

And then Eskom said... “Let there be (no) light”?



Services impact the well-being of individuals and society. So much so, that the service sector has been classified widely under the category of a public goods and essential services. Furthermore, a thriving service sector is an indicator of many desirable social and economic outcomes, however service failures have the capacity to disrupt and destroy individuals and those same societies. Service failures are described as the failure for systems to operate due to being disrupted, causing mild to grave inconveniences.

One such an example that has come under scrutiny in South Africa for continuous failure is the supply of electricity. The power supplier introduced rolling black outs called “load shedding” in 2007 to account for the imbalance in supply and demand. Fourteen years later, South Africans are still encumbered by the effects of load shedding.

A study was conducted by Karabo Mohasoa, a [Master’s](#) student in the [Department of Marketing Management](#) to explore how load shedding makes consumers feel and behave, using a TSR perspective. This is because TSR moves beyond finding commercial solutions to fundamental issues and focus on research aiming to improve the individual’s and community’s well-being. The aim of the study was to investigate the effects of attribution of blame and anger caused by an essential service failure such as load shedding on the individual’s intention to spread negative word-of-mouth (nWOM).

Data was collected by means of an online survey. The findings revealed that when individuals experience load shedding, the service failure leads to emotional instability. Consumers try to restore emotional equilibrium by assigning blame (e.g. coping strategy) to the party whom they feel is responsible for the service failure. In this context, the national energy provider Eskom is to blame. Blaming external parties for a service failure results in anger that triggers South Africans to engage in nWOM regarding Eskom's failure to adequately supply electricity.

The research offers sound marketing advice to electricity providers in South Africa on how to better communicate service failure to mitigate attribution of blame and reduce anger.

This research was conducted as part of the fulfilment of the [Master's degree](#) in Marketing Management in 2021 with the [Department of Marketing Management](#) by Karabo Mohasoa under the supervision of [Prof Melanie Wiese](#).