

## **I want a business relationship with you!**

The number of cell phones in South Africa exceeds the number of people who live in the country. The bulk of the market use one of the four main cell phone network providers, namely Vodacom, MTN, Cell C and Telkom. However, Mobile Virtual Network Operators (MVNO's) have emerged as new competitors in the cell phone industry. With a few MVNO's in South Africa already, including me&you mobile and VirginMobile, the big players in the market will have to up their game in order to effectively compete in the future.

Relationship marketing is an important marketing tactic that can assist cell phone network providers in gaining a competitive advantage over other rivals. Cell phone network providers need to build long-term relationships with their customers in order to create loyalty and retain them. The question to ask is: do customers want to have a relationship with their cell phone network provider?

Corli du Toit and Welmarie Fourie, [Master's](#) students in the [Department of Marketing Management](#), conducted a study to determine the antecedents of relationship proneness within a South African context, as it is believed that organisations can increase and better manage the relationship with those customers displaying relationship proneness. The study was conducted among a sample of 195 cell phone users living and working in the greater Pretoria and Johannesburg areas.

The results indicated that customers are prone to engage in a relationship with their cell phone network provider, thus allowing organisations to build stronger long-term relationships with their customers, resulting in greater their loyalty. The study also revealed that from all of the constructs measured, social benefits was the only factor that significantly predicted customers' relationship proneness, indicating the importance of providing these benefits to customers. As an example social benefits can be offered by training staff to recognise customers and implement systems and processes to enable employees to see the historical relationship the organisation has with the customer.

This study highlights the importance of relationship proneness as a key influential construct in a service exchange setting. Organisations should thus consider their

customers' relationship proneness in their relationship marketing strategies. By building relationships with relationship prone customers, organisations can gain insight into customers' needs. These insights can support the organisation in producing new products, services and marketing strategies, ultimately increasing revenue and market share.

*This research was conducted as part of the fulfilment of the [Master's degree](#) in Marketing Management in 2015 with the [Department of Marketing Management](#) by Corli du Toit and Welmarie Fourie under the supervision of [Prof. P.G. Mostert](#).*