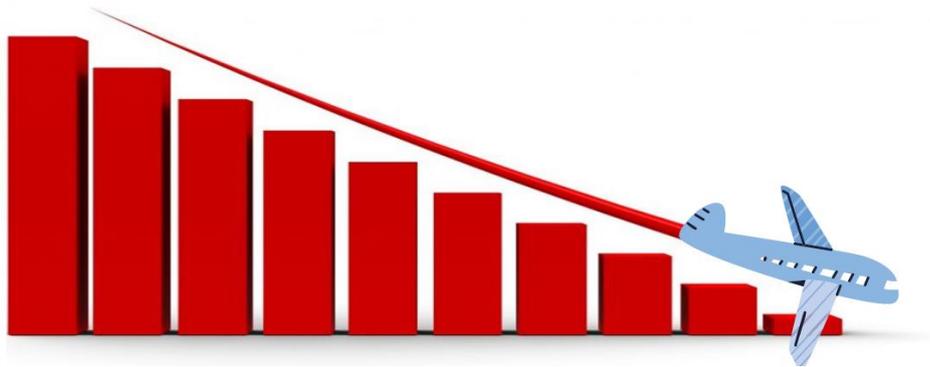


“Don’t fly with them!”

Preventing customers from wreaking havoc for your service brand



As customers, we have all experienced a service failure at some point. However, customers don't all react to service failures in the same way. What makes customers behave differently to others when service delivery goes wrong?

Understanding the factors that impact customers' decisions and behaviours is important for companies to consider, especially when recovering from a service failure. Following a negative service experience, consumers may engage in negative behaviour towards the company and/or brand. Such behaviour may negatively influence other customers or future sales, making these customers a potential liability to the company.

A research study was conducted by Megan van Schie, a [Master's](#) student in the [Department of Marketing Management](#), to investigate the behavioural responses when customers feel their needs have not been met within the South African airline industry. Specifically, the impact of dissatisfaction and brand avoidance on passengers was explored in relation to the decision to either switch brands, engage in negative word-of-mouth (nWOM) or turn to anti-brand actions (such as complaining, threats, stealing and vandalism).

Responses were obtained from 130 airline passengers via social media platforms, using a scenario-based online survey. The findings revealed that both dissatisfaction and brand avoidance are strongly related with switching intention, indicating a strong likelihood that customers may intend to switch service providers after experiencing a service failure. The results also showed that both dissatisfaction and brand avoidance are correlated moderately with nWOM and weakly with anti-brand action. Thus it

appears that customers are less likely to engage in vindictive actions, suggesting that service providers have an opportunity to respond to the service failure promptly and in a meaningful way, to pre-empt nWOM and anti-brand action.

The findings suggest that to reduce negative behaviour towards a brand, strategies must be developed to lower customer dissatisfaction and decrease brand avoidance after a service failure. Employing techniques such as active listening and efficient complaints handling, can ensure that customers feel heard and know that their concerns are important to the organisation.

This research was conducted as part of the fulfilment of the [Master's degree](#) in Marketing Management in 2020 with the [Department of Marketing Management](#) by Megan van Schie under the supervision of [Dr MC van der Merwe](#).