforms (such as Facebook and Twitter).

Table 7-5: Secondary objective 3: Conclusion and recommendations for apology (continues)

Recommendations
Recommendation 20: When making an apology, employees should emphasise their willingness to assist the customer with his/her problem (see section 2.6.3). Accordingly, mobile ISPs' employees should communicate and show commitment to helping the customer. For example, some useful phrases when communicating could be, "*I sincerely apologise for the inconvenience caused and I am happy to assist you with this matter*."
Recommendation 21: Considering that service failures are inevitable (as explained in section 2.5.4), mobile ISPs should avoid making promises they might not be able to fulfil (e.g. promising customers that they will not experience the same service failure again).

7.3.3.4 Explanation

As discussed in section 2.6.3, explanation as a service recovery attribute entails that the service provider provides the customer with an understandable and rational reason for the service failure he/she have experienced (El-Helaly *et al*., 2015:7). Although it may be vital for the service provider to compensate the customer, it is essential to provide an explanation concerning the cause of the service failure first, because customers need to know why the failure occurred (Msosa & Govender, 2019:480). Tarofder *et al*. (2016:528) argue that service providers should understand that it is the customer's right to know the cause of the service failure. Therefore, providing a detailed explanation concerning the problem encountered is one of the most effective organisational responses a service provider can make to complaining customers (Hinson *et al*., 2019:79). However, the manner in which the customer interprets the provider's explanation plays a crucial role in restoring satisfaction following a complaint (Quy & Lan, 2015:1079).

The following **literature findings** pertaining to explanation as service recovery attribute can be summarised:

- It is vital for a service provider to offer a reasonable explanation to customers about the service failure and to attempt to resolve the problem (Wirtz & Lovelock, 2018:418).
- Although some customers may perceive an explanation as an essential aspect for valuable and favourable outcomes, it may bear negative consequences from those customers who may think that it is just the service provider's effort to justify the service failure without being blamed (Sciarelli *et al*., 2017:27).
- The service provider's explanations that customers can consider as honest, sincere and not manipulative are generally the most effective (Zeithaml *et al*., 2018:191).

Based on **main findings 15, 16 and 17** (see section 6.5.1), the respondents perceived the explanation provided by their mobile ISP as slightly below average. In particular, the respondents agreed the least that the provider offered a convincing explanation for the reason of the problem. Based on these main findings, the following conclusion and recommendations can be noted pertaining to secondary objective 3, as indicated in Table 7-6.

Table 7-6: Secondary objective 3: Conclusion and recommendations for explanation

Conclusion
Conclusion 7: The respondents feel that their mobile ISPs provided mediocre explanations concerning the service failure.
Recommendations
Recommendation 22: As from the literature (see section 2.6.3), service providers should provide adequate explanations to customers. Moreover, service providers should ensure that the content of the explanation is appropriate, in the sense that it should contain all the relevant facts and valid information to clarify why the service failure occurred. The mobile ISP should therefore be able to provide an informed and detailed explanation to the customer regarding the related service failure. Furthermore, mobile ISPs should be selective in employing individuals who can communicate proficiently and provide adequate explanations to customers. Alternatively, employees who are hired should be trained to improve their interpersonal and communication skills before they can begin to interact with customers.
Recommendation 23: When providing an explanation for the service failure, the service provider should also indicate what it would do to avert a similar service failure in the future (see section 2.6.3). Therefore, besides explaining the causes of the service failure, when mobile ISPs handle a service failure, it should also communicate with customers and explain their relentless efforts in improving their service delivery to avoid similar problems (e.g. in cases of billing issues).
Recommendation 24: As previously discussed (see section 2.6.3), service providers should provide honest and sincere explanations. It is therefore imperative for mobile ISPs to adequately train their employees on how to provide explanations in an appropriate manner.

7.3.4 Secondary objective 4

Measure the justice that respondents perceive they obtain from their mobile ISP.

As discussed in Chapter 2, customers expect their service provider to handle their complaints in a just and fair manner (Zeithaml *et al.*, 2018:192). When customers experience a service failure, they tend to perceive injustice; thus, the service provider's competence to establish justice is necessary in shaping customers' perceptions of a satisfactory experience (Yani-de-Soriano *et al.*, 2019:710). The perceived inequality or injustice in the exchange process is centred on the customer's investment in time, money, and effort in comparison to the service provider's failure to fulfil the customer's expectations or failure to deliver what was promised (Ngahu *et al.*, 2016:55). Accordingly, Adams' (1965) Justice Theory is recognised as an invaluable instrument for evaluating customers' satisfaction following a service failure (Chao & Cheng, 2019:1355). Customer perceived justice is the assessment of whether the business has performed its duty in delivering the promised benefits (Cheng *et al.*, 2017:397). The rationale behind the justice theory is that the level of customer satisfaction and future behavioural intentions are influenced by the perceptions that customers hold about the justice of the service recovery effort (Chao & Cheng, 2019:1351). In fact, customers care about the justice they receive from the service provider because they are concerned about the long-term benefits guaranteed by the fair methods and processes through which conflicts are rectified (Guo *et al.*, 2016:44). According to Oflaç (2016:232), the perceived justice theory has been applied in different contexts due to its recognised benefits of justice in relationships (Smith & Mpinganjira, 2015:36).

The following **literature findings** pertaining to perceived justice can be summarised:

- Even though customers may perceive the outcomes and procedures of service recovery as fair, they might still feel mistreated if they perceive an unfair treatment in the way the business delivers the value proposition (Bahri-Ammari & Bilgihan, 2017:91).

- Perceived justice plays a critical role in long-term relationships, since exchange parties must collaborate, leveraging each other's capabilities and resources in order to achieve mutual goals (Chao & Cheng, 2019:1351).

- The perceived justice component of the equity theory will cause customers to judge if they have received a fair service recovery strategy or not (Ogonu & Nwogu, 2018:35).

- When customers perceive unfair justice during service delivery, it prompts them to switch to other service providers, which is not ideal for service providers, as it will lead to more costs in attracting new customers (Gohary *et al.*, 2016:138).

Based on **main findings 18, 19 and 20** (see section 6.5.2), it was established that the respondents perceived their mobile ISP's justice as above average. The respondents further indicated that their mobile ISP took longer than necessary to resolve their problem and that the provider was not flexible in dealing with the problem. Based on these main findings, the following conclusion and recommendations can be noted pertaining to secondary objective 4, as indicated in Table 7-7.

Table 7-7: Secondary objective 4: Conclusion and recommendations

Conclusion
Conclusion 8: The respondents perceived the justice from their mobile ISP to be mediocre, with a specific need for improvement in problem resolution time and improved flexibility when addressing the problem.
Recommendations
Recommendation 25: As previously explained (see section 2.6.2.2), service recovery efforts should show flexibility and employees should be empowered to exercise their own judgement and use their communication skills to create solutions that will satisfy the customers who have complained. Mobile ISPs should demonstrate flexibility by being able and willing to quickly adapt their complaint resolution processes to satisfy the customers' needs by providing personalised services. Furthermore, mobile ISPs should train their employees to equip them with the necessary expertise, which can qualify them to be empowered by managers to manage service failures on their own. Mobile ISP managers could consider knowledge-sharing among employees during staff meetings so that they are empowered on how other employees have dealt with certain service failures and become adept at problem-solving.
Recommendation 26: As from the literature (see section 2.5.3), service providers could strive for service leadership. Arguably, when mobile ISPs are committed towards service delivery (i.e. striving for service leadership), even when service failures occur, they remain committed towards service delivery by promptly resolving the problems in a flexible manner.
Recommendation 27: As previously highlighted (see section 2.6.2.2), service providers should have highly motivated employees when resolving service failures. Accordingly, short weekly motivation sessions should be conducted by mobile ISPs to ensure employees exert a significant level of effort when dealing with customers. Mobile ISPs could also use employee recognition and reward systems to motivate their employees.
Recommendation 28: As explained in section 2.6.2.2, customers want a prompt response, preferably with the first person whom they contact. As such, mobile ISPs should make a significant investment in training and empowering their employees to address complaints quickly without referring the customer to another employee to get further assistance.

7.3.5 Secondary objective 5

Measure respondents' satisfaction with the service recovery of their mobile ISP.

As elaborated in Chapter 3 (section 3.3.1), satisfaction with service recovery refers to the extent to which the service provider's service recovery efforts meet or surpass customers' expectations and reduce their dissatisfaction following a service failure (Ateke & Kalu, 2016:19). Ngahu *et al.* (2016:56) assert that dissatisfied customers expect the service provider to take corrective action to reinstate their satisfaction after they have experienced a service failure. Consequently, service recovery is necessary for the service provider with the view to restore customer satisfaction following a service failure (Ellyawati, 2017b:1265). The expectancy-disconfirmation theory by Oliver (1980) has been broadly used to describe the process through which customers establish their satisfaction with service recovery (Ding & Lii, 2016:882). The customer's expectations can either be positively disconfirmed when a service recovery exceeds his/her predetermined expectations, or negatively disconfirmed when the service provider fails to fulfil his/her initial expectations (Matikiti, Mpinganjira *et al*., 2018:46). Lee (2018:279) suggests that when the service recovery efforts from the service provider are equitable to the loss incurred by the customer, he/she will be satisfied with the service recovery. Notably, a poor service recovery effort following a service failure encounter can lead to highly dissatisfied customers, who might become "terrorists" – actively seeking opportunities to criticise the business openly on internet review sites or online media (i.e. negative eWOM) (Wilson *et al*., 2016:328).

The following **literature findings** pertaining to satisfaction with service recovery can be summarised:

- Providing a satisfactory service recovery can alleviate customers' feelings of betrayal and their intentions to react negatively towards the service provider (Van Vaerenbergh *et al*., 2014:47).
- When customers are satisfied with the service recovery outcome, the business can expect them to remain loyal. On the contrary, when customers are dissatisfied with the outcome, the business is more likely to lose the customers (Ateke & Harcourt, 2017:15).
- Service failures that remain unaddressed can result in customers' defection, the sharing of negative experiences with other customers and potentially challenging the service provider through customer rights agencies or litigation (Zeithaml *et al*., 2018:180).
- A satisfactory service recovery can enhance customers' repurchase intentions (Moliner-Velázquez *et al*., 2015:471).
- Satisfaction with service recovery can positively influence customers' trust (Nadiri, 2016:197).
- When a service failure occurs and the service provider initiates service recovery, a service recovery paradox may occur (Cheng *et al*., 2015:839). However, although a service recovery paradox means that customers may ultimately gain more satisfaction from an excellent recovery, there is no assurance that customers will become satisfied (Zeithaml *et al*., 2018:182).

- It is critical for service providers to recognise that the business' success is premised on its ability to satisfy the customer and it should therefore create strategies to enhance satisfaction with service recovery (Matikiti, Roberts-Lombard *et al*., 2019:411).

Based on **main findings 21, 22 and 23** (see section 6.5.3), it was established that the respondents' satisfaction with their mobile ISP's service recovery is below average. Most respondents indicated that they were not satisfied with the way in which their problem was dealt with. Based on these main findings, the following conclusion and recommendations can be noted pertaining to secondary objective 5, as indicated in Table 7-8.

Table 7-8: Secondary objective 5: Conclusion and recommendations

Conclusion
Conclusion 9: The respondents are dissatisfied with the service recovery efforts of their mobile ISPs. In particular, the respondents are dissatisfied with the way in which their problem was dealt with.
Recommendations
Recommendation 29: As highlighted in the literature (see section 2.5.4), establishing interactive communication between the service provider and the customer will help to design a seamless way of managing service failures and ultimately attain satisfaction with service recovery. Therefore, mobile ISPs should develop interactive communication (i.e. two-way communication) with their customers during the service recovery process.
Recommendation 30: Service providers should learn from service recovery experiences in order to acquire information to improve service delivery (see section 2.6.3). In this regard, mobile ISPs could conduct a root-cause analysis by hiring consultancy experts to determine the causes of the recurrent service failures (e.g. billing issues) or the causes of poor complaint resolution (e.g. delayed responses to complaints) and then deal with the root of the problem.
Recommendation 31: As from the literature (refer to section 3.3.3), understanding customers' expectations can assist in explaining how satisfaction from service recovery is attained. Furthermore, service providers should assess their service recovery policies or strategies based on customers' expectations. Therefore, mobile ISPs should increase their efforts to be acquainted with their customers' needs and expectations during service recovery through customer engagement and marketing research. Moreover, mobile ISPs should continually conduct research to analyse and re-strategise their policies or recovery strategies where necessary to ensure they are continually meeting customers' expectations. Mobile ISPs should also adopt the relationship marketing approach in order to understand customers' needs and expectations (see section 2.6.3).
Recommendation 32: As explained in section 3.3.3, a double deviation may occur when the first service recovery attempt fails. Therefore, mobile ISPs should be willing to learn from recovery experiences in order to acquire valuable information for managing service failures and restore the customer's satisfaction. Furthermore, by mimicking the concept of making the service fail safe – do it right the first time (refer to section 2.6.3) – mobile ISPs could also ensure commitment to solving service failures by developing a service recovery culture of, "*learn from the service mistake and do it right the second time*".

Table 7-8: Secondary objective 5: Conclusion and recommendations (continues)

Recommendations
Recommendation 33: As established from the literature (see section 3.3.4), customers' perceived justice shapes their satisfaction with service recovery. Therefore, mobile ISPs should strive to improve customers' perceived justice during service recovery by treating them fairly.
Recommendation 34: To further improve customers' satisfaction with the service recovery effort, mobile ISPs could employ the recommendations pertaining to the service recovery attributes (provided in section 7.3.3), as these are widely recognised actions to restore customer satisfaction.

7.3.6 Secondary objective 6

Measure respondents' trust in their mobile ISP.

In Chapter 3 (section 3.4.1), trust was defined as the customer's confidence that an exchange party is reliable in delivering on the promises made and fulfilling its obligations (Schurr & Ozanne, 1985:940). In services marketing, trust is a requirement for maintaining the relationship between the customer and service provider, since customers normally have to make a purchase decision before they can access the service (Mirani *et al*., 2015:468). In order to establish trust, the trustor (i.e. customer) should make a judgement that the trustee (i.e. service provider) can fulfil its obligations and the trustee's trustworthiness is premised on this judgement (Roy *et al*., 2015:1002). As explained in section 3.3.4, researchers commonly distinguish between two types of trust, namely cognitive trust and affective trust. Cognitive trust refers to a customer's confidence in the service provider's abilities and reliability (Johnson & Peterson, 2014:522), whereas affective trust signifies the psychological state of the customer feeling secure and affectionate (Akrout *et al*., 2016:262). Utami (2015:640) noted that it is less demanding and problematic for businesses to develop lasting relationships with their customers if a reciprocal level of trust can be established between the two parties. Moreover, trust is a continuous reaction that is developed over time and increases customers' beliefs that the service provider will not engage in opportunistic behaviour (Saleem *et al*., 2017:1139).

The following **literature findings** pertaining to trust can be summarised:

- The service provider might not be able to fulfil customers' expectations in the service encounter, thereby damaging their trust (Da Rosa Pulga *et al*., 2019:497).
- A successful service recovery enhances customers' trust in the provider, increasing their confidence about the trustworthiness and integrity of the service provider (Garg, 2013:27).

- In order to regain customers' trust after a service failure, a service recovery strategy has to be carefully and properly managed or it could result in more disappointment and dissatisfaction (Ellyawati, 2017b:1263).
- Trust is a critical component for successful long-term business-customer relationships, as customers' trust affects their intentions and future behaviour (Dimyati & Subagio, 2018:711).
- Customers who trust the business are less likely to switch to competitors' offerings (Hapsari *et al*., 2020:50).

Based on **main findings 24, 25 and 26** (see section 6.5.4), it was established that the respondents rated their trust in their mobile ISP as slightly above average. However, the respondents agreed the most that they must be cautious in dealing with their mobile ISP. Based on these main findings, the following conclusion and recommendations can be noted pertaining to secondary objective 6, as indicated in Table 7-9.

Table 7-9: Secondary objective 6: Conclusion and recommendations

Conclusion
Conclusion 10: The respondents generally found it necessary to be cautious in dealing with their mobile ISP.
Recommendations
Recommendation 35: As discussed in section 3.4.3, trust is established when the customer has confidence in the service provider's intentions, as well as its competence to perform tasks effectively. Mobile ISPs should therefore instil confidence in their customers in order to minimise the uncertainty of the relationship. As such, mobile ISPs should ensure that they are responsive to customer complaints, are empathetic towards their customers, and are accountable for their actions.
Recommendation 36: Since trust is formed based on trustworthiness (Huang *et al*., 2016:752) (see section 3.4.2), mobile ISPs should show characteristics of trustworthiness to customers. These characteristics can be the skills and competencies of the mobile ISP's employees to deliver the service correctly or perform the service recovery, the mobile ISP's willingness to treat the customer in a good manner following a service failure, or the mobile ISP's honesty and fairness when addressing service failures.
Recommendation 37: As indicated in the preceding literature (see section 3.4), managers who desire to restore trust after a service failure should implement actions that are aimed at rebuilding or strengthening the customer-business relationship. These actions may include virtual or physical social interactions between the mobile ISP and its customers, such as sending an e-mail or a handshake upon closing a service encounter.

Table 7-9: Secondary objective 6: Conclusion and recommendations (continues)

Recommendations
Recommendation 38: In Chapter 3 (see section 3.4), it was established that service providers can use a formal apology as a trust recovery strategy, as this acts as an acknowledgement of the service failure and emits a psychological signal to the customer in an effort to restore the relationship. Mobile ISPs should therefore consider the recommendations pertaining to apology as service recovery attribute (in section 7.3.3.3) when making an apology to customers following a service failure.
Recommendation 39: Relationship marketing, as highlighted from the literature (in section 2.5.2), is often regarded as the most important strategy to gain customer trust. Thus, mobile ISPs should put effort into establishing and nurturing the relationships with their customers, which will ultimately build customer trust.
Recommendation 40: As established in the literature (see section 3.4), service providers should strive to deliver services as promised and develop methods for providing reliable service experiences. Therefore, mobile ISPs should develop a service leadership culture that is committed towards service delivery and emphasises service quality (see section 2.5.3). Furthermore, mobile ISPs should encourage employees to develop personalised relationships with customers and fulfil the promises made, for instance, calling back a customer who made a complaint (Matikiti, Mpinganjira *et al*., 2019:103).

7.3.7 Secondary objective 7

Measure respondents' eWOM intentions towards their mobile ISP.

As explained in Chapter 3 (section 3.5.1.2), eWOM relates to any positive or negative sentiments with regard to a product, service or business which are communicated by prospective, existing or former customers to many people and institutions via the internet (Hennig-Thurau *et al*., 2004:39). According to Pasternak *et al*. (2017:415), eWOM represents more authenticity and credibility than brand-controlled marketing messages. Consequently, individuals are more likely to value and trust eWOM. One benefit of eWOM is that it is accessible to any individual who can use internet platforms to share their opinions and views about products or services (Huete-Alcocer, 2017:2). Kudeshia and Kumar (2017:311) posit that customers try to influence purchasing decisions of friends, colleagues, or prospective customers by providing recommendations and reviews on their social networking sites about a product or service. Reviews can be written by highly satisfied customers (e.g. customers praising employees for providing excellent services), or by highly disappointed customers (e.g. customers describing unsatisfactory experiences to warn other customers) (Zhang & Yang, 2019:1609).

The following **literature findings** pertaining to eWOM can be summarised:

- Customers who are satisfied with a service recovery experience are more likely to spread positive eWOM than those who are dissatisfied, which could potentially result in positive habitual behaviours (Liu *et al*., 2019:384).
- eWOM permits for more informed decisions, as customers can easily access information to support their decision-making process (Alhidari *et al*., 2015:111).
- The marketing environment has witnessed a significant growth in customer-generated content, due to the easy access and rapid dispersal of information via the internet (Mahapatra & Mishra, 2017:594).
- Customers' reviews which are made available through social network sites encompass a quick and informal way of communicating views and experiences about products or services with actual customers and prospective customers who can even be in different geographical locations (Gafni & Golan, 2016:45).
- eWOM is more influential than traditional WOM because of its viral nature, reach and also its online existence which permits users to access information at any time they search for the information. However, eWOM is significantly less personal as compared to traditional WOM and this may reduce its impact (Selvi & Thomson, 2016:118).
- eWOM can generate brand awareness, brand identity and brand equity for the business, ultimately enhancing customers' purchase intentions.

Based on **main findings 27, 28 and 29** (see section 6.5.5), it was established that the respondents rated their eWOM intentions towards their mobile ISP as above average, with most agreeing that they will share their service experience with their mobile ISP through social networking sites or mobile technology. Based on these main findings, the following conclusion and recommendations can be noted pertaining to secondary objective 7, as indicated in Table 7-10.

Table 7-10: Secondary objective 7: Conclusion and recommendations

Conclusion
Conclusion 11: The respondents indicated that they intend to communicate about their mobile ISP via eWOM. More specifically, the respondents have indicated that they will share their service experience via eWOM.

Table 7-10: Secondary objective 7: Conclusion and recommendations (continues)

Recommendations
Recommendation 41: As established from the literature (see section 3.5.1.1), service providers should reward customers who write positive reviews so as to encourage them to share testimonials that can improve the credibility of the service provider. As such, mobile ISPs should invest time and effort in identifying possible ways through which positive reviewers could be rewarded, such as awarding free data or points that can later be converted into airtime.
Recommendation 42: Positive WOM can be improved by treating all customers with courtesy and respect when they complain, thus maintain a positive business image (see section 3.5.1.1). Mobile ISPs should, therefore, follow a similar approach, by ensuring that their frontline personnel have the necessary skills and attributes to manage complainants courteously and respectfully.
Recommendation 43: Mobile ISPs should make streamlined channels available for customers to share their service experiences. For instance, providing social media links on the mobile ISP's website, which can be used to share experiences.

7.3.8 Secondary objective 8

Measure respondents' repurchase intention towards their mobile ISP.

It was established in section 3.5.2.2 that repurchase intention is the likelihood that the customer will continuously reuse a service offered by a service provider in the future (Oman *et al*., 2016:26). Since most service offerings have substitutes, this may affect customers' decisions to continue patronage with the related service provider based on their satisfaction with the service (Sibona *et al*., 2017:1128). Thus, a business is at risk of losing future revenue that could be generated from repeat business if the customer is dissatisfied (Ogonu *et al*., 2019:278). Based on the equity theory, in order to restore repurchase intention following a service failure, the business should resolve customers' feelings of perceived injustice by a satisfactory service recovery (Ding *et al*., 2016:64). Satisfied customers develop high levels of repurchase intention, while dissatisfied customers will avoid repurchasing from the same business (Pee *et al*., 2018:231). According to Nwokorie (2016:2), the evaluation of previous service encounters tends to impact customers' attitudes and intentions when preparing for future service encounters. Thus, as highlighted by Kuo *et al*. (2016:175), the intention of a customer to repurchase a product or service (i.e. repurchase intention) forms part of Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behaviour. The theory of planned behaviour entails that an individual's decision-making process is influenced by his/her evaluation of the possible outcomes of specific behaviour, the expectation of references and the possible resources or impediments associated with that behaviour (Stranieri *et al*., 2016:209).

The following **literature findings** pertaining to repurchase intention can be summarised:

- A customer's willingness to repurchase the same product depends on his/her experience whether expectation levels were met or not (Goh *et al*., 2016:994).
- Every business requires repeat customers to boost and increase profit (Rana *et al*., 2017:1).
- The customers' intention to repurchase a product or service from a certain business will likely translate into their actual repurchasing behaviour of that specific product or service (Han *et al*., 2019:538).
- Customers who have high intention to repurchase are more probable to engage with other customers to make recommendations and they can communicate WOM relating to a product or a service following their initial purchase (Adekunle & Ejechi, 2018:796).
- The customers' perceptions of high switching costs being imposed by the business could deter the customers from exiting a relationship, thus, increasing their repurchase intention of the product concerned (Aghivirwiati *et al*., 2018:85).

Based on **main findings 30, 31 and 32** (see section 6.5.6), it was established that the respondents' intention to repurchase from their mobile ISP is relatively high. In particular, the respondents agreed the most that they will keep using the services of their mobile ISP. Based on these main findings, the following conclusion and recommendations can be noted pertaining to secondary objective 8, as indicated in Table 7-11.

Table 7-11: Secondary objective 8: Conclusion and recommendations

Conclusion
Conclusion 12: The respondents are likely to repurchase from their mobile ISP, regardless of their level of satisfaction with the service recovery effort.
Recommendations
Recommendation 44: As highlighted from the literature (see section 3.5.2.1), providing compensation in a manner that is fair or exceeds the customer's service recovery expectations will result in a positive impact on the repurchase intention of the customer. Mobile ISPs should therefore be prepared to compensate customers and subsequently ensure that they have processes and standards in place to establish adequate compensation levels. Recommendations 6 to 8 (see section 7.3.3.1) pertaining to compensation as service recovery attribute, can be considered by mobile ISPs as a guideline to compensate customers.

Table 7-11: Secondary objective 8: Conclusion and recommendations (continues)

Recommendations
Recommendation 45: As explained in the preceding literature (see section 3.5.2.1), when a service provider shows the ability to perform a service recovery in a manner that builds customer trust, it increases the customer's likelihood to repurchase. Thus, mobile ISPs should ensure restoration of customer trust in order to improve their repurchase intention by considering recommendations 35 to 40 (see section 7.3.6).
Recommendation 46: Mobile ISPs could also make use of online service recovery rating systems, to present customers with the opportunity to rate their recovery experiences. This information could provide invaluable feedback to service providers, as they would be able to identify possible problem areas immediately, enabling them to further enhance their service recovery processes. Positive feedback and ratings could be published on their website, to advertise their successful actions to other customers.

7.3.9 Secondary objective 9

Examine the interrelationships between the constructs of the study.

Chapter 4 presented the conceptual model and the proposed relationships between the constructs investigated in this study. Therefore, the interrelationships between service recovery attributes (i.e. compensation, response speed, apology and explanation), perceived justice, satisfaction with service recovery, trust, eWOM and repurchase intention were uncovered by assessing the properties of the measurement model and the structural model.

The following **literature findings** pertaining to the literature review from Chapter 4 can be summarised:

- Service recovery attributes may underlie compensation, response speed, apology, and explanation.
- Service recovery attributes may have a positive effect on satisfaction with service recovery.
- Service recovery attributes may have a positive indirect effect on satisfaction with service recovery, as mediated by perceived justice.
- Satisfaction with service recovery may have a positive effect on trust.
- Satisfaction with service recovery may have a positive effect on eWOM.
- Satisfaction with service recovery may have a positive effect on repurchase intention.

Before testing the hypotheses, the reliability and validity of the measurement scales were confirmed. Based on **main findings 4 and 5**, it was established that all of the measurement scales used to measure the variables of this study are reliable and valid. Therefore, it can be concluded that the measurement instrument (questionnaire) used in this study accurately measured what it was supposed to measure within the South African mobile ISP industry.

To test the hypothesised relationships (indicated in the conceptual model – Figure 4-1), structural equation modelling was conducted. The structural model fit statistics (see Table 6-16) indicated acceptable model fit (**main finding 33**). The results further indicated that the service recovery attributes underlies compensation, response speed, apology and explanation (**main finding 34**), service recovery attributes have a positive effect on satisfaction with service recovery (**main finding 35**) and that satisfaction with service recovery has a positive effect on trust (**main finding 37**), eWOM (**main finding 38**) and repurchase intention (**main finding 39**). These main findings subsequently supported H_1, H_2, H_4, H_5, and H_6. The mediation relationship between service recovery attributes and satisfaction with service recovery, with perceived justice as mediator, was not supported (**main finding 36**). Thus, H_3 was rejected.

Based on these main findings, the following conclusions and recommendations can be noted pertaining to secondary objective 9, as indicated in Table 7-12.

Table 7-12: Secondary objective 9: Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions
Conclusion 13: All the direct paths of the structural model showed positive effects, thus supporting H_1, H_2, H_4, H_5, and H_6. Concerning mobile ISPs, it seems that service recovery attributes underlies compensation, response speed, apology and explanation. Furthermore, service recovery attributes seem to have a positive effect on satisfaction with service recovery, which in turn has a positive effect on customers' behavioural intentions in the form of increased trust, positive eWOM communications and improved possibility for repurchases.
Conclusion 14: Perceived justice, which is commonly included as part of the service recovery process, did not mediate the relationship between service recovery attributes and satisfaction with service recovery (H_3 is not supported). Concerning mobile ISPs, it seems that perceived justice does not explain or improve the positive relationship between service recovery attributes and satisfaction with service recovery.
Recommendations
Recommendation 47: Mobile ISPs should focus on the implementation of effective service recovery actions, such as compensation, response speed, apology, and explanation, as these attributes were found to have a positive effect on customers' satisfaction with the service recovery effort. This can be achieved by the implementation of recommendations 8 to 24 (see section 7.3.3) pertaining to the service recovery attributes identified in this study.

Table 7-12: Secondary objective 9: Conclusions and recommendations (continues)

Recommendations
Recommendation 48: Mobile ISPs should ensure that their customers are satisfied with the provided service recovery effort, as this can improve their trust, generate positive eWOM, and encourage repurchases. This can be attained by the implementation of recommendations 29 to 34 (see section 7.3.5).
Recommendation 49: To benefit from successfully executed service recovery efforts – in the form of increased trust, positive eWOM communications and repurchase intentions – mobile ISPs should make the most of their available resources to respond optimally (in terms of compensation, response speed, apology and explanation) to customers experiencing a service failure and ensure that these customers are kept satisfied. It is, therefore, recommended that mobile ISPs – along with the preceding recommendations made throughout this chapter (i.e. recommendations 1 to 49) – consider implementing the service recovery model compiled in this study (see Figure 6-2).

7.4 THE LINKS BETWEEN THE OBJECTIVES, LITERATURE, QUESTIONS IN THE QUESTIONNAIRE, MAIN FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section indicates the links between the secondary objectives (formulated in Chapter 1), the relevant literature review, questions in the questionnaire, main findings, conclusions, and recommendations as presented in Table 7-13.

Table 7-13: The links between the objectives, literature, questions in the questionnaire, main findings, conclusions, and recommendations

Literature	Questions	Main findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
Secondary objective 1: Provide an overview of existing literature pertaining to the constructs of this study, namely service recovery attributes, perceived justice, satisfaction with service recovery, trust, eWOM and repurchase intention.				
Chapters 1 to 4	N/A	N/A	The conclusions and recommendations developed for secondary objectives 3 to 8 were derived from the literature presented in Chapters 1 to 4.	
Secondary objective 2: Compile a sample profile of the respondents who participated in this study.				
N/A	3 to 6 and 11 to 16	1 to 3	1 to 3	1 to 7
Secondary objective 3: Measure respondents' perceptions of the service recovery attributes of their mobile ISP.				
Chapter 1: 1.4.2 Chapter 2: 2.6.3 Chapter 4: 4.2.1	7	6 to 17	4 to 7	8 to 24

Table 7-13: The links between the objectives, literature, questions in the questionnaire, main findings, conclusions, and recommendations (continues)

Literature	Questions	Main findings	Conclusions	Recommendations
Secondary objective 4: Measure the justice that respondents perceive they obtain from their mobile ISP.				
Chapter 1: 1.4.4 Chapter 2: 2.6.2.2 Chapter 3: 3.3.4 Chapter 4: 4.2.3	8	18 to 20	8	25 to 28
Secondary objective 5: Measure respondents' satisfaction with the service recovery of their mobile ISP.				
Chapter 1: 1.4.3 Chapter 3: 3.3 Chapter 4: 4.2.2	9	21 to 23	9	29 to 34
Secondary objective 6: Measure respondents' trust in their mobile ISP.				
Chapter 1: 1.4.5 Chapter 3: 3.4 Chapter 4: 4.2.4	10	24 to 26	10	35 to 40
Secondary objective 7: Measure respondents' eWOM intentions towards their mobile ISP.				
Chapter 1: 1.4.6 Chapter 3: 3.5.1 Chapter 4: 4.2.5	10	27 to 29	11	41 to 43
Secondary objective 8: Measure respondents' repurchase intention towards their mobile ISP.				
Chapter 1: 1.4.7 Chapter 3: 3.5.2 Chapter 4: 4.2.6	10	30 to 32	12	44 to 46
Secondary objective 9: Examine the interrelationships between the constructs of the study.				
Chapter 1: 1.5 Chapter 4: 4.3	7 to 10	4, 5 and 33 to 39	13 to 14	47 to 49

7.5 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

The following theoretical and managerial contributions were made from this study.

7.5.1 Theoretical contributions

- As explained in Chapter 1 (section 1.4.2), compensation, response speed, apology, and explanation are some of the most conventional actions for service recovery, yet they had only been researched as individual constructs and not as part of one multi-dimensional construct. This study therefore extends the set of determinants that influence satisfaction with service recovery by introducing service recovery attributes through a unified approach as a multi-dimensional construct. Thus, advancing an understanding of the relationship between these two constructs. In particular, this study contributes to service recovery literature by providing a novel perspective on service recovery attributes as a multi-dimensional construct.

- The proposed conceptual model for this study has been validated, thus confirming the interrelationships between the constructs within the context of the South African mobile ISP industry. Therefore, this study contributes knowledge to the service recovery theory by exploring the antecedents and behavioural outcomes of satisfaction with service recovery whilst investigating service recovery attributes, perceived justice, satisfaction with service recovery, trust, eWOM and repurchase intention in an integrated model.
- This study established that mobile ISP customers' satisfaction with service recovery influence their behavioural responses (i.e. trust, eWOM and repurchase intention), which emphasises the importance of studying satisfaction with service recovery.
- To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no research has been conducted to investigate the antecedents and behavioural outcomes of satisfaction with service recovery in the South African mobile ISP industry. This study therefore further contributed to literature by establishing the relationships between the antecedents and behavioural outcomes of satisfaction with service recovery. Furthermore, the study contributes by providing recommendations specifically for the South African mobile ISP industry.

7.5.2 Managerial contributions

- The structural model developed in this study (see Figure 6-2) provides a comprehensive tool that mobile ISP managers and employees can implement when dealing with service failures with the view to effectively respond to and manage customer complaints. By establishing the hypothesised relationships between the constructs, this study provided industry-specific insight into the antecedents of satisfaction with service recovery and customers' behavioural responses following a service recovery experience. Based on the findings, the model provides a strategic framework for managing service failures, restoring customer satisfaction, as well as improving positive behavioural responses.
- The study shows that mobile ISPs can rely on the identified service recovery attributes (i.e. compensation, response speed, apology, and explanation) to reinstate customer satisfaction after a service failure. As such, mobile ISPs should ensure that they compensate their customers fairly, promptly respond to complaints, offer a sincere apology, and provide explanations to clarify the causes of the service failure by implementing the recommendations formulated in section 7.3.3. Taking this into account, the empirical results of this study confirm the significance of the service recovery attributes in restoring customer satisfaction.

- As noted by Nadiri (2016:194) and Olatunde *et al*. (2020:81), service recovery seems to be a neglected aspect of services marketing. This is evident from recent market reports (BrandsEye, 2019; Consulta, 2020) indicating the failure of South African mobile ISPs to resolve customer complaints. Moreover, the findings of this study show that respondents were dissatisfied with the service recovery efforts of their mobile ISPs (see section 6.5.3), thus also indicating a double deviation (Kussusanti *et al*., 2019:130). From this perspective, there is a genuine need for South African mobile ISPs to be oriented and committed towards the implementation of effective service recovery strategies, actions, or policies. There is also a need for mobile ISPs to train and empower their employees in service recovery management as well as taking complaints (i.e. complaint handling) seriously with the view to restore customers' satisfaction.

- Although customers may exhibit relatively high repurchase intentions, regardless of their satisfaction with the initial service recovery attempt (i.e. double deviation), mobile ISPs should strive to restore customers' satisfaction with a second service recovery attempt. In so doing, mobile ISPs could avoid unnecessary costs, such as litigation (depending on the service failure experienced), from dissatisfied customers. Dissatisfied customers might even end up taking private action complaining behaviour (see sections 2.5.4.3.2 and 2.5.4.3.3) through negative eWOM, which may discourage prospective customers from using the mobile ISP. As previously explained (in section 2.5.4.3.2), private actions do not get the direct attention of the service provider and could therefore have a substantial negative effect on sales and profitability (Harudin *et al*., 2013:12750).

- South African mobile ISPs should conduct an integrated root-cause analysis with continuous learning within their service delivery systems. In so doing, mobile ISPs could identify the main causes of the predominantly recurring service failures that can be significantly minimised (e.g. billing issues). Moreover, mobile ISPs could identify the major causes of poor employee service recovery performance. As a result, mobile ISPs should become knowledgeable about where to channel their efforts in order to improve complaint handling, service recovery management, and customer satisfaction.

- Considering that service failures are inevitable (such as fluctuating internet speed), South African mobile ISPs can take a proactive approach by communicating with customers to expect problems. For example, during system upgrades or electricity power cuts, mobile ISPs can notify their customers in advance of the connectivity problems they might experience, thus helping to alleviate customer dissatisfaction from such an experience.

7.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Regardless of the theoretical and managerial contributions made by this study, the study also presents some theoretical and empirical limitations, which are further discussed below.

7.6.1 Limitations of the literature review

The following limitations of the literature review are identified:

- To the best of the researcher's knowledge and based on an extensive literature examination, no existing studies have specifically investigated service recovery attributes (i.e. compensation, response speed, apology, and explanation) as a multi-dimensional construct. Therefore, in order to investigate the relationship between the service recovery attributes and satisfaction with service recovery, the researcher had to follow a unified approach to determine the influence of each individual attribute on satisfaction with service recovery.

- Due to a deficiency of available research on the antecedents and behavioural outcomes of service recovery in the South African mobile ISP industry, the researcher primarily had to rely on literature from different service settings and countries.

- This study adopted the trust construct that was perceived as the most suitable for use and did not measure the cognitive and affective types of trust, as recognised by various authors (McAllister, 1995:25; Ren *et al*., 2016:468; Trif, 2013:113).

7.6.2 Limitations of the empirical research

The following limitations of the empirical research are identified:

- The survey was retrospective in nature, as the respondents had to recall a service failure they had experienced from their mobile ISP and then provide answers based on their service recovery experiences. Cognitively, reporting of past events is prone to various recall errors, such as (a) telescoping (i.e. respondents may incorrectly shift the occurrence of an event forward or backward in time, into or out of the recall period), (b) heaping (i.e. respondents mistakenly combine previous events into one point in time), or (c) recall decay (i.e. respondents forget and fail to accurately report previous events) (Bell *et al*., 2019:327). Thus, although the data was successfully collected from the sample, problems associated with recall errors could have caused biased reporting of events and ultimately biased results.

- Considering that this study is contextualised specifically in the South African mobile ISP industry, the results cannot be generalised to other service industries. Ahmad and Ahmad

(2014:62) argue that customers' behaviour tend to differ based on country of origin, industry type and even societies. Thus, the service recovery expectations of customers within the South African mobile ISP industry, for example, might differ from customers' expectations in the healthcare or banking industry.

- It was compulsory for respondents to answer some parts of the questionnaire. As such, response bias could have occurred at questions where the respondents were unfamiliar or inexperienced with the related setting.
- The sample was composed of both contract and prepaid customers of South African mobile ISPs. Therefore, the results with regard to high repurchase intention might be skewed, since prepaid customers are not contract-bound and can easily switch to alternative mobile ISPs.
- Since a complete and accurate sampling frame was unattainable – due to the Protection of Personal Information Act 4 of 2013 – the researcher had to make use of non-probability sampling, which ultimately prolonged the data collection time.
- Since a non-probability sampling method was employed, the results may not be representative of the experiences and views of all South African mobile ISP customers. Thus, limiting the generalisability of the results.

With the abovementioned limitations in mind, it is possible to make a number of recommendations that can be used for future research.

7.7 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The following recommendations for future research are suggested:

- Future research should attempt to use probability sampling methods in order to improve the generalisability of the results. However, considering the regulations that prohibit researchers from acquiring a sampling frame to use for probability sampling, researchers could engage directly with mobile ISPs to collect the data on their behalf and the researcher later accesses the information without the personal information of respondents.
- The conceptual model for this study incorporated four service recovery attributes, which were identified from the literature investigation as the most recognised and established recovery attributes. Future research within the mobile ISP industry could consider extending this model to include different service recovery attributes, such as social interaction, customer intimacy, or relationship quality. This might provide some additional insights into this industry, specifically when designing service recovery strategies.

- Future research could also be conducted with regard to the outcomes of satisfaction with service recovery, such as customer commitment or forgiveness.

- Considering that no existing research specifically investigated the service recovery attributes as a multi-dimensional construct, it is proposed that further research be conducted in different service settings to verify the extent to which these dimensions may account as an actual reflection of effective service recovery attributes.

- A comparative study could be undertaken to measure the difference in repurchase intention between contract and prepaid customers. In addition, the applicable service recovery experiences should be presented for each category of customers.

- The service recovery model compiled in this study could be further tested in different service industries, as to determine the relevance and viability of this model.

7.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the conclusions with regard to the literature (in Chapters 1 to 4) and empirical findings (in Chapter 6). Chapter 7, therefore, commenced by providing an overview of the study, followed by addressing each of the secondary objectives. The subsequent section indicated the links between the objectives, literature, hypotheses, questions in the questionnaire, main findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the study. Thereafter, the chapter discussed the contributions of the study, indicated the limitations encountered and concluded by suggesting directions for future research.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

Mobile internet service provider (ISP) users' behaviour after service recovery

This survey forms part of a Doctoral study in Marketing Management at the North-West University (Potchefstroom Campus), with a specific focus on the behavioural intentions of mobile internet service provider (ISP) users after service recovery.

Objective:

The objective of this study is to determine mobile ISP users' satisfaction, trust, word-of-mouth intentions, and repurchase intentions after experiencing a service recovery.

Confidentiality and anonymity:

Taking part in this survey is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the process at any time. All information provided by you will be completely anonymous and will be treated with the utmost standard of privacy and confidentiality. The data obtained from this survey will be stored in a secure location, and destroyed within the next four years. No information will be disclosed to any other parties, and no information will be reported on an individual basis.

Results:

The research results will only be used empirically for the written thesis of the study. All participants are welcome to request results upon completion of this study.

Completing the questionnaire should take approximately 10 minutes of your time. When evaluating a question, please answer from your own perspective, by marking or completing where required.

Please accept my thanks, in anticipation of your willingness to participate in this research.

Should you have any questions, please contact me at major23725869@gmail.com.

Rufaro Kelvin Major

Ethics number: NWU-00313-18-A4

* Required

Screening questions

1. Which one of the following mobile ISPs do you **MAINLY** use? *

   Mark only one oval.

   - Cell C
   - MTN
   - Telkom
   - Vodacom
   - None of the above

2. Have you recently made a complaint to your mobile ISP (between 2017 and 2019)? *

   Mark only one oval.

   - Yes
   - No

Patronage habits

3. How long have you been using your mobile ISP? **Please indicate in YEARS.** *

____

4. What is the average amount of time you spend on the internet? *

Mark only one oval.

- ⬭ Less than 9 hours per week.
- ⬭ 9 to 30 hours per week.
- ⬭ More than 30 hours per week.

5. What are the three MAIN purposes for using your mobile internet? *

Rank from 1 to 3 (1 = first main purpose, 3 = third purpose).

- ⬭ Banking
- ⬭ Entertainment (e.g. video streaming)
- ⬭ Games or gaming
- ⬭ Shopping
- ⬭ Social and communication (e.g. Facebook, WhatsApp)
- ⬭ Research
- ⬭ Work

6. What is the most recent service failure you have experienced from your mobile ISP? *

Mark only one oval.

- ⬭ Billing issues
- ⬭ Internet downtime
- ⬭ Internet speed fluctuations
- ⬭ Poor customer support
- ⬭ Top-up issues
- ⬭ Other: _______________________

Service recovery attributes

Keeping **your mobile ISP** in mind, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

7. After the service failure, my mobile ISP... *

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly disagree	2	3	4	Strongly agree
...offered me adequate compensation for the loss incurred.	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
...adequately compensated me for all the time I spent dealing with the service failure.	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
...adequately compensated me to cover my financial losses.	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
...adequately compensated me for all the hard times I had due to the service failure.	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
...adequately compensated me for the inconvenience I went through due to the service failure.	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
...reacted promptly to my inquiries regarding the service failure.	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
...quickly attended to my service failure-related problem.	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
...responded promptly to my complaint regarding the service failure.	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
...did not take long to solve the service failure.	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
...apologised to me for what had happened.	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
...expressed regret for the mistake that occurred.	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
...apologised for the inconvenience the problem had brought to me.	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
...apologised for what I had suffered because of the problem.	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
...explained why the problem might have occurred.	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
...explained which factors might have caused the problem.	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
...explained what might have gone wrong.	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭
...offered a convincing explanation for the reason of the problem.	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭	⬭

Perceived justice

8. Keeping **your mobile ISP** in mind, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. *

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly disagree	2	3	4	Strongly agree
In resolving the service failure, my mobile ISP gave me what I needed.					
I did not get what I deserved.					
The outcome I received from my mobile ISP in response to the problem was fair.					
The outcome of addressing the service failure was not up to expectation.					
My mobile ISP showed adequate flexibility in dealing with my problem.					
The length of time taken to resolve my problem was longer than necessary.					
My mobile ISP was appropriately concerned about my problem.					
My mobile ISP did not put the proper effort into resolving my problem.					
My mobile ISP's communications with me were appropriate.					
My mobile ISP did not give me the courtesy I was due.					

Satisfaction with service recovery

9. Keeping **your mobile ISP** in mind, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. *

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly disagree	2	3	4	Strongly agree
I am satisfied with the way in which my problem was dealt with.					
I am satisfied with the way my problem was resolved.					
In general, my mobile ISP provided a satisfactory solution to this particular problem.					
I am happy with the way my problem was solved.					

Behavioural intentions

10. Keeping **your mobile ISP** in mind, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. *

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly disagree	2	3	4	Strongly agree
My mobile ISP can be relied upon to keep its promises.					
I believe that my mobile ISP is trustworthy.					
I find it necessary to be cautious in dealing with this mobile ISP.					
I will share my service experience with my mobile ISP through social networking sites or mobile technology.					
I will say positive things about my mobile ISP through social networking sites or mobile technology.					
I will recommend my mobile ISP if someone ask me for information on social networking sites or mobile technology.					
After the service failure I have experienced, I will not use my current mobile ISP in the near future.					
I intend to use my mobile ISP's services in the future.					
I will keep using the services of my mobile ISP.					

Socio-demographic information

Please note that this section is not compulsory. The information from this section will **only** be used to compile a sample profile, and will not be reported on individually.

11. In which year were you born?

____

12. What is your gender?

Mark only one oval.

- Male
- Female

13. What is your ethnicity?

Mark only one oval.

- Asian
- Black
- Coloured
- Indian
- White
- Other: ______________________

14. What is your highest level of education?

Mark only one oval.

- Some primary school
- Primary school completed
- Some high school
- Matric / Grade 12 completed
- Technical college diploma
- University or technology diploma
- University degree (B-degree)
- Post-graduate degree (honours, masters or doctorate)

15. What is your employment status?

Mark only one oval.

- Full-time student
- Unemployed
- Self-employed
- Part-time employed
- Full-time employed
- Housewife or househusband
- Retired

16. What is your personal average net income (after deductions)?

Mark only one oval.

- R5 000 p.m. or less
- R5 001 – R10 000 p.m.
- R10 001 – R15 000 p.m.
- R15 001 – R20 000 p.m.
- R20 001 – R25 000 p.m.
- R25 001 – R30 000 p.m.
- R30 001 – R35 000 p.m.
- More than R35 000 p.m.

APPENDIX B

ETHICS CLEARANCE LETTER

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

Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom,
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Web: http://www.nwu.ac.za

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

ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER OF STUDY

Based on the approval by the **Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EMS-REC) on 31/05/2018** after being reviewed at the meeting held on **18/05/2018**, 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: eWOM intentions after service recovery in the mobile internet service provider industry.

Project Leader/Supervisor: Dr Mackay
Student: RK Major

Ethics number: N W U - 0 0 3 1 3 - 1 8 - A 4

Application Type:
Commencement date: 2018-05-18 **Expiry date**: 2021-05-17 **Risk:** Low risk

Special conditions of the approval (if applicable):

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 Bennie Linde
Chair NWU Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee

APPENDIX C

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS LETTER

Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
Web: http://www.nwu.ac.za

Statistical Consultation Services
Tel: +27 18 285 2016
Fax: +27 0 87 231 5294
Email: suria.ellis@nwu.ac.za

20 November 2019

Re: Dissertation, Mr RK Major, student number 23725869

We hereby confirm that the Statistical Consultation Services of the North-West University analysed the quantitative data of the above-mentioned student and assisted with the interpretation of the results. However, any opinion, findings or recommendations contained in this document are those of the author, and the Statistical Consultation Services of the NWU (Potchefstroom Campus) do not accept responsibility for the statistical correctness of the data reported.

Kind regards

SM Ellis

Prof SM Ellis (Pr. Sci. Nat.)

Associate Professor: Statistical Consultation Services

APPENDIX D

LANGUAGE EDITING CONFIRMATION LETTER

DECLARATION

I, C Vorster (ID: 710924 0034 084), Language editor and Translator and member of the South African Translators' Institute (SATI member number 1003172), herewith declare that I did the language editing of a thesis written by mr RK Major (student number 23725869) from the North-West University.

Title of the thesis: A service recovery model for the mobile internet service provider industry

C Vorster

25 November 2020

C Vorster	Date

Express Editing 24