

Do relationships with e-commerce customers really matter?

Due to the characteristics of services, service providers often stand the chance of not meeting customers' expectations, therefore resulting in a 'service failure'. The response to service failure, namely service recovery, consists of the actions the service provider takes to correct the failure and restore balance to the customer relationship. Since customers respond to service failures in different ways, it is important for service providers to have a clear understanding of customer behaviour following service failures and service recovery efforts by the provider.

Justice theory forms the basis of the theoretical framework used in this study conducted by Scott Donaldson, a [Master's](#) student in the [Department of Marketing Management](#), to determine the influence of customer involvement and trust on selected outcomes following service recovery within a South African e-commerce context. Responses from e-commerce website users were analysed to establish how customers' involvement and trust influenced their satisfaction, negative emotions resulting from the failure, and participation in positive word-of-mouth activities after different service recovery scenarios.

Results of this study show that a number of relationships exist between involvement and trust and satisfaction, positive word-of-mouth, and negative emotions following service recovery. Furthermore, the relationships between the constructs varied according to the comprehensiveness of the service recovery efforts as well as to how involved and trusting the respondents were. These findings contribute to the limited research available on customer involvement and trust relating to post service recovery within a South African e-commerce context. A number of important managerial implications emerge from the results for marketers who consider innovative methods to improve customer responses after service recovery. As a first recommendation, marketers should segment customers according to their level of involvement and trust before focusing efforts on maintaining a strong relationship with highly involved and trusting customers. In doing so, businesses are able to prioritise resources towards their most

'beneficial' customers with the intention of creating long, profitable relationships. The results furthermore show that businesses should offer greater service recovery solutions since an increase in service recovery efforts leads to higher levels of satisfaction, positive word-of-mouth, and lower negative emotions – and in particular to those customers who are more involved and show greater trust in the service provider. Thus, instead of merely correcting the service failure with no further action, service providers should do more to rectify the failure by including actions such as offering an apology and explaining the reason for the failure.

This research was conducted as part of the fulfilment of the [Master's degree](#) in Marketing Management in 2018 within the [Department of Marketing Management](#) by Scott Donaldson under the supervision of [Prof PG Mostert](#).