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DUAL COMMITMENT: EVIDENCE FROM AN EMERGING COUNTRY PERSPECTIVE

Abstract:

Despite the fact that commitment is a well-established and important concept in the marketing literature, our understanding of the concept of customer commitment remains limited. A possible reason for this pertains to the notion of dual commitment. Dual commitment stems from a buying situation where a service delivered is dependent on the collaboration between two or more service providers. Under these circumstances, the question arises whether commitment should be managed on an aggregated level, or on the level of each of the contributing service providers. The mobile service industry is a typical example hereof, where the service is the end-result of collaboration between a mobile handset provider on the one hand, and a mobile network service provider on the other. In such a situation, two questions arise: Should a customer's commitment be managed on a comprehensive level or, secondly, will a customer's commitment towards a mobile handset provider differ from their commitment towards the actual mobile network service provider?

Against this background, this study investigated the management of customer commitment from a dual commitment perspective. A quantitative approach was used to analyse the perceptions of South African respondents belonging to the Generation Y cohort. During the research, respondents were introduced to two questionnaires: the first questionnaire pertained to the management of commitment towards the mobile handset provider (MHP), whereas the second questionnaire addressed commitment towards the mobile network service provider (MNSP). Both the questionnaires focused on three dependent variables (affective, normative and calculative commitment), with trust, satisfaction, communication, shared values and reputation being the independent variables. The data were analysed in SPSS version 25, and regression analyses were used to assess the statistical significance of the hypothesised relationships.

The empirical results revealed a number of interesting findings. Firstly, the study questions the existence of dual customer commitment in the South African telecommunications industry. The reason is that striking similarities were found in the ways in which commitment are managed from the two service providers investigated. In addition, in terms of the management of commitment on affective, calculative, and normative levels, several similarities were also found. This study's results therefore contradict those reported in the existing literature, prompting the question whether the unique characteristics of respondents from emerging markets, such as South Africa, could have influenced the results.

Keywords:

Dual commitment, affective, calculative and normative commitment

JEL Classification: M31

Introduction

When studying the concept of relationship commitment, the marketing literature traditionally focuses on unilateral commitment, as opposed to a dual commitment perspective. Unilateral commitment refers to the positive attachments that a customer develops towards a specific service provider, and where this service provider has no reciprocal obligations towards any other service provider (Magenau, Martin & Peterson, 1988). In contrast to unilateral commitment, situations could occur where an individual could have different levels of commitment towards different role players in a service delivery context (Becker, Kernan, Clark & Klein, 2015). These different role players, which Meyer, Morin and Vandenberghe (2015) refer to as 'constituencies of commitment', should be combined to create a final commitment towards the service provider.

In addition, the literature appears to focus primarily on dual commitment from an organisational perspective. This focus resulted in an almost complete lack in research on the topic of dual commitment from a customer perspective. This study therefore investigated the management of commitment from the viewpoint of the South African mobile phone industry. Dual commitment is represented by mobile handset providers (MHPs), and mobile network service providers (MNSPs) respectively.

Commitment

Little consensus exists regarding the meaning of the term 'customer commitment'. One definition of commitment notes that the continued "relationship with another is so important as to warrant maximum efforts at maintaining it" (Rezaei, Wang & Tavasszy, 2015: 9154). This definition is similar to an earlier description by Moorman, Zaltman and Deshpande (1992:316) that commitment is a desire to maintain a relationship. The majority of definitions conclude that customer commitment denotes an exchange partner's willingness and desire to maintain relationships (Mercurio, 2015).

Although commitment was initially viewed as a unidimensional construct (Bügel, Verhoef & Buunk, 2011), the more recent approach is to view commitment as a multidimensional construct consisting of an affective, calculative and normative dimension (Pandit & Vilches-Montero, 2016). Affective commitment, which denotes an emotional attachment, develops when customers have a high level of involvement and participation in an organisation (Long, Yong & Chuen, 2016). Furthermore, affective commitment increases the likelihood of customers to engage in behaviour that seeks to increase organisational performance and extend beyond the role of customer expectations (Perreira & Berta, 2016).

Calculative commitment is defined as "the willingness to remain in the relationship with an organisation due to the investment made and benefits received from the relationship that

make it too costly to consider switching organisations” (Umoh, Amah & Wokocha, 2014:70). Based on this investment made in a relationship, calculative commitment increases once customers are aware of the costs of calling off the relationship with an organisation. Therefore, calculative commitment is transactional in nature as customers tend to assess their investment based on what they have sacrificed or devoted to the relationship against what they expect to gain by remaining in the relationship (Umoh *et al.*, 2014).

Normative commitment, which is the most recently added dimension of commitment, describes instances in which customers develop a sense of obligation to engage in behaviours and actions that will benefit the organisation as well as the achievement of organisational goals (McCallum, Forret & Wolff, 2014). From a theoretical perspective, Jones, Fox, Taylor and Fabrigar (2010) define normative commitment as “the degree to which a customer is psychologically bonded to the organisation on the basis of his or her sense of obligation to the organisation”. Therefore, customers base their commitment towards a service provider on obligation (Bansal, Irving & Taylor, 2004) and indebtedness regarding the need to reciprocate to facilitate mutual benefits (McCallum *et al.*, 2014). As normative commitment increases, customers tend to feel as though their engagement in the relationship is driven by external pressures from which the perceived obligation stems (Vandenberghe, Mignonac & Manville, 2015).

Against this background, the point of departure for this study is that service providers should manage customer commitment by focusing on the interaction between affective, calculative and normative commitment. In addition, this study supports the view of Meyer *et al.* (2015) that a customer’s mindset towards a service provider is influenced by the specific configuration of commitment types that is applied. Therefore, different customers could have different levels of commitment towards the same service provider.

Antecedents of commitment

In order to manage customer commitment, service providers should have a clear understanding of the antecedents of commitment. Given the objectives of this study, five antecedents of commitment were selected: trust, satisfaction, communication, shared values and reputation.

Trust refers to “the willingness of individuals to increase their susceptibility to actions of others whose behaviour they cannot control” (Bricci, Fragata & Antunes, 2015:174). When customers trust an organisation, the prospect of continuity and development of commitment is automatically reinforced (Chen, Chen & Yeh, 2003). The formation of trust has the ability to strengthen ties with the organisation, ensuring that customers do not merely engage in once-off sales, but keep the sales consistent by means of repeat purchases (Cater, 2007). When

trust is established between a service provider and a customer, switching costs increase, thereby strengthening customer commitment and enhancing organisational performance (Joseph, 2012). Based on the literature review, the following hypotheses were developed:

- H_{1a} There is a positive relationship between trust and affective commitment
- H_{1b} There is a positive relationship between trust and calculative commitment
- H_{1c} There is a positive relationship between trust and normative commitment

Customer satisfaction is considered a predictor of commitment (Gangai & Agrawal, 2015). Morgan and Hunt (1994) argue that trust and commitment functions in a dependent relationship, suggesting that satisfaction could simultaneously influence both trust and commitment. Gangai and Agrawal (2015) revealed that satisfaction is positively related to both calculative and normative commitment. In addition, satisfaction with relationship benefits and outcomes is positively related to affective commitment, whereas satisfaction with an organisation's management is positively related to normative commitment (Yew, 2007). Alsiewi and Agil (2014) reported a positive relationship between satisfaction and affective commitment. Based on the literature review, the following hypotheses were stated:

- H_{2a} There is a positive relationship between satisfaction and affective commitment
- H_{2b} There is a positive relationship between satisfaction and calculative commitment
- H_{2c} There is a positive relationship between satisfaction and normative commitment

The purpose of effective communication is to provide customers with information that will ensure that customers benefit from it and that they can decode the information with minimum effort (Ball, Coelho & Machas, 2004). Thureau (2000) notes that communication is often neglected, and that this antecedent is crucial in value creation. Effective communication can affect all aspects of relationship marketing, but specifically customer commitment (Thureau, 2000). According to Zeffane, Tipu and Ryan (2011), effective communication is needed to manage and maintain customer commitment (Zeffane *et al.*, 2011). Against this background, the following hypotheses were formulated:

- H_{3a} There is a positive relationship between communication and affective commitment
- H_{3b} There is a positive relationship between communication and calculative commitment
- H_{3c} There is a positive relationship between communication and normative commitment

Posner, Kouzes and Schmidt (1985:294) describe values as being "the deep-seated standards that influence moral judgement and commitment to personal goals". The terms 'values' and 'shared values' are often used interchangeably. Similar to individuals, organisations have values that reflect in their decisions and desired organisational objectives.

When customers engage with an organisation, they endorse the organisation's values (Posner *et al.*, 1985), which could result in increased commitment. Posner *et al.* (1985) demonstrated that customers who feel that their values are compatible with those of the organisation, show more confidence in their prospect of future engagement with the organisation. According to Dean (2008), shared values build trust; and that this trust forms the foundation from which committed relationships are established. Based on the literature review, the following hypotheses were stated:

H_{4a} There is a positive relationship between shared values and affective commitment

H_{4b} There is a positive relationship between shared values and calculative commitment

H_{4c} There is a positive relationship between shared values and normative commitment

An organisation's reputation is increasingly becoming an important consideration when customers decide to support a particular organisation. This viewpoint is corroborated by Adamson, Chan and Handford (2003) who measured commitment by acknowledging the extent to which customers believe financial institutions could be relied on to do what is right. Keh and Xie (2009) believe that a favourable reputation can strengthen customers' perceptions when judging organisational performance, which could result in commitment. In addition, Joseph (2012) believes that customer commitment is influenced by perceptions of an organisation's reliability. Therefore, organisations that are considered to be more reliable, are more likely to benefit from committed customers. By being reliant on a known and widely recognised organisation, feelings of risk or vulnerability that a customer may feel, diminish and the uncertainty is replaced with a sense of stability (Joseph, 2012). Based on the literature review, the following hypotheses were developed:

H_{5a} There is a positive relationship between reputation and affective commitment

H_{5b} There is a positive relationship between reputation and calculative commitment

H_{5c} There is a positive relationship between reputation and normative commitment

Dual commitment

Dual commitment can be described as a situation where an employee experiences divided loyalty between their commitment to their employer and their commitment to another association (Becker *et al.*, 2015). A typical example is found in the field of human resources, where an employee might be committed to both a company's management and to a trade union (Cohen, 2005). It is, of course, possible that the level of commitment can differ between the two parties involved in the service delivery. The rationale behind dual commitment is that each service provider should add value over unilateral constellations as each commitment adds to and reinforces the final service that is delivered (Wombacher & Felfe, 2017).

The origin of dual commitment lies in the field of organisational behaviour, where it was found that different motivations exist for an individual's commitment towards an organisation (Morin, Meyer, McInerney, Marsh & Ganotice, 2015). Therefore, it is possible that levels of commitment may also exist towards two service providers (Nguuyen, Felfe & Fookan, 2015). Inevitably, these differences might result in conflict between the service providers over the long term (Redman & Snape, 2016). Despite the propensity for conflict, dual commitment can exist in a harmonious environment (Redman & Snape, 2016).

Objectives of the study

Based on the literature review, the primary objective of the study was to determine the potential relationships between the antecedents of commitment and commitment in circumstances where there is a dual perspective. The second objective was to provide guidelines for service providers to manage circumstances of dual commitment.

Research methodology

Pilot study: A pilot study was conducted to determine the reliability of the measurement instruments. The respondents participating in the pilot study were selected in such a manner that they reflected the characteristics of the final sample. This selection provided the opportunity to assess whether item purification was necessary based on the reliability of each construct.

Sampling: The target population for the study consisted of students of a South African multicultural university. All the respondents belonged to the generation Y cohort. A non-probability sampling technique was used as respondents were selected based on convenience. No sampling frame was available.

Measurement instrument: All items in the questionnaire were sourced from the literature. The aim was to ensure that only scales of which the reliability was previously established, were included in the study. The items used were primarily drawn from Coote, Forrest and Tam (2003), Garbarino and Johnson (1999), Keh and Xie (2009), Lacey (2007) and MacMillan, Money, Money and Downing (2005). In order to reflect the context of the study, some items had to be slightly rephrased. However, the rephrasing did not change the original meaning of the items.

Data gathering: After institutional permission and ethical clearance was obtained, the respondents were approached. Respondents firstly had to indicate their commitment towards their MHP. Once these questionnaires were collected, a second questionnaire was distributed to the same group of respondents. In this questionnaire, respondents had to indicate their commitment towards their MNSP (as opposed to their commitment towards their MHP in the first questionnaire). Each respondent, therefore, completed two separate questionnaires.

Data analysis: All analyses were performed using SPSS version 25. The reliability of the questionnaires was assessed by calculating Cronbach alphas, and the relationships between the independent and the dependent variables were assessed by means of regression analyses.

Empirical results

This paper firstly reports on the results of the pre-test, after which the results of the main study are presented.

Results of the pre-test

The purpose of the pre-test was to assess the reliability of the measurement instrument. The reliability scores for the pre-test ranged between 0.716 and 0.855. The only exceptions were the scores of 0.585 for calculative commitment and 0.686 for trust. Although the scores for these two constructs were below the generally accepted level of 0.7, it was decided to retain these two variables. This decision was made because of the exploratory nature of the study.

Results of the main study

The main study comprised two phases, namely the section pertaining to the MHP (referred to as phase 1), and the section pertaining to the MNSP (referred to as phase 2). For phase 1, 168 useable questionnaires were received, whereas 144 useable questionnaires were received in the case of phase 2.

Results of phase 1 (MHP)

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to determine the underlying structure of the data. For this analysis, principal axis factoring was used as extraction method and direct oblimin as rotation method. Although a five-factor structure was anticipated, the CFA revealed a four-factor structure only. Firstly, a number of items had to be removed since they did not load onto any factor or they loaded in isolation with no other items accompanying them. Furthermore, an almost collapse of the trust and reputation dimensions were observed. After the newly formed factors were examined, they were relabelled as follows:

An inspection of the items contributing to factor 1 suggested a degree of positive feelings that customers may experience when entering into agreements with their MHP. Consequently, the term 'positive disposition' was used.

Factor 2 comprised items pertaining to shared values only and for that reason the label 'shared values' was retained. Likewise, factor 3 was labelled 'communication' since the two communication items loaded together. It was thus not necessary to relabel these two factors.

Factor 4 predominantly consisted of satisfaction items, with the addition of one trust item. This trust item refers to the confidence that customers have in their MHP. Confidence can be viewed as a prerequisite of satisfaction and therefore the label 'satisfaction' was retained.

Once the factors were relabelled, each factor's reliability was calculated. The reliability scores ranged between 0.769 and 0.893, demonstrating proof of internal consistency. However, in the case of the pre-test, the reliability score of 0.586 for calculative commitment was below the generally accepted threshold of 0.7, which is deemed a limitation of the study.

Due to the relabelling of the initial trust factor, the following hypotheses were additionally stated.

H_{6a} There is a positive relationship between positive disposition and affective commitment

H_{6b} There is a positive relationship between positive disposition and calculative commitment

H_{6c} There is a positive relationship between positive disposition and normative commitment

A series of regression analyses were conducted to determine the possible relationships between the three types of commitment (the dependent variables) and the newly formed dimensions (the independent variables). The results of the three regression analyses are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Results of regression analyses: Phase 1(MHP)

Regression analysis 1: Affective commitment					
Independent variable	Beta coefficients	t-values	Significance level	Collinearity statistics	
				Tolerance	VIF
Positive disposition	.259	3.260	.001	.422	2.368
Shared values	.356	5.468	.000	.631	1.585
Communication	-.021	-.347	.729	.724	1.382
Satisfaction	.290	4.171	.000	.552	1.811
R ² : 0.565					
Regression analysis 2: Calculative commitment					
Positive disposition	-.042	-.374	.709	.422	2.368
Shared values	.261	2.849	.005	.631	1.585
Communication	.175	2.038	.043	.724	1.382
Satisfaction	.044	.452	.652	.552	1.811
R ² : 0.134					
Regression analysis 3: Normative commitment					
Independent variable	Beta coefficients	t-values	Significance level	Tolerance	VIF
Positive disposition	.118	1.200	.232	.422	2.368
Shared values	.429	5.315	.000	.631	1.585
Communication	.006	.078	.938	.724	1.382

Satisfaction	.105	1.216	.226	.552	1.811
R ² : 0.313					

Source: Based on empirical results

In the first regression analysis, satisfaction, communication, shared values and positive disposition were hypothesised relative to affective commitment. As shown in Table 1, satisfaction, communication and positive disposition were all found to be positively and significantly related to affective commitment. Support was therefore found for hypotheses H_{2a}, H_{4a} and H_{6a} whereas H_{3a} had to be rejected. An inspection of the tolerance and VIF levels revealed that multicollinearity did not pose a concern in this regression analysis. Also, based on the R² value of 0.565, it was established that about 56% of the variance in affective commitment was declared by the independent variables.

The second regression analysis only found support for two hypotheses, namely the relationship between communication and calculative commitment (hypothesis H_{3b}), and between shared values and calculative commitment (hypothesis H_{4b}). Both these hypotheses were accepted on the 0.05 significance level. Once again, multicollinearity did not pose a concern, and the R² value was 13.4%.

The final regression analysis focused on normative commitment as dependent variable, with satisfaction, communication, shared values and positive disposition as independent variables. In this regression analysis, support was found for only shared values as an antecedent of normative commitment. Therefore, support was found for H_{4c}. Based on tolerance and VIF levels, multicollinearity was not found to be a problem, while 31.3% of the variance in normative commitment was declared by the independent variables.

Results of phase 2 (MNSP)

The first phase of the study focused on respondents' commitment towards their MHP, whereas the second phase centred on commitment towards their MNSP. As in the case of phase 1, a CFA was performed to assess construct validity. Once again, the pattern matrix did not provide the structure that was expected. Firstly, a number of items had to be removed since they did not load onto any factor. Similar to that of phase 1, the analysis saw the trust dimension disintegrate, suggesting that trust may not be a significant element for customers when they consider forming relationships with their MNSP. In addition, the trust items were incorporated into a number of the remaining factors. Subsequently, a four-factor structure emerged.

Factor 1 emerged as a combination of the satisfaction and trust items. An inspection of the trust items revealed that all of them pertained to elements that could be viewed as prerequisites of satisfaction. For this reason, the satisfaction label was retained.

Factor 2 consisted of all the communication items, suggesting that this factor was sufficient in measuring communication. In terms of factor 3, the shared values items loaded together. Consequently, the communication and shared values labels were retained.

Factor 4 comprised two reputation items and one trust item. The trust item, in turn, dealt with integrity, which is often seen as part of a service provider's reputation. It was thus decided to retain the reputation label.

The reliability of the data was once again assessed by means of calculating Cronbach alphas for the newly established dimensions. The reliability values ranged between 0.733 and 0.918, illustrating sufficient levels of internal consistency.

Regression analyses were performed to assess the relationships between the four factors (dimensions) that emerged from the CFA and the three types of commitment. The results of these analyses appear in Table 2.

Table 2: Results of the regression analyses: Phase 2 (MNSP)

Regression analysis 1: Affective commitment					
Independent variable	Beta coefficients	t-values	Significance level	Collinearity statistics	
				Tolerance	VIF
Satisfaction	.460	6.204	.000	.505	1.980
Communication	.043	.657	.512	.637	1.570
Shared values	.409	6.243	.000	.648	1.544
Reputation	.000	-.002	.998	.625	1.600
R ² : 0.614					
Regression analysis 2: Calculative commitment					
Satisfaction	-.042	-.431	.667	.505	1.980
Communication	.304	3.509	.001	.637	1.570
Shared values	.402	4.677	.000	.648	1.544
Reputation	-.043	-.491	.624	.625	1.600
R ² : 0.334					
Regression analysis 3: Normative commitment					
Independent variable	Beta coefficients	t-values	Significance level	Tolerance	VIF
Satisfaction	.088	.994	.322	.505	1.980
Communication	.093	1.180	.240	.637	1.570
Shared values	.580	7.386	.000	.648	1.544
Reputation	-.045	-.558	.578	.625	1.600
R ² : 0.445					

Source: Based on empirical results

In the first regression analysis (with affective commitment as the dependent variable), two of the hypothesised relationships were confirmed: Firstly, the relationship between satisfaction and affective commitment and, secondly, between shared values and affective commitment. These findings are based on the beta-coefficients, t-values and significance levels presented in Table 2. Support was thus found for hypotheses H_{2a} and H_{4a}. An inspection of the tolerance and VIF levels revealed that multicollinearity was not a concern in these analyses. In addition,

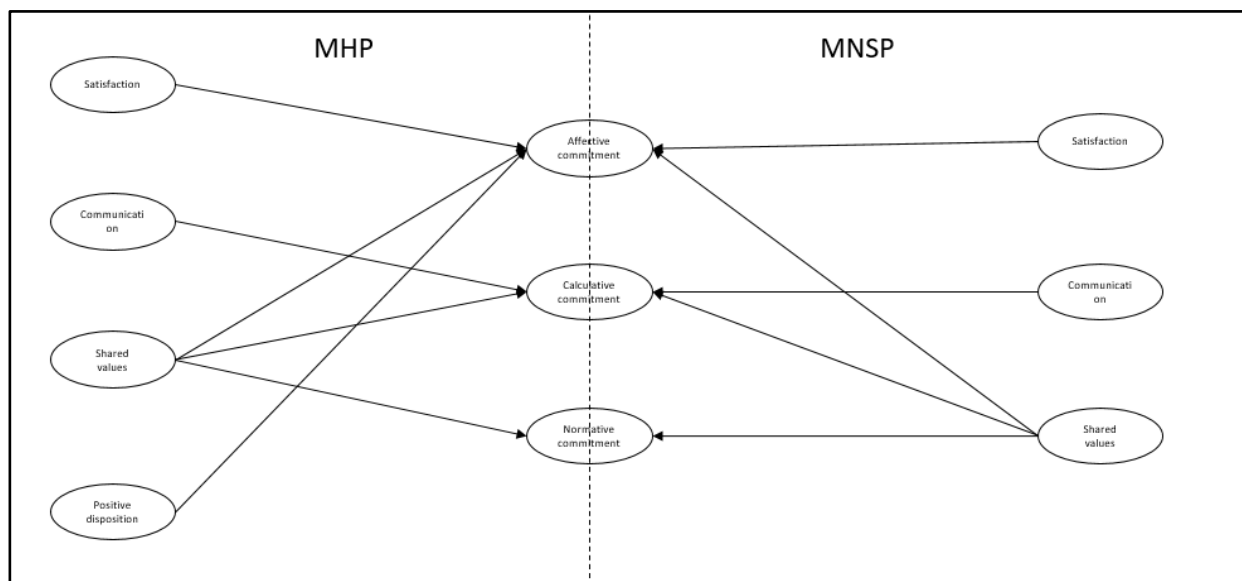
the R^2 value of 0.614 implies that slightly more than 61% of the variance in affective commitment was explained by the independent variables.

In the second regression analysis, calculative commitment was set as dependent variable, whereas satisfaction, communication, shared values and reputation were the independent variables. In this analysis, two hypothesised relationships were confirmed, namely H_{3b} (the relationship between communication and calculative commitment), and H_{4b} (the relationship between shared values and calculative commitment). The tolerance and VIF levels proved that multicollinearity was not a concern, and 33.4% of the variance in calculative commitment was explained by the independent variables.

In the final regression analysis, normative commitment was used as the dependent variable, with the same set of independent variables. In this analysis, only shared values was found to be positively related to normative commitment, therefore supporting H_{4c} . Once again, multicollinearity did not pose a problem. The R^2 value of 0.445 implies that 44.5% of the variance in normative commitment was explained by the independent variables.

The empirical results are summarised in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Summary of the confirmed hypothesised relationships



Discussion

A number of interesting relationships emerged from this study that can be seen in Figure 1. Not only were similarities found between the way in which commitment was managed from an MHP and an MNSP perspective, but there were also striking similarities between the ways in which the three different types of commitment were managed by the two service providers.

It was expected that differences would be detected between the MHP and the MNSP samples. However, the results of the CFAs confirmed that satisfaction, communication and shared values were significant antecedents of commitment in both samples. Considering these antecedents, the only difference is that positive disposition was found to be significant in the case of the MHP sample, but not significant in the case of the MNSP sample.

These similarities imply that respondents view their mobile handset brands in the same way as they deem their service providers who offer the mobile network connection to the handset. The reason for this interesting finding might lie in the concept of behavioural heuristics, which means that, in order to simplify the buying process, customers tend to 'group' their decisions together. Thanks to this 'regrouping', customers are faced with fewer alternatives, which simplify the buying process. However, it must be mentioned that this notion is of a speculative nature only.

In both the MHP and the MNSP samples, the study revealed that affective commitment should be managed by focusing on both satisfaction and shared values. In addition, calculative commitment should be managed in both markets by focusing on communication and shared values, whereas normative commitment should be managed by means of shared values. These similarities reinforce the earlier finding that there are remarkable parallels between the two samples. The remainder of this discussion therefore centres on satisfaction, communication and shared values, which were found to be the three central variables in managing commitment from both the MHP and the MNSP perspectives.

Results of the study relative to the literature

This study confirmed the expected positive relationship between satisfaction and affective commitment, which concurs with the marketing literature (Alsiewi & Agil; 2014; Matzler & Renzl, 2007; Yew, 2007). The same can be said about the outcome that satisfaction has a significant impact on calculative commitment, which endorses the findings of Gangai and Agrawal (2015). In addition, the marketing literature provides ample support for the positive effect of shared values on commitment (Howell, Brown & Cooper, 2012; Warner & Rowley, 2011; Deen & Amuthalakshmi, 2006). More specifically, this effect was confirmed on affective commitment (Howell *et al.*, 2012), calculative commitment (Yen *et al.*, 2014) and normative commitment (Manion, 2005) as well. The result that communication plays a significant role in managing calculative commitment is consistent with the findings of both Trajkova, Andonov and Mihajloski (2014) and Johnson (2007).

As indicated in Figure 1, support was found for the effect of positive disposition on affective commitment, but only in the MHP sample. Since positive disposition as a dimension emerged from the CFA, it is challenging to relate this finding to the marketing theory. However, research

by Klein, Becker and Meyer (2009) indicated that employees who are enthusiastic and who reflect an optimistic mood towards an organisation are more likely to be committed towards that organisation. In addition, Lau (2011) confirmed that engagement characterised by a positive state of mind and attitude can lead to the formation of affective commitment.

Recommendations

In acknowledging that satisfaction is dependent on fulfilling customer expectations, MHPs and MNSPs should first acquaint themselves with customer expectations before pursuing ways to fulfil these expectations. Given that customer satisfaction is no longer merely about being friendly and efficient in solving customer enquiries, service providers should go beyond the latter and consider involving customers in, for example, loyalty programmes. Such programmes will enable service providers to establish an emotional bond with customers, and will further foster affective commitment. The key is to ensure that customers feel appreciated throughout the relationship.

The purpose of enhancing customer satisfaction is to ensure that customers positively evaluate the offerings they receive from their MHP and MNSP. A further purpose is to give impetus to customers to remain in the relationship; to spur the levels of commitment to not only one service provider, but to encourage dual commitment.

The purpose of providing customers with timely and effective communication is to give them the immediate attention they deserve and expect when they make enquiries or experience problems with their MHP or MNSP. Effective communication by these service providers should comprise the provision of transparent information about their service offerings, policies and procedures. This approach could typically include information on mobile phone specifications, access to customer mobile phone reviews, the warranty policies of the mobile phones and featured stories, news and latest updates on topics such as new legislation that may have an impact on the service delivery and offerings of the MHP or MNSP. In addition, the communication on the two service providers' social media platforms and websites should be clear and concise and the response time to customers should be timely and prompt. In communicating with customers, MHPs and MNSPs should use opportunities to elicit customer feedback and respond to customer suggestions. This proactive approach will enable these service providers to develop mutually beneficial solutions.

Establishing shared values can become an authentic way in which the MHPs and MNSPs can connect with their customers. To develop shared values, these two telecommunications service providers should formulate value statements that capture their essence. Furthermore, MHPs and MNSPs should regard shared values as a set of principles that transcend the understanding of shared beliefs to consider the relationship between them and their

customers. By aligning the needs and desires of customers, MHPs and MNSPs can encourage their customers to invest in the shared values embodied by these service providers.

The values that these service providers hold should support their vision and shape the organisational culture. Ideally, the organisational values should be designed to relate to customers. It is important to acknowledge that organisational values can have different meanings to different groups of customers. This understanding may require that MHPs and MNSPs acknowledge the different customer segments they serve and that the values they hold may differ among other segments.

To encourage a positive disposition among customers, MHPs should address their customers with kindness and develop an attitude that is courteous. This approach will enable the MHPs to develop relationships with customers that are sincere. By ensuring that the engagement with customers are always characterised as being warm and welcoming, customers will more likely associate their MHP with positive experiences. To further elicit a positive attitude, MHPs should develop a conducive environment with a positive code of conduct that nurtures the customers' beliefs in the abilities of this service provider.

Contribution of the study

The major contribution of the study is the realisation that dual commitment may be of varying importance and relevance in different markets. From a South African mobile telecommunications perspective, the study revealed remarkable similarities in the way in which commitment is managed by both service providers in a dual relationship context. The study does not question the relevance of dual commitment in general, but argues that the way in which commitment is managed by the two different service providers, may be more similar than was previously envisaged.

The study therefore necessitates collaborating service providers to constantly pursue their similarities as a means to further improve their service offerings.

This finding bridges the gap in the literature on the topic of dual commitment from a customer perspective.

Limitations and future research

This study made use of a student sample only, which means that the views expressed by respondents represent only those of a selective target market. In addition, the study was industry-specific. Therefore, one should be cautious to generalise the results.

The reliability of the calculative commitment dimension is regarded as a limitation of the study. The Cronbach value below the generally accepted value of 0.70 indicates that the items did not reliably measure calculative commitment.

To address the limitations of the study and to explore additional research avenues, the study could be replicated in different industries where organisations are more dependent on one another to succeed. The purpose would be to determine whether the antecedents of dual commitment identified in the present study are specific to the telecommunications industry or whether it can be generalised to other contexts.

It would be interesting to further investigate the rationale behind the fact that, in this study, shared values was the only dimension regarded as an antecedent of dual commitment for all three types of commitment. Finally, the possible effect of cultural differences could be an interesting area of further research.

Conclusions

Most often empirical research confirms what has already been reported in the literature. This study is an exception to this state of affairs, since it failed to confirm some of the well-established antecedents of commitment. For example, although it is generally accepted that trust is a key antecedent of commitment, this study could not confirm a distinct role for trust when managing commitment. In fact, the study found striking similarities in the ways in which commitment is managed under dual commitment circumstances. The results of this study are therefore somewhat unexpected.

Although the study is not without its limitations, a broader picture unfolded. It should be kept in mind that the study was executed in a South African environment, and that the country is classified as a developing and emerging country. Therefore, marketing practitioners are advised to be cautious to apply relationship marketing strategies, which are commonly proposed in the literature, to emerging environments. In other words, emerging markets differ from developed markets, and it cannot be assumed that generic commitment building strategies would be effective in emerging contexts too. Finally, marketing academics should reconsider their current approaches to dual commitment, since this concept might be of lesser importance from a developing market perspective.

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