Investigating Commitment as a Unidimensional or a Multidimensional Construct in a Retail Banking Setting

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Abstract

The paper investigates the dimensional nature of commitment (affective and calculative) within a retail banking setting. The study tests two models that include antecedents and an outcome of commitment as a unidimensional and a multidimensional construct. The target population for the study included adult customers of retail banks residing in an emerging market. To collect data, self-administered questionnaires were fielded purposively among respondents, with 599 usable responses being collected for analysis. The study highlights the irrelevance of the dimensional nature of commitment (unidimensional or multidimensional) on future behavioral intention within a retail banking setting and established the significance of perceived value, customer orientation, and information sharing on commitment.

Keywords: Affective commitment; calculative commitment; behavioral intention

Introduction

There remains a lack of agreement in literature on the application of commitment as a unidimensional or a multidimensional construct in the measurement of behavior. This is evident, since for decades various researchers have argued around the relevance of measuring commitment as a unidimensional or a two-factor, multidimensional construct. For example, Akhtar and Tan (1994) argued that the accurate measurement of commitment can only be secured through its measurement as a multidimensional construct. Allen (2016) concurred, stating that the multidimensional nature of commitment requires a multidimensional evaluation of the construct to ensure accuracy of measurement. However, Klein, Cooper, Molloy, and Swanson (2014) and Klein and Park (2016) opined that the measurement of commitment as a unidimensional construct secures higher levels of reliability and accuracy when measured scientifically. Considering this, it becomes increasingly important to understand that the measurement of commitment in social science research can be secured through a unidimensional or a multidimensional approach (Goldberg, Baker, & Rubenstein, 1965). This is especially important to note considering that commitment is perceived as a critical determinant of behavioral intention and an important factor that can guide organizations to establish long-term relationships with customers (Aurier & N'Goala, 2010; Erdil, 2014).

In relationship marketing literature, commitment has been well-researched as a unidimensional or a multidimensional construct, as marketing scholars have come to understand the important role played by commitment in business-to-consumer (B2C) relationships (Shukla, Banerjee, & Singh, 2016; Van Tonder & De Beer, 2018). Customer service expectations are increasing continually, putting pressure on service providers, such as banks, to understand these expectations better to secure enhanced levels of commitment (Consulta, 2019). Research on the importance of affective and calculative commitment as mediating variables influencing behavioral intention remains scarce in emerging markets. Considering that commitment encompasses a lasting desire to establish or continue a long-term relationship, it becomes increasingly imperative to understand the factors that influence commitment (measured as a unidimensional construct or a multidimensional construct) and ultimately behavioral intention (Arcand, PromTep, Brun, & Rajaobelina, 2017; Engizek & Yasin, 2017).

This study departs from the proposition that within B2C relationships, business managers should understand the importance of commitment as both a unidimensional and a multidimensional relational variable influencing behavioral intention. In addition, these managers should develop knowledge of the factors that influence commitment as a unidimensional construct or a multidimensional construct (affective and calculative commitment), especially considering that it is validated as an important factor in the B2C relationship building process (Keiningham et al., 2017; Zhang, Hu, Guo, & Liu, 2017). However, despite the wide research focus on the relationship building value of commitment (as a unidimensional or a multidimensional construct), no previous research study has explored the stimulus factors (i.e., perceived value, customer orientation, information sharing, service fairness) that influence commitment from both a unidimensional and a multidimensional perspective in a service environment, such as banking. In turn, the influence of commitment (as a unidimensional or a multidimensional construct) on the behavioral intention of retail banking customers in an emerging African market also remains unexplored.

The contribution made by the study is grounded on the combination of the cognitive appraisal and the relationship marketing theory constructs. These constructs have not been explored widely in tandem in academic literature. The theoretical contribution of the study is built on the proposition of a model to confirm the hypothesized relationships between perceived value, customer orientation, information sharing, service fairness, commitment, and behavioral intention within an emerging market context, especially since two models are proposed where the influence of commitment on behavioral intention is reflected as two-pronged. Firstly, the intervening function of commitment reflective of affective and calculative commitment (multidimensional) and, secondly, commitment as a single construct (unidimensional). Therefore, this study advances knowledge by promulgating the application of commitment as either a unidimensional or a multidimensional construct that can influence the behavioral intention of customers in a service environment. From a managerial perspective, the study adds value by guiding South Africa's banking industry on how to strengthen commitment through positive stimulus factors, ultimately leading to a favorable behavioral intention toward the bank. Furthermore, the study does not include a focus on the normative dimension of commitment, since the psychological attachment of the customer to the bank was not measured in the context of this study. The reason for this is that normative commitment was not perceived as a key dimension driving future behavioral intention in a service setting, such as retail banking. This is especially important when considering that normative commitment is based on obligation and not affect, reflecting feelings of guilt (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Fatima, Razzaque, & Di Mascio, 2015; Li, Browne, & Chau, 2006).

The article initiates a broad contextualization of the study, followed by an in-depth discussion of the different theories applied to the study. Next, a broad overview is provided of the different variables explored, the formulated hypotheses, the research methodology, the results, discussion of the results as well as the theoretical and managerial implications proposed by the study.

Theoretical framework

The South African banking industry

The major banks in South Africa are ABSA, First National Bank (FNB), Capitec Bank, Nedbank, and Standard Bank. These banks have a combined market share of 91% in South Africa (Research and Markets, 2019). However, these banks are gradually losing market share, since new competitors are accessing the market. Examples of new banking brands in the South African banking market include TymeBank, Bank Zero and SA Postbank, and Discovery Bank ("6 new banks launching in South Africa soon," 2018). As a result, the difficult economic conditions in South Africa and the entry of new banking service providers to the country have required these major banks to reevaluate their value offering to prospective customers ("When banks prioritise value over price, the customer wins," 2019). The continuous change in banking customer needs, wants, and overall expectations makes it increasingly important for South African banks to have knowledge of how they can positively influence customers' behavior to strengthen commitment and loyalty. An increase in customer choice makes it critically important for banks to understand the factors that influence customer commitment, and ultimately stimulate positive behavioral intention to secure future survival of the banking brand in South Africa.

Theories grounding the study

The cognitive appraisal theory and the theory of relationship marketing theories was applied to the study with regards to the proposed relationship between the different variables. Cognitive appraisal theory originated from literature to describe the coping behavior of employees (Folkman, Lazarus, Dunkel-Schetter, DeLongis, & Gruen, 1986) but has emerged as an important theory in marketing that addresses customers' emotions and behavior (Song & Qu, 2017; Wen, Hu, & Kim, 2018). The objective of cognitive appraisal theory is to establish how stimuli can predict customers' future decision-making and behavior when their emotions are influenced by stimuli (Watson & Spence, 2007; Wen et al., 2018). As a result, cognitive appraisal theory secures an inclusive understanding of the emotional responses of customers and has been accepted extensively to provide a wide-ranging explanation of consumers' behavioral responses in a service environment, such as banking (Rucker, Tormala, Petty, & Briñol, 2014).

In this study, both calculated and affective commitment are considered influencers of the affective and cognitive state of an individual (e.g., as a customer). The belief is based on the argument that the behavioral intention of the customers of a service provider will be guided by the level of calculative and/or affective commitment (Y. Hwang, Lin, & Shin, 2018). Various researchers (e.g., Pauluzzo & Geretto, 2017; Rambocas, Kirpalani, & Simms, 2018) have argued that a positive behavioral intention is guided by the customers' level of commitment, which is influenced by their level of service experience.

Relationship marketing originated in the early 1980s, where it was positioned as a strategy for the building of long-term relationships within a services marketing environment (Gummesson, 2017). However, its theoretical grounding was developed from the commitment-trust theory of Morgan and Hunt (1994). Through this theory, relationship marketing was positioned as an overarching strategy that encompasses the need for commitment to exist before a long-term relationship can be developed between parties, such as between a supplier and a customer (Verma, Sharma, & Sheth, 2016). Therefore, relationship marketing promulgates a relational approach between different parties that is founded on sound service delivery, continuous engagement, and professional management of the relationship on a continuous basis (San-Martín, Jiménez, & López-Catalán, 2016). In addition, the modern customer has increased expectations for suppliers to deliver on their value expectation needs that should flow from the relationship, how the service provider should engage with them during the service delivery process, the type of information that customers expect the service provider to share with them, and the service level delivered to customers throughout all touchpoints of engagement (Aziz, 2016; Harmeling, Moffett, Arnold, & Carlson, 2017). Considering this, relationship marketing should be applied as a theoretical strategy, developed to embrace the unique requirements of customers and service providers in the long-term relationship building process (Miquel-Romero, Caplliure-Giner, & Adame-Sánchez, 2014).

Commitment as a multidimensional (two-factor) construct versus a unidimensional construct

Numerous scholars have argued in favor of the measurement of commitment as either a unidimensional or a multidimensional construct, with consensus around its measurement in marketing literature. For example, Klein and Park (2016) and Ponder, Holloway, and Hansen (2016) supported the measurement of commitment as a unidimensional construct, arguing that the theoretical complexity of the commitment construct necessitated its measurement as a unidimensional construct. However, there are scholars arguing for the measurement of commitment as a multidimensional construct in various settings consisting of affective or calculative commitment. For instance, Khan, Hollebeek, Fatma, Islam, and Riivits-Arkonsuo (2020) promulgated the importance of measuring commitment as a multidimensional construct due to its multidimensional nature. They argued that such an approach can predict a more refined influence of commitment on antecedents and postcedents in proposed relationships.

Perceived value

Perceived value is grounded on customers' perceptions of the benefits received versus the sacrifices that customers have to make to obtain a product or service (Yrjölä, Rintamäki, Saarijärvi, Joensuu, & Kulkarni, 2019). Therefore, a customer perceives value as a net tradeoff received when considering all the advantages that the product or service has to offer and then comparing it with the price of the product or the emotional cost to obtain the product (Avcilar & Özsoy, 2015). The introduction of service-dominant logic in relationship marketing literature proposes that customers want to experience service value, grounded on aspects like service experience, service quality, co-creation, and price paid for the service (Leckie, Nyadzayo, & Johnson, 2018; Vargo & Lusch, 2016). When customers' value perception of a service provider is high, they are more willing to commit to the provider in the long term (Ramadan, Abosag, & Zabkar, 2018; Riley, Pina, & Bravo, 2015).

Customer orientation

Customer orientation refers to the acknowledgement of customers through an understanding of their needs and expectations, where they feel engaged when interacting with a service provider (Chang & Lin, 2015). Therefore, a customer orientation approach by service providers should entail the application of solution-driven service engagement tactics to enhance the customer service experience (Bhat & Darzi, 2016). Through such an approach, the customer will feel acknowledged, respected and valued, thereby enhancing behavioral outcomes, such as satisfaction and commitment (Kao, Tsaur, & Wu, 2016).

Information sharing

Information sharing encompasses the sharing of information with customers that is built on honesty, reliability, and trustworthiness to ensure that customers perceive the information as valuable and relevant (Umashankar, Ward, & Dahl, 2017). Consequently, employees who directly engage with customers at all levels of interaction should have a strong customer orientation. Such an orientation should secure improved knowledge of the expectancies and the different needs of customers toward information sharing, how such information sharing should be done, as well as when and why (Menguc, Auh, Katsikeas, & Jung, 2016). Through an understanding of customer needs and expectations, service providers will be better equipped to know why customers perceive information sharing as beneficial, adding to their service experience with the supplier (Yang, Yu, & Bruwer, 2018).

Service fairness

Service fairness can be described as the view of a customer toward the level of justice received during the delivery of a service (Su, Huang, & Chen, 2015). It has become an important element that grounds the customer's service perception of the service experience provided by the service provider (Roy, Shekhar, Lassar, & Chen, 2018). Customers want to be treated with respect, experience positive levels of engagement through all touchpoints of the customer service interface, and receive value from the service provider through their association with the organization (Liang et al., 2017). Bhatt (2020) and Namkung and Jang (2010) stated that the measurement of service fairness is of great importance to the services marketing field, since it provides the service provider with a clear understanding of consumers' service perceptions, influencing their intention to be associated with the provider in future. Considering this, the measurement of service fairness in the study was grounded on three key service fairness principles, promulgated by Alexander and Ruderman (1987), namely, interactional fairness, procedural fairness, and distributive fairness.

Behavioral intention

Behavioral intention can be described as level of preparedness of an individual to accomplish a specific behavior, such as to continue using a bank's services (Jung, Shim, Jin, & Khang, 2016). When engaging with a service provider, customers want to have a positive experience that is grounded on high service performance levels, a positive customer orientation, and ultimately the benefit of receiving value for money (Pansari & Kumar, 2017). Considering this, it can be argued that a positive service experience can enhance customers' satisfaction levels, stimulate their commitment to the service provider, and influence their behavioral intention positively (Petzer, De Meyer-Heydenrych, & Svensson, 2017).

Theoretical model development for model 1

The discussion that follows validates the proposed hypothesized relationships in model 1 through a comprehensive literature overview. As can be noted, there is ample research validation for the proposed hypotheses in model 1.

The interrelationship between perceived value and affective and calculative commitment

Marketing scholars (e.g., Naeem, Mirza, Ayyub, & Lodhi, 2019) have supported the positive influence of perceived value on affective commitment for decades. On the one hand, researchers argue that the higher the customers' value perceptions of aspects like trust, belongingness, identification, mutual attraction, and willingness to be associated with the service provider although alternatives are available, the stronger their affective commitment toward the service provider (Boateng & Narteh, 2016). On the other hand, if the benefits of being associated with a service provider are higher than the cost incurred to secure the association, and if the switching cost barrier is low, the customer will have a stronger calculative commitment toward a service provider in future (Fatima & Di Mascio, 2020). Considering this, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis (H1a): Perceived value has a positive and significant influence on affective commitment.

Hypothesis (H1b): Perceived value has a positive and significant influence on calculative commitment.

The interrelationship between customer orientation and affective and calculative commitment

Four decades ago, Saxe and Weitz (1982) stated that a customer who is affectively committed to a service provider is generally satisfied with the customer orientation approach of the service provider, feeling an emotional connection with the provider (Yrjölä et al., 2019). In terms of calculative commitment, Vera and Trujillo (2013) stated that the customer expects the economic benefits that flow from the relationship with the service provider to be higher than the costs incurred to continue the relationship. Therefore, when the financial gains from the relationship exceed the cost of remaining in the relationship, the customer will be less inclined to switch to a competitor and the calculative commitment to a service provider is strengthened (Petersen, Kumar, Polo, & Sese, 2018). Against this background, the following hypotheses are formulated:

Hypothesis (H2a): Customer orientation has a positive and significant influence on affective commitment.

Hypothesis (H2b: Customer orientation has a positive and significant influence on calculative commitment.

The interrelationship between information sharing and affective and calculative commitment

Marketing scholars, such as Watabaji, Molnar, Weaver, Dora, and Gellynck (2016), have argued extensively that information sharing supports the commitment (affective and calculative) of parties to the relationship by creating a feeling of belonging, developing continuous engagement, and improving open communication between parties. Ahmad and Huvila (2019) concurred, stating that when one party shares information with another party, a feeling of interest is developed that can strengthen the affective and calculative commitment of parties. Hence, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis (H3a): Information sharing has a positive and significant influence on affective commitment.

Hypothesis (H3b): Information sharing has a positive and significant influence on calculative commitment.

The interrelationship between service fairness and affective and calculative commitment

Scholars (e.g., E. Hwang, Baloglu, & Tanford, 2019) have argued that when customers are treated with fairness, respect, and dignity during a service, they develop a stronger emotional bond with the supplier and will be less willing to switch to a competitor due to elevated feelings of self-worth. In addition, if the perception of economic value derived from the service engagement exceeds the cost paid for the service, the customer will illustrate a greater calculative commitment to the service provider (Nikbin, Marimuthu, & Hyun, 2016). Thus, the following hypotheses are formulated:

Hypothesis (H4a): Service fairness has a positive and significant influence on affective commitment.

Hypothesis (H4b): Service fairness has a positive and significant influence on calculative commitment.

The interrelationship between affective commitment and calculative commitment

Marketing literature argues that when a customer develops an emotional bond with a service provider, experiences positive service engagement, has feelings of attachment to the provider, or is faced with high switching costs or limited alternatives to select, the customer will perceive the affective benefits as outweighing the calculative costs (Petersen et al., 2018). Therefore, strong feelings of emotions and attachment grounded on high levels of service quality can positively influence economic decisions to remain committed to a service provider, especially when the service provider's reputation is strong (Kungumapriya & Malarmathi, 2018). Furthermore, Rajaobelina, Brun, Prom Tep, and Arcand (2018) confirmed that feelings of association and belonging to a brand strengthens the economic intent to remain with the brand. Fullerton (2019) concurred, stating that the economic benefits received from a relationship with a provider are guided by feelings of "emotional attachment", such as contentment and belonging. More than a decade ago, Hur, Park, and Kim (2010) confirmed that affective commitment is the strongest predictor of calculative commitment in a services marketing environment. Therefore, the functional relationship that customers have with a provider is influenced by their affective commitment to the brand (Shukla et al., 2016).

Considering this information, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis (H5): Affective commitment has a positive and significant influence on calculative commitment.

The interrelationship between affective commitment and behavioral intention

Affective commitment is an important factor that influences future behavioral intention, since it encompasses an emotional bond between a customer and a service provider (Cater & Zabkar, 2009). Customers who are affectively committed to a service provider will remain committed because they have a strong emotional connection with the service provider. Such a connection is grounded on feelings of joy, a sense of belonging, emotional attachment, and identification with the service provider, which positively influence behavioral intention (Tabrani, Amin, & Nizam, 2018). In view of the above, the following hypothesis is formulated:

Hypothesis (H6): Affective commitment has a significant and positive influence on behavioral intention.

The interrelationship between calculative commitment and behavioral intention

A customer's calculative commitment is grounded on a benefit–cost analysis, determining whether it is more beneficial or costly to continue in a relationship with a service provider (Pandit & Vilches-Montero, 2016). Ojeme, Robson, and Coates (2016) stated that a customer's calculative commitment to a provider will remain strong when the economic benefits of such a relationship outweigh the cost of remaining in the relationship. However, when the cost of switching providers is very high, the customer may remain in the relationship for economic reasons, strengthening positive behavioral intention (Richard & Zhang, 2012). Against this background, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis (H7): Calculative commitment has a significant and positive influence on behavioral intention.

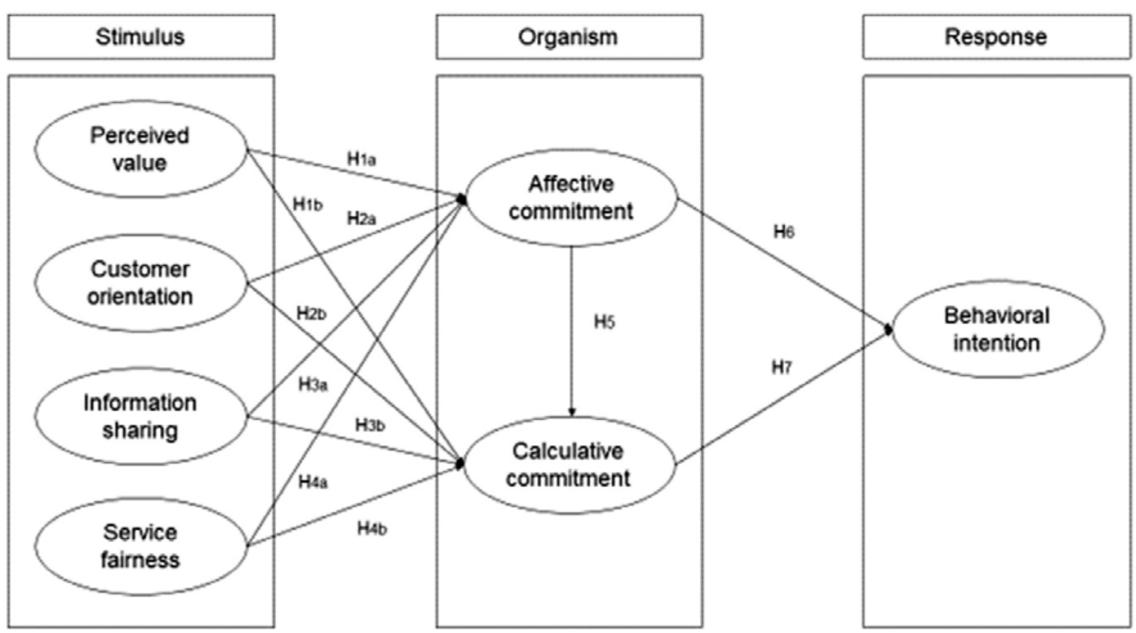

Figure 1. Commitment as a two-factor construct—a sequential mediation model (model 1).

Sequential mediation was used to better understand the mediating effect of affective and calculative commitment as mediating variables in the proposed models. Considering that affective and calculative commitment are interlinked in the proposed model, sequential mediation was used to better understand how the relationship between the various stimuli and behavioral intention are linked through affective and calculative commitment as mediating variables. Model 1 is illustrated in Figure 1. This figure depicts perceived value, customer orientation, information sharing, and service fairness as the independent variables; affective and calculative commitment as the intervening variables; and behavioral intention as the outcome variable.

Theoretical model development for model 2

The discussion that follows validates the proposed hypothesized relationships in model 2 through an all-inclusive literature overview. The literature provides extensive support for the proposed relationships in model 2.

The interrelationship between perceived value and commitment

Perceived value encompasses an evaluation of the economic and service benefits that flow from a relationship with the service provider, which influence future commitment intentions (Itani, Kassar, & Loureiro, 2019). The positive relationship between perceived value and commitment has been validated extensively by previous research and is hypothesized in this study (Karjaluoto, Shaikh, Saarijärvi, & Saraniemi, 2019). Considering the context of this study, it can be argued that perceived value may have a positive influence on commitment. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis (H1): Perceived value has a significant and positive influence on commitment.

The interrelationship between customer orientation and commitment

Lombardi, Sassetti, and Cavaliere (2019) argued that employees who are knowledgeable about customer needs deliver higher levels of customer service, thereby stimulating a positive customer orientation and ultimately their commitment toward the service provider. Customer orientation is indicative of how well the service provider is able to address customer expectations and manage customer problems in a service-orientated manner (Izogo, Reza, Ogba, & Oraedu, 2017), thereby strengthening the customer's commitment intent in the long term (Hamzah, Othman, & Hassan, 2016). Most marketing scholars (Dubey & Sangle, 2019) agree that customer orientation influences commitment in various settings. Consequently, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis (H2): Customer orientation has a significant and positive influence on commitment.

The interrelationship between information sharing and commitment

Information sharing encompasses the distribution of accurate and timely information in a transparent manner that enables better planning and decision-making in the long term (Abdullah & Musa, 2014). When the customer perceives the sharing of information as transparent and accurate, a stronger willingness to commit to the service provider is secured (Izogo, 2017). Therefore, the future commitment of a customer is influenced by a service provider's ability to secure continuous communication that keeps the customer informed (Shetty & Basri, 2018). Considering this, the following hypothesis is formulated:

Hypothesis (H3)*:* Information sharing has a significant and positive influence on commitment.

The interrelationship between service fairness and commitment

Marketing scholars have argued extensively that for bank customers to strengthen their commitment to their service provider, customers need to be provided with a service that is engaging, courteous, and high quality (Özkan, Süer, Keser, & Kocakoç, 2019). When bank customers believe they are treated fairly, experience positive service engagement, and are provided with information that is correct, their willingness to commit to their service provider is enhanced (Worthington & Devlin, 2013). As a result, a positive service fairness perception stimulates future customer commitment toward a service provider (Kiio & Kohsuwan, 2020). Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis (H4): Service fairness has a significant and positive influence on commitment.

The interrelationship between commitment and behavioral intention

Van Tonder, Petzer, and Van Zyl (2017) purported that customers' commitment to a service provider is guided by the overall quality of service engagement experienced, the benefits received from remaining in a relationship with the provider, and the overall attachment the customers have toward the bank. Committed customers illustrate a willingness to build a long-lasting relationship with their service provider, thereby reflecting an intent to remain in the relationship for a long time (Izogo, 2017), which illustrates a positive future behavioral intention. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis (H5): Commitment has a significant and positive influence on behavioral intention.

The mediating effect of commitment on the relationships between perceived value, customer orientation, information sharing, service fairness, and behavioral intention

The positive relationships proposed in the aforementioned sections provide further insight on the probability of commitment functioning as a mediating variable in the proposed model on the positive relationships between perceived value, customer orientation, and behavioral intention. In the same way, the positive relationship between information sharing and service fairness and commitment, as well as between commitment and behavioral intention point toward the likelihood of commitment serving a mediation role on the positive influence of information sharing and service fairness on behavioral intentions. Hence, regarding banking customers, it is proposed that:

Hypothesis (H6a–d): Commitment mediates the relationships between perceived value, customer orientation, information sharing, service fairness, and behavioral intention.

The proposed model for the study is illustrated in Figure 2. This figure shows perceived value, customer orientation, information sharing, and service fairness as the independent variables, commitment as the intervening variable, and behavioral intention as the outcome variable.

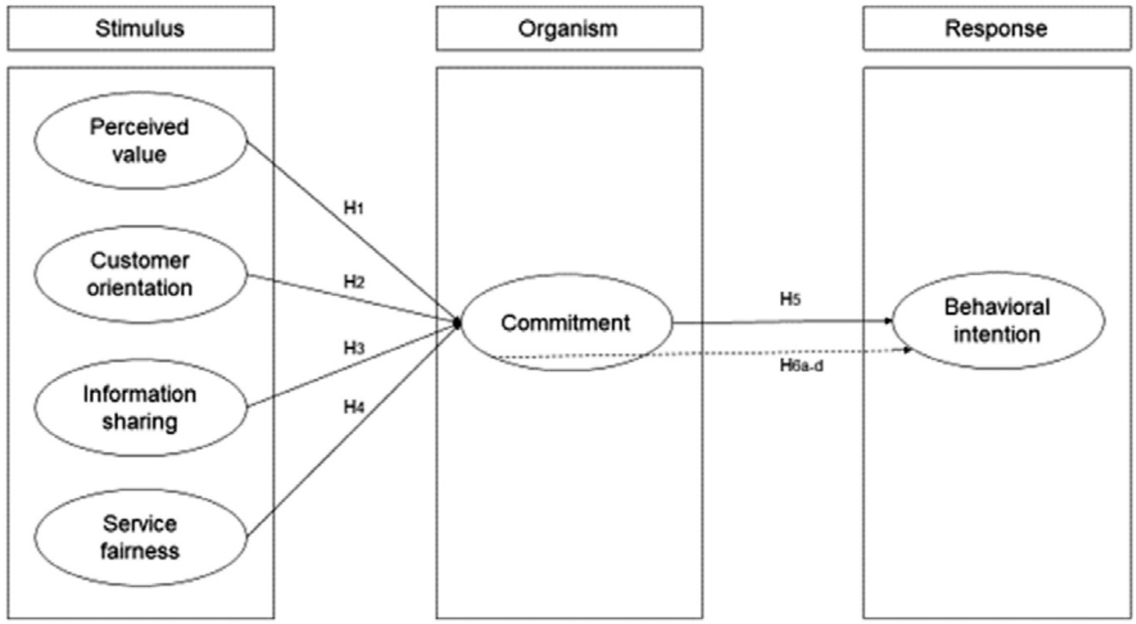

Figure 2. Commitment as a unidimensional construct (model 2).

Research methodology

Sample

The population targeted in the study consisted of adult customers of retail banks in an emerging market. A total of 599 usable responses were collected for analysis. Of the sample surveyed, 53.1% of the respondents were female, 46.7% were male, and 0.2% indicated “other” as gender. The majority of respondents have a tertiary education (42.7%), followed by those who completed high school (40.6%), while the remainder of the respondents had some schooling but did not complete high school (16.7%). Where race is concerned, most respondents classified themselves as black (40.6%), followed by Indian (32.9%); with the remainder of the respondents classifying themselves as white, mixed race, or “other” (26.5%). The majority of respondents are employed, either on a full- or part-time basis (66.1%), while 33.6% of the respondents were students, homemakers, or unemployed when the study was conducted. When the survey was conducted, most of the respondents held a savings account (75.5%), followed by a cheque account (44.1%), and a credit card (31.7%) at Standard Bank (14.5%), Nedbank (16.2%), ABSA (20.9%), Capitec (21.7%), or FNB (26.7%).

Data collection

With the assistance of a field services company, self-administered questionnaires were fielded purposively among respondents in South Africa’s Gauteng province. The fieldworkers ascertained prospective respondents’ willingness to participate in the study and ensured that they met the screening criteria. The respondents received paper-based questionnaires, which were collected once completed. The questionnaire commenced with a consent statement explaining the rights and responsibilities of the respondents, followed by sections determining their demographic profile and retail bank patronage habits. The remaining sections of the questionnaire focused on gaging the study’s constructs—namely, perceived value customer orientation, information sharing, service fairness (interactional and distributive), affective commitment, calculative commitment, and behavioral intention.

Measures and items

The above-mentioned constructs were measured using measures adapted from earlier studies, as indicated in Table 1. The items included in the measures were gaged using a Likert-type scale (seven-point), where 1 denotes "strongly disagree" and seven represents "strongly agree".

Table 1. Measurement of constructs.

Construct	Number of items	Source
Perceived value	4	Nyadzayo (2010)
Customer orientation	3	Cheng, Chen, and Chang (2008); Wray, Palmer, and Bejou (1994)
Information sharing	3	Chu and Wang (2012); Ndubisi (2007); Wong, Hung, and Chow (2007)
Service fairness (interactional and distributive)	7	Giovanis et al. (2015)
Affective commitment	5	Giovanis et al. (2015)
Calculative commitment	5	Giovanis et al. (2015)
Behavioral intention	3	Brady and Cronin (2001); Brady and Robertson (2001); Dagger and Sweeney (2007); Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988)

Data analysis strategy

The researchers used Mplus version 7.4 software to analyze the direct effects as hypothesized in the study and illustrated in the conceptual models presented in Figures 1 and 2. The data analysis commenced with an investigation of the univariate normality of all the items measuring the constructs with the aid of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro–Wilks tests for normality, which guided the choice of a suitable estimator to estimate the study's models. Where univariate normality is evident, the maximum likelihood model (MLM) is appropriate and, where non-normality is evident, the MLM estimator is advised (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2017). Subsequently, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) gaged the measurement model's psychometric properties assessing construct validity (convergent and discriminant validity) and reliability (internal consistency and convergence reliability) (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2014).

With respect to internal consistency reliability, the Cronbach's alpha values were computed and to assess convergence validity, composite reliabilities (CR) were calculated. In both instances, the values calculated should exceed 0.7, as this is indicative of the construct being reliable (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Hair et al., 2014). To assess convergent validity, the factor loadings for all of the items were inspected to ensure they exceeded 0.7 (with a two-tailed *p* value of less than.01 evident) (Hair et al., 2014). The average variance extracted (AVE) for all constructs was also inspected to ensure these were not below the cutoff of 0.5 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Their criterion was used to gage discriminant validity by comparing the correlation coefficient of each construct pair with the corresponding square root of the AVE and ensuring the latter exceeded the correlation coefficient (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). In instances where discriminant validity could not be established using this criterion, a procedure used by Shiu, Pervan, Bove, and Beatty (2011) was applied to determine whether the constructs concerned were indeed distinct from each other. This procedure involves considering the difference in the chi-square value between the unconstrained and nested CFA models for the construct pairs as the correlation between the constructs is constrained in unison, resulting in a chi-square distribution exhibiting one degree of freedom (Shiu et al., 2011). Discriminant validity between the construct pairs is evident if the chi-square difference value exceeds 3.84 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988).

Subsequently, appropriate model fit indices were considered to assess model fit for the measurement and structural models for both models (models 1 and 2) proposed with respect to the direct effects hypothesized for the study. The model fit indices and their respective cutoff values are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Model fit indices.

Fit indices	Recommended cutoff value
Satorra–Bentler χ^2/df ratio	<3
RMSEA	<0.08
CFI	>0.90
TLI	>0.90
SRMR	<0.08

Note. RMSEA: root mean square error of approximation; CFI: com-parative fit index; TLI: Tucker–Lewis index; SRMR: standardizedroot mean square residual.Sources: Bagozzi and Yi (1988); Hu and Bentler (1999); Muthén and Muthén (1998-2017); Van de Schoot et al. (2012).

Once the main effects were assessed, the Hayes Process Macro was employed to evaluate the indirect effects as hypothesized. To test for mediation, bootstrapping estimation with 10,000 resamples was performed, producing bias-corrected confidence intervals (BCCIs) (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2017). The researchers then determined whether a zero was present between the lower (LLCIs) and upper level confidence intervals (ULCIs) with respect to the indirect effects. In the absence of a zero, mediation was extant, and the nature of mediation was identified based upon the guidelines proposed (Zhao, Lynch, & Chen, 2010).

The final phase of the data analysis strategy involves a comparison of the competing models of the study (model 1, where commitment is a two-factor construct, and model 2, where commitment is a unidimensional construct), as illustrated in Figures 1 and 2. According to Posada and Buckley (2004) and Van de Schoot, Lugtig, and Hox (2012), when assessing the two models, the model exhibiting the lowest Bayesian information criterion (BIC) and Akaike information criterion (AIC) values can be considered the one with the optimal equilibrium between fit and intricacy.

Results

Assessment of normality

The results of the assessment of univariate normality for all the items used to measure the constructs were statistically significant ($p < .05$), which is telling of univariate non-normality (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2017). The MLM estimator was used to estimate the models of the study, given its sturdiness to univariate non-normality, whereas it also yields parameter estimates including a chi-square statistic and standard errors, the Satorra–Bentler chi-square statistic, which is mean-adjusted (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2017).

Table 3. Convergent validity and reliability for the re-estimated measurement model (model 1).

Construct and items	Estimate	S.E. Est.	*p* value	*t*-value	AVE	CR	Cronbach's alpha
Service fairness (interactional and distributive) (FAIR)					0.702	0.943	0.914
IF1	0.844	0.019	.0001**	43.952			
IF2	0.874	0.015	.0001**	57.756			
IF3	0.778	0.032	.0001**	23.932			
IF4	0.874	0.015	.0001**	56.378			
PF1	0.825	0.021	.0001**	40.076			
PF2	0.848	0.018	.0001**	48.3			
PF3	0.819	0.017	.0001**	48.434			
Customer orientation (ORIENTATE)					0.806	0.944	0.923
CO1	0.86	0.015	.0001**	57.192			
CO2	0.887	0.012	.0001**	71.936			
CO3	0.939	0.007	.0001**	137.272			
CO4	0.911	0.015	.0001**	59.073			
Perceived value (VALUE)					0.829	0.951	0.929
VALUE1	0.89	0.011	.0001**	78.546			
VALUE2	0.917	0.009	.0001**	100.062			
VALUE3	0.942	0.008	.0001**	125.298			
VALUE4	0.892	0.01	.0001**	85.355			
Information sharing (INFO)					0.785	0.916	0.896
INFO1	0.885	0.012	.0001**	73.424			
INFO2	0.84	0.025	.0001**	33.654			
INFO3	0.929	0.01	.0001**	93.934			
Affective commitment (AFFECTCO)					0.797	0.952	0.949
AC1	0.9	0.009	.0001**	96.161			
AC2	0.951	0.006	.0001**	170.209			
AC3	0.866	0.012	.0001**	70.004			
AC4	0.845	0.016	.0001**	53.391			
AC5	0.899	0.009	.0001**	99.259			
Calculative commitment (CALCUCOM)					0.658	0.852	0.820
CC1	0.874	0.014	.0001**	61.278			
CC3	0.763	0.028	.0001**	27.62			
CC4	0.793	0.024	.0001**	20.382			
Behavioral intention (BEHAVE)					0.879	0.956	0.933
BI1	0.939	0.008	.0001**	110.548			
BI2	0.949	0.01	.0001**	99.344			
BI3	0.925	0.01	.0001**	91.185			

Note.**Statistically significant atp<.01, two-tailed

Model 1: Commitment as a two-factor construct

Assessment of the measurement model

It is evident from the original measurement model that convergent validity cutoffs have been met, except for calculative commitment, where the factor loadings for two items did not exceed the recommended cutoff point of 0.7 (statistically significant at $p < .01$). In addition, the AVE for calculative commitment did not meet the cutoff point (> 0.5). In all instances, the CRs and Cronbach's alpha values exceeded 0.7 and the model exhibited reliability. Subsequently, the two items (CC2 and CC5) were removed and the measurement model was re-estimated. In Table 3, the convergent validity and reliability results for the re-estimated measurement model are reported. It is evident that the factor loadings for all items exceed the 0.7 and are statistically significant at $p < .01$. The AVEs for all constructs exceed 0.5 and the CRs and Cronbach's alpha values for all constructs exceed 0.7. Therefore, it can be said that convergent validity and reliability of the re-estimated measurement model have been established (Hair et al., 2014).

The discriminant validity results for the re-estimated model are presented in Table 4. Given the Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion, it is evident that several construct pairs do not meet the criterion. These include calculative commitment and customer orientation, calculative commitment and perceived value, behavior intention and information sharing, calculative and affective commitment, and behavioral intention and calculative commitment. These discriminant validity issues suggest that commitment could be considered a unidimensional construct.

Table 4. Discriminant validity for re-estimated measurement model (model 1).

	Fair	Orientate	Value	Info	Affectco	Calcucom	Behave
Fair	*0.838*						
Orientate	0.811	*0.898*					
Value	0.809	0.788	*0.910*				
Info	0.826	0.84	0.789	*0.877*			
Affectco	0.669	0.728	0.755	0.682	*0.893*		
Calcucom	0.74	**0.827**	**0.848**	0.75	**0.84**	*0.780*	
Behave	0.792	0.837	0.8	**0.884**	0.698	**0.834**	*0.938*

Note. Square roots of the AVE are presented on the diagonal in italics. The correlations between pairs of constructs are visible below the diagonal. Pairs of constructs with discriminant validity issues are presented in bold.

When considering the model fit statistics (Satorra–Bentler χ^2/df ratio = 2.42, RMSEA = 0.049, CFI = 0.957, TLI = 0.951, and SRMS = 0.040), it is evident that there is a reasonably good fit between the model and the data. Although the re-estimated model exhibits discriminant validity issues, the structural model is assessed subsequently to evaluate competing models (models 1 and 2).

Assessment of the structural model

The model fit statistics for the structural model indicate that the structural model fits the data reasonably well (Satorra–Bentler χ^2/df ratio = 2.46, RMSEA = 0.049, CFI = 0.952, TLI = 0.946, and SRMS = 0.039). Table 5 provides insight into the structural paths. It is evident from the results that the standardized path coefficient (significant at $p < .01$, two-tailed) for calculative commitment and behavioral intention is greater than 1 (1.545), and the standardized path coefficient (significant at $p < .01$, two-tailed) between affective commitment and behavioral intention is negative (−0.701), suggesting the presence of multicollinearity in the specified model (Grewal, Cote, & Baumgartner, 2004). Together with the discriminant validity issues uncovered in the re-estimated measurement model and the multicollinearity concerns evident in the structural model, it is proposed that commitment (affective and calculative) be tested as a unidimensional construct.

Table 5. Standardized estimates in the structural model (model 1).

Path			Standardized estimate	S.E. Est.	*p* value	*t*-value	Result
Perceived value	→	Affective commitment	0.481	0.057	.0001**	8.492	Significant
Perceived value	→	Calculative commitment	0.152	0.031	.0001**	4.913	Significant
Customer orientation	→	Affective commitment	0.329	0.091	.0001**	3.607	Significant
Customer orientation	→	Calculative commitment	0.179	0.060	.003**	2.964	Significant
Information sharing	→	Affective commitment	−0.001	0.069	.988	−0.015	Not significant
Information sharing	→	Calculative commitment	0.291	0.051	.0001**	5.669	Significant
Service fairness	→	Affective commitment	0.024	0.099	.805	0.247	Not significant
Service fairness	→	Calculative commitment	−0.015	0.065	.821	−0.226	Not significant
Affective commitment	→	Calculative commitment	0.472	0.047	.0001**	10.025	Significant
Affective commitment	→	Behavioral intention	−**0.701**	0.126	.0001**	−5.547	Significant
Calculative commitment	→	Behavioral intention	**1.545**	0.118	.0001**	13.109	Significant

Note.**Statistically significant atp<.01, two-tailed.

The bolded values illustrate that these values are not falling within the prescribed parameters for the measurement done, as specified by theory.

Model 2: Commitment as a unidimensional construct

Assessment of the measurement model

The original measurement model for model 2 with commitment as a unidimensional construct exhibited acceptable convergent validity, with most factor loadings exceeding 0.7 (statistically significant at $p < .01$), except for two items measuring calculative commitment, namely, CC2 (0.568) and CC5 (0.243). The AVEs for all constructs exceeded 0.5, except for calculative commitment, while the Cronbach's alpha values and CRs for all constructs exceeded the cutoff of 0.7. Subsequently, CC2 and CC5 were removed and the model was re-estimated. The results for the re-estimated model are presented in Table 6 . For the re-estimated model, convergent validity is evident with most of the factor loadings exceeding 0.7 and the AVEs for all constructs exceeding 0.5. Moreover, internal consistency and convergence reliability can be confirmed with all Cronbach's alpha values and CRs for all constructs above 0.7.

Table 6. Convergent validity and reliability for the re-estimated measurement model (model 2).

Construct and items	Estimate	S.E. Est.	*p* value	*t*-value	AVE	CR	Cronbach's alpha
Service fairness (interactional and distributive) (FAIR)					0.702	0.943	0.914
IF1	0.844	0.02	.0001**	43.079			
IF2	0.874	0.015	.0001**	60.231			
IF3	0.777	0.032	.0001**	24.122			
IF4	0.873	0.015	.0001**	57.347			
PF1	0.825	0.021	.0001**	40.139			
PF2	0.848	0.018	.0001**	47.861			
PF3	0.819	0.017	.0001**	48.3			
Customer orientation (ORIENTATE)					0.806	0.945	0.923
CO1	0.861	0.015	.0001**	58.352			
CO2	0.888	0.012	.0001**	72.877			
CO3	0.939	0.007	.0001**	132.952			
CO4	0.91	0.015	.0001**	59.194			
Perceived value (VALUE)					0.829	0.951	0.929
VALUE1	0.89	0.011	.0001**	79.328			
VALUE2	0.917	0.009	.0001**	99.15			
VALUE3	0.942	0.007	.0001**	126.191			
VALUE4	0.892	0.011	.0001**	83.515			
Information sharing (INFO)					0.784	0.916	0.896
INFO1	0.886	0.012	.0001**	73.342			
INFO2	0.84	0.025	.0001**	33.276			
INFO3	0.928	0.01	.0001**	94.269			
Commitment (affective and calculative) (COMMIT)					0.787	0.941	0.940
AC1	0.899	0.009	.0001**	98.108			
AC2	0.932	0.006	.0001**	152.048			
AC3	0.85	0.013	.0001**	65.917			
AC4	0.859	0.014	.0001**	59.338			
AC5	0.893	0.009	.0001**	97.023			
CC1	0.796	0.017	.0001**	46.771			
CC3	0.65	0.03	.0001**	21.446			
CC4	0.616	0.035	.0001**	17.391			
Behavioral intention (BEHAVE)					0.879	0.956	0.933
BI1	0.937	0.008	.0001**	110.28			
BI2	0.95	0.009	.0001**	105.196			
BI3	0.925	0.01	.0001**	88.295			

Note: **Statistically significant at p <.01, two-tailed.

It is evident from Table 7 that discriminant validity of the re-estimated measurement model is apparent, as for most of the constructs the square root of the AVE exceeds the correlation with other constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 7. Discriminant validity for re-estimated measurement model (model 2).

	Fair	Orientate	Value	Info	Commit	Behave
Fair	*0.838*					
Orientate	0.811	*0.898*				
Value	0.809	0.788	*0.910*			
Info	0.826	0.84	0.789	*0.885*		
Commit	0.704	0.771	0.798	0.719	*0.887*	
Behave	0.792	0.837	0.8	0.885	0.747	*0.937*

Note. Square roots of the AVE are presented on the diagonal in italics. The correlations between pairs of constructs are visible below the diagonal. Pairs of constructs with discriminant validity issues are presented in bold.

The model fit statistics for the re-estimated measurement model provide evidence that the model fits the data fairly well (Satorra–Bentler χ^2/df ratio = 2.92, RMSEA = 0.057, CFI = 0.941, TLI = 0.934, and SRMS = 0.054). Subsequently, the structural model was estimated.

Assessment of the structural model

The model fit statistics for the structural model provide evidence that the model fits the data well. Although the Satorra–Bentler χ^2/df ratio (3.53) marginally exceeded the recommended cutoff value, the RMSEA (0.065), the CFI (0.922), the TLI (0.913) and the SRMR (0.078) met the criteria for model fit. Given the assertion by Hair et al. (2014) that a model should not be rejected based upon a single fit statistic, but that model fit should be evaluated taking the other model fit statistics into account, the researchers propose that there is ample evidence of satisfactory model fit in this instance.

Table 8 provides insight into the structural paths. It is evident that perceived value and customer orientation positively and significantly influence commitment, while information sharing and service fairness do not positively and significantly influence commitment. Finally, commitment positively and significantly influences behavioral intention. Therefore, with respect to the direct effects, H1, H2, and H5 can be supported.

Table 8. Standardized estimates in the structural model (model 2).

Path			Standardized estimate	S.E. Est.	*p* value	*t*-value	Result
Perceived value	→	Commitment	0.496	0.045	.0001	10.913	Significant
Customer orientation	→	Commitment	0.358	0.051	.0001	7.015	Significant
Information sharing	→	Commitment	0.082	0.054	.127	1.527	Not significant
Service fairness	→	Commitment	−0.029	0.045	.519	−0.644	Not significant
Commitment	→	Behavioral intention	0.783	0.018	.0001	43.552	Significant

Note:**Statistically significant at p <.01, two-tailed

Mediation analysis

Knowing the multicollinearity issues uncovered in model 1, sequential mediation in the model was not tested. With respect to model 2, Table 9 provides the results related to the mediating effect of commitment, as a unidimensional construct in model 2, between its antecedents and behavioral intention. Based on whether or not a zero is present between the LLCIs and ULCIs of the BCCIs and Zhao et al. (2010) guidelines, it is evident from the results that commitment partially mediates the relationships between perceived value and behavioral intention (0.446; two-tailed *p* value = .0001 [LLCI = 0.337; ULCI = 0.562]) as well as between customer orientation and behavioral intention (0.362; two-tailed *p* value = .0001 [LLCI = 0.256; ULCI = 0.491]). However, commitment does not moderate the relationships between information sharing and behavioral intention (0.076; two-tailed *p* value = .252 [LLCI = −0.028; ULCI = 0.214]), nor between service fairness and behavioral intention (−0.030; two-tailed *p* value = .485 [LLCI = −0.132; ULCI = 0.091]). Therefore, H6a–b can be supported, while H6c–d cannot be supported.

Table 9. Bootstrapping indirect effects at 95% confidence intervals (model 2).

Variables X ≫ M ≫ Y	Indirect effect [LLCI; ULCI]	*t*-value (*p* value)	Result
Perceived value ≫ Commitment ≫ Behavioral intention	0.446 [0.337; 0.562]	7.777 (.0001)	Partial mediation
Customer orientation ≫ Commitment ≫ Behavioral intention	0.361 [0.256; 0.491]	5.563 (.0001)	Partial mediation
Information sharing ≫ Commitment ≫ Behavioral intention	0.076 [−0.028; 0.214]	1.147 (.252)	No mediation
Service fairness ≫ Commitment ≫ Behavioral intention	−0.030 [−0.132; 0.091]	0.485 (.627)	No mediation

Note. X: exogenous variable. M: mediating variable. Y: endogenous variable.

Assessing the competing models

Table 10 presents the model fit statistics for the two models, as reported, with the addition of the AIC and BIC values. It is evident from Table 10 that model 2, where commitment is a unidimensional construct, is the best fit of the two models concerned. Model 2 exhibits lower AIC and BIC values than model 1, which is indicative of the optimal equilibrium between fit and intricacy exhibited by model 2, where the competing models are concerned (Posada & Buckley, 2004; Van de Schoot et al., 2012).

Table 10. Competing models (models 1 and 2).

Fit indices	Model 1: Structural model where commitment is a two-factor construct	Model 2: Structural model where commitment is a unidimensional construct
Satorra–Bentler χ^2/df ratio	2.46	3.53
RMSEA	0.049	0.065
CFI	0.952	0.922
TLI	0.946	0.913
SRMR	0.039	0.078
AIC	46,549.855	42,788.850
BIC	47,077.286	43,219.586
Sample-size adjusted BIC	46,696.320	42,908.463

Discussion

This study investigated the dimensional nature of commitment (affective and calculative) within a retail banking setting and tested two models (models 1 and 2) that include antecedents and an outcome of commitment as a unidimensional and a multidimensional construct. The discussion of the results will be guided by the dimensional nature of commitment.

Commitment as a multidimensional (two-factor) construct

In terms of model 1, where commitment is reflected as a multidimensional, two-factor construct (affective versus calculative commitment), it was found that the perceived value offering and customer orientation of banks toward their retail customer base has a significant influence on the affective commitment of banking customers. The findings of the study correlate with previous studies in the field of marketing, which established that customers' affective commitment is influenced by perceived value and customer orientation, although in a context that is not similar to that of the current study. (Rather, Tehseen, Itoo, & Parrey, 2019). However, it was noted that the affective commitment of bank customers in emerging markets such as South Africa are not influenced by information sharing and service fairness. Contrary to previous marketing studies, information sharing and service fairness do not have an influence on the affective commitment of customers (Jokela & Söderman, 2017). Nevertheless, the affirmative relationship between affective commitment and behavioral intention, as promulgated by Benjamin (2012) and Van Tonder et al. (2017), are supported.

Furthermore, the results established that banks' perceived value offering, their customer orientation skills when delivering a service as well as their information sharing ability significantly and positively influence the calculative commitment of customers in a retail banking context, toward their banks. This finding aligns with studies by Izogo, Elom, and Mpinganjira (2021), stating that positive and significant relationships exist between calculative commitment and perceived value, customer orientation, and information sharing in an industry-specific context. Interestingly, service fairness does not have a positive and significant influence on calculative commitment, which is contrary to the findings of other marketing scholars (Giovanis, Athanasopoulou, & Tsoukatos, 2015). Moreover, affective commitment has a significant and positive influence on calculative commitment. This finding is in line with previous studies (Kaur & Soch, 2018), which argued the positive relationship between affective commitment and calculative commitment across industries in developed and emerging markets. Finally, calculative commitment has a positive and significant relationship with behavioral intention in an emerging market context, which is widely supported by scholars in the marketing field (Kungumapriya & Malarmathi, 2018).

Commitment as a mediator in model 1 (commitment measured as a multidimensional construct)

In the case of model 1 (where commitment is measured as a multidimensional construct), sequential mediation was not tested, knowing the multicollinearity issues uncovered in the model.

Commitment as a unidimensional construct

In terms of model 2, where commitment is reflected as a unidimensional construct, only perceived value and customer orientation had a positive and significant influence on commitment. These findings are supported by previous research in the field of marketing, where commitment was measured as a unidimensional construct in multiple markets (Iqbal, Nisha, & Rashid, 2018; J. U. Islam et al., 2020). Information sharing and service fairness did not have a positive and significant influence on the commitment of retail banking customers in an emerging market. This finding contrasts with previous research findings on the relationship between information sharing, service fairness, and commitment (S. R. Islam & Perumal, 2018). Finally, it was established that commitment has a positive and significant influence on behavioral intention, which supports previous marketing research validating the positive relationship between commitment as a unidimensional construct and behavioral intention (Tandon & Kiran, 2018).

Commitment as a mediator in model 2 (commitment measured as a unidimensional construct)

Regarding the role of commitment as mediator (where commitment is measured as a unidimensional construct), this study found that in the case of model 2, commitment partially mediates the relationships between perceived value, customer orientation, and behavioral intention. This finding is in line with previous research studies (Van Tonder et al., 2017). However, it was established that commitment does not mediate the relationship between information sharing, service fairness, and behavioral intention. This finding is in contrast with previous research by multiple scholars across various industries (Hashim & Tan, 2015).

A conclusive summary based on the findings of both models (reflecting commitment as a multidimensional or a unidimensional construct)

In the case of model 1 (commitment measured as a multidimensional, two-factor construct) and model 2 (commitment measured as a unidimensional construct), it becomes clear that retail banking customers want their banks to provide them with value for money, where the costs incurred to obtain the retail banking service are lower than the overall benefits received.

The overall service experience of the customer is guided by the knowledgeable bank employees toward the service and product needs of the customer, the willingness of employees to address customer problems in a fast and professional manner, as well as the bank's ability to have the customers' best interests at heart. Therefore, perceived value and customer orientation are important antecedents of commitment, as both a unidimensional or a two-factor construct in the retail banking industry of an emerging market. Interestingly, information sharing and service fairness are not perceived as prerequisites by retail banking customers when stimulating their commitment toward their retail bank. However, information sharing is perceived as a critically important element to stimulate the calculative commitment of retail banking customers, while service fairness does not have any influence on the calculative commitment of banking customers in an emerging market.

Overall commitment, whether measured as a unidimensional construct or as a two-factor construct, reflects a positive relationship with behavioral intention. As a consequence, when bank customers perceive the relationship with their banks to be of emotional and financial value and experience customer service delivery in a positive manner, their commitment can be either of a unidimensional or a two-factor (affective or calculative) nature. It is only in the case of the sharing of information by the bank that banking customers can be empowered to make calculative decisions to remain in the relationship with the bank, especially where the bank keeps customers informed about new services and if the bank delivers good explanations whenever the bank customer is confused concerning the services of the bank. Finally, commitment, whether measured as a unidimensional or a two-factor construct, influences future behavioral intention in a positive manner in an emerging market, such as South Africa. Therefore, when the overall value and service experience of the bank customer is positive, the customer will develop increased commitment toward the bank, as a service provider. Such commitment is developed irrespective of the nature of commitment in the service industry to which it is relevant.

Theoretical and managerial implications

The results of the study established that irrespective of the nature of commitment (whether measured as a unidimensional or a two-factor construct), perceived value and customer orientation have a direct influence on banking customers' future commitment to their service provider. Interestingly, the results illustrate that only in the case of calculative commitment does information sharing reflect a significant relationship with commitment. In addition, service fairness does not have any relationship with commitment.

Theoretical implications

This study proposes various theoretical contributions to the field of relationship marketing by securing an improved understanding of the role of commitment as both a unidimensional and a multidimensional (two-factor) variable. Understanding commitment from multiple perspectives is important for banks to be better enabled to build strong relationships with the customers in the future.

Understanding commitment as an important variable in future relationship building

The findings of the study confirm the importance of commitment in driving future behavioral intention. It confirms that the format of commitment, whether a unidimensional or a multidimensional (two-factor) construct, has little relevance to driving a bank customer's decision to remain committed to the selected service provider. When customers feel engaged with their banks and have positive experiences built on continuous communication, the satisfaction of their needs, and an economical value proposition that relates positively to their cost-benefit analysis of remaining in the relationship, they will illustrate greater commitment (including an affective and a calculative component) to their banks (refer to Tables 5 and 8) (Iqbal et al., 2018; J. U. Islam et al., 2020). In addition, if bank customers identify well with their banks, are emotionally attached to their banks, and receive more benefits from their banks compared to competitors, they will reflect greater behavioral intention to remain in a relationship with their banks in the future. Marketing scholars have validated the importance of commitment in securing a positive behavioral intention in a B2C environment (Huang & Liu, 2020). However, over the decades, there has been a wide debate on whether commitment should be measured as a unidimensional or a multidimensional construct (refer to the section titled "Commitment as a multidimensional (two-factor) construct versus a unidimensional construct"). The current findings dispute these arguments by underlining the importance of commitment in driving future behavioral intention, irrespective of the nature of commitment—that is, being a unidimensional or a multidimensional (two-factor) construct.

Greater understanding of the antecedents of commitment, whether measured as a unidimensional or a multidimensional construct

The findings of the study confirm the importance of perceived value and customer orientation in strengthening customers' future commitment to their banks. Furthermore, the findings validate that, irrespective of the nature of commitment (a unidimensional or a multidimensional construct), the same antecedents have a direct influence on customers' future commitment to their banks. Therefore, knowledge of the antecedents of commitment guides future intention to remain in the relationship. However, banks should become increasingly aware that although the type of commitment that their customers have reflects little relevance of their future intention to remain in the relationship, calculative commitment is the only form of commitment that is guided by the sharing of accurate and relevant information. Consequently, it seems as if customers' future commitment to their banks is influenced by feelings of emotional attachment and economic benefit. Customers want to feel attached to their banks through experiences that drive convenience, address their product and service needs, and embrace their best interests as customers. In addition, customers' calculative commitment can only be strengthened when they perceive the information received from their banks as accurate, when there is continuous communication from their banks regarding new service offerings, and when communication is delivered in a professional manner that they experience excitement and joy. Such an outcome will strengthen their overall commitment (a unidimensional and a multidimensional construct) to the bank (refer to Table 5 and 8) (Roy, Gruner, & Guo, 2022).

Conclusively, the study contributes to relationship marketing literature by purporting the importance of customer value perception and the overall level of service orientation of banks when providing service delivery to their customers. It is further emphasized that these factors do not have any relation to the type of commitment that it influences, namely, unidimensional or multidimensional (two-factor construct).

Improved understanding of the role of commitment (as a unidimensional or a two-factor construct) in fostering behavioral intention

Interestingly, only in the case of model 2 do the research results validate the partial mediation role of commitment on the relationships between perceived value, customer orientation, and behavioral intention (refer to Table 9). Marketing scholars, such as Tabrani et al. (2018) and Usman (2015), have argued extensively that commitment (as a unidimensional construct) is critically important to strengthen behavioral intention in various settings. Consequently, it would seem that since it is vital for a bank to ensure it offers value to its customers and delivers a customer-centered service, the bank needs to understand that commitment remains a key factor in driving future behavioral intention. Such commitment is not type- or category-specific, but requires a deep understanding of customer needs, such as bank service convenience, innovative banking service offerings, and rewards to remain in a relationship with the bank.

Managerial implications

In terms of the managerial implications, it becomes clear that retail banks should have a clear and focused understanding of the factors driving the commitment of their customers and positively influencing their future behavioral intention. For example, the type of commitment that retail banking customers have toward their banks is not critically important, but how such commitment influences their future behavioral intention is imperative to understand. Banks should become increasingly aware that commitment can be driven by multiple factors founded on the need of the customer to be associated with the bank. Such an association can be founded on the longing of the customers to remain in the relationship with their banks, since they perceive the relationship to be beneficial, reflecting their optimism and contentment with the relationship.

Alternatively, customers can illustrate clear characteristics of emotional and calculative commitment. By doing research on these specific commitment needs of customers, banks will be in a better position to develop an understanding of the factors that drive these specialized commitment needs, thereby strengthening their behavioral intention in the long term. Therefore, retail banks should develop financial products and services that offer their customer base a value proposition that is perceived as beneficial. Retail banking customers need to be informed consistently that the benefits of doing business with their banks outweigh the cost of remaining in the relationship. As a result, aspects like a convenient retail banking service (both online and offline), engaging service experiences through all touchpoints that reflect ease of use, professional service delivery and affordability, as well as the provision of banking products that address the changing financial needs of customers should be offered to customers as a single product and service offering. This will offer banks a competitive edge over competitors, as customers will experience professional service delivery as well as be offered continuous service engagement though multiple platforms and products developed around their evolutionary financial needs.

Furthermore, the accuracy of shared information becomes imperative to drive the future calculative commitment of customers. Hence, banks need to ensure that all forms of online and offline communications directed at their customer base are professional, accurate, and engaging. Retail bank customers want to be engaged by their banks through multiple channels, such as emails, WhatsApp, SMS, social media platforms like Facebook, or through smartphone technology. However, the most appropriate communication medium will depend on the individual customer or the specific retail customer segment targeted. As a result, research into customer segment communication preferences becomes imperative.

Finally, banks should drive the commitment of their customer base through an improved understanding of the factors that positively influence the future behavioral commitment of their customer base. As a result, banks should invest in technology that more successfully collects big data on their customer segments, illustrating what empowers customers to identify with the bank and makes customers feel emotionally attached to the bank. Moreover, banks should understand that although their customer base might need financial services, they might not be excited about it. Therefore, through the application of customer touchpoint assessments, continuous research analysis and the analyzing of bank service and product usage trends, banks could better empower themselves with knowledge on how to strengthen the emotional attachment of customers. In conclusion, banks can consider a similar approach to establish how to better manage the economic value proposition offered to their customer base. Banks should critically analyze the cost-benefit ratio that they offer their customers and whether such costs are in relation to the convenience, financial service transparency expectations, customer experience expectations, and overall product benefit offering that customers want when compared to new, more innovative entrants coming into the South African market. Such an analysis, founded on in-depth consumer research and data analytics, can assist banks in developing an improved understanding of the key elements driving future customer commitment that is built on the principles of attachment, association, and economic benefits.

Conclusions

In the study it was established that from the perspective of an emergent market, it is proposed that commitment be perceived as either a unidimensional or a multidimensional (two-factor) construct, since how it is constituted has limited relevance or influence on the future behavioral intention of banking customers Customer commitment in emergent markets is stimulated by their value perception of the banking product and service received, their service engagement experience with their banks, and the quality of information shared with them, empowering them to make informed financial product and service need decisions. Hence, banks should develop a service culture that is built on customer needs and exceeds customer expectations. By doing so, customers can develop a behavioral intention that is positive the future commitment of customers will be enhanced.

Research limitations

Perceived value, customer orientation, information sharing, and service fairness were the only precursors applied to a particular service environment. Nevertheless, summaries were provided of the selected antecedents of commitment (measured as a unidimensional and a two-factor construct) in terms of the South African retail banking industry. Knowledge of this should assist the retail banking industry in South Africa to better understand how to foster commitment to positively influence the future behavioral intention of their customer base.

Areas for future research

Future research could conduct a comparison between emerging and developed markets and different industries to explore the influence of commitment as a unidimensional or a multidimensional construct on the loyalty of banking customers. Furthermore, the mediating role of commitment, as either a unidimensional or two-factor construct, can be explored in other industries or emerging markets across the world.

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Ethical statement

Ethical clearance for the project was provided by the Gordon Institute of Business Sciences (GIBS) in Johannesburg, South Africa on 14 June 2018. No ethical clearance number was provided, but approval was granted by the chair of the research committee of GIBS, namely, Prof Gavin Price.

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