ANTECEDENTS OF CUSTOMER LOYALTY IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN LIFE INSURANCE INDUSTRY

BY

BASIL MKHIZE

434292

SUPERVISOR: DR SIPHIWE DLAMINI

A research report submitted to the Faculty of Commerce, Law, and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management in Strategic Marketing.

August 2024

ABSTRACT

Retaining existing customers is currently the most significant challenge in the competitive life insurance market (Lakshmi & Santhi, 2015). Yet, previous studies on the factors influencing customer loyalty and repeat purchases have primarily been conducted in industries other than life insurance. Customer loyalty has been widely explored in marketing; however, empirical research on this subject within the life insurance sector in South Africa is scarce (Minta, 2018). Furthermore, there is a notable increase in lapse rate as the source of customer dissatisfaction in the life insurance sector (Sivesan (2019). Thus, the study explored the antecedents of customer loyalty in South Africa's life insurance industry. It examined the impact of service quality, complaint handling, customer satisfaction, and trust on customer loyalty to South African life insurance. Additionally, it investigated the mediating factors affecting customer loyalty in the South African life insurance industry using the expectancy-confirmation theory. The methodology involved a self-administered questionnaire from 303 life insurance policy owners in South Africa. Structural equation modelling was used to test eight hypotheses, including two mediating effects. IBM SPSS 27, AMOS 27, and SmartPLS 3 software were used to analyse and interpret the dataset. The study found that six of the eight tested hypotheses were supported and significant, with service quality having the greatest impact on customer satisfaction. Furthermore, customer satisfaction was found to mediate the relationship between service quality and customer loyalty partially, and customer trust partially mediated the relationship between complaint handling and customer loyalty. This suggests that marketing managers in South African Life Insurance could use these results to enhance their service delivery strategies to maximise customer satisfaction and ultimately increase their retention goals. This study contributes to the literature on customer loyalty to life insurance companies by investigating its antecedents, including the mediating roles of customer satisfaction and trust, which have been under-researched. Furthermore, several future research directions which marketers and scholars could undertake are highlighted.

Keywords: service quality, complaint handling, customer satisfaction, customer trust, and customer loyalty

DECLARATION

I, **Basil Nhlanhla Mkhize**, declare that this research report is my work, except as indicated in the references and acknowledgements. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management Strategic Marketing at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at this university or any other university.

Basil Mkhize ____________________

Signed at Johannesburg South…………………..…………………………………………….

On the …………28…………………**day of** …………August …………….**2024**………

DEDICATION

Dedicating this dissertation, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my late mother, Thandeka Mirriam Simelane, and my late maternal grandmother Musa Settinah Simelane. The remarkable qualities of humility and an indomitable spirit exhibited by these two exceptional women have served as a constant source of inspiration for me. Their unwavering resilience and firm determination have had profound and lasting impacts on my life, shaping me into the person I am today. I am deeply grateful for the invaluable lessons and guidance they imparted to me, teaching me the importance of prayer and gratitude, which have enabled me to navigate life's challenges with grace and courage. It is with pride and confidence that I pay tribute to their tremendous contributions, which always hold a special place in my heart.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to my supervisor, Dr. Dlamini, for his support and guidance throughout this project. Thank you for believing in me and this project. Your unwavering confidence in me and steadfast commitment to helping me succeed have been immeasurable, and I am deeply grateful for your patience and encouragement. I am profoundly thankful for your invaluable contribution and extend my heartfelt gratitude to you.

I would also like to extend my sincere appreciation to my family and friends for their support throughout this journey. Your unwavering support has allowed me to become a better version of myself, and I am deeply grateful for the opportunity that you have offered me to thrive and succeed. I hold every one of you in the highest regard.

To my syndicate members, cohorts of the MMSM program, and the distinguished professors at the Wits Business School, I express my sincerest appreciation for the exceptional lessons and enduring friendships that have been cultivated during our mutual journey.

Finally, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who supported me in my journey. Your encouragement and check-ins have made this experience less lonely and more enjoyable.

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1.1 Introduction

Chapter One aims to provide the context and rationale for this study. It identifies the problem statement in the life insurance sector in South Africa and presents the research objectives and questions that this study aims to address. The study's significance, delimitations, assumptions, and definitions of the terms are discussed in detail. Finally, the structure of this study is outlined.

1.2 Purpose of the study

This study examines the factors that affect customer loyalty in South Africa's life insurance industry, specifically the relationship between service quality, complaint handling, and the role of customer satisfaction and trust in mediating this relationship.

1.3 Context of the study

1.3.1. The South African Insurance Industry

The insurance industry's origin in South Africa has been a topic of debate, with varying viewpoints. According to Vivian (1996), the banking industry's historical documentation was extensive, but no record existed of the insurance industry's emergence or identity. On the other hand, Verhoef (2013) claimed that the first insurance company in South Africa was established as early as 1830, and the industry subsequently experienced considerable growth and profitability. Molloy and Ronnie (2021) argued that formal life insurance in South Africa has its origins in 1845, and the sector is considered a mature market. According to the FSCA, the insurance industry experienced positive growth, with a 3% compound annual growth rate (CAGR) in gross written premiums between 2015 and 2020 (FSCA, 2022).

According to a study by Olayungbo and Akinlo (2016), South Africa's insurance penetration rate was higher than that of other African countries, such as Algeria, Egypt, Kenya, Mauritius, Nigeria, Tunisia, and Zimbabwe. Bah (2022) defined insurance penetration as the ratio of insurance premiums to gross domestic product (GDP). Additionally, MarketLine (2020) reported that South Africa's insurance penetration rate was estimated at 11.8% of the country's GDP in 2018. Olarewaju and Msomi (2021) highlight that a high degree of insurance penetration in a country suggests that its markets can effectively embrace insurance as a risk reduction policy and a source of investment. Fitch Solutions Group Limited (2023) indicated that although affordability remains a significant issue for many South Africans, the country has the highest insurance penetration rate on the continent and accounts for approximately 80% of the total premiums from Africa.

Furthermore, according to Molloy and Ronnie (2021), South Africa has the world's third-highest life insurance penetration rate and was ranked sixteenth globally in terms of annual earnings from premiums in 2016. Asongu and Odhiambo (2019) found that life insurance positively affected economic growth in the country, while the effect of non-life insurance was insignificant. The Fitch Solutions Group Limited (2023) report indicates that South Africa is home to the largest and most developed insurance market in sub-Saharan Africa. The insurance penetration rates of sub-Saharan Africa for 2017 are illustrated in Figure 1, and it is evident that South Africa and Lesotho have higher insurance penetration rates than other countries (Malambo, 2022).

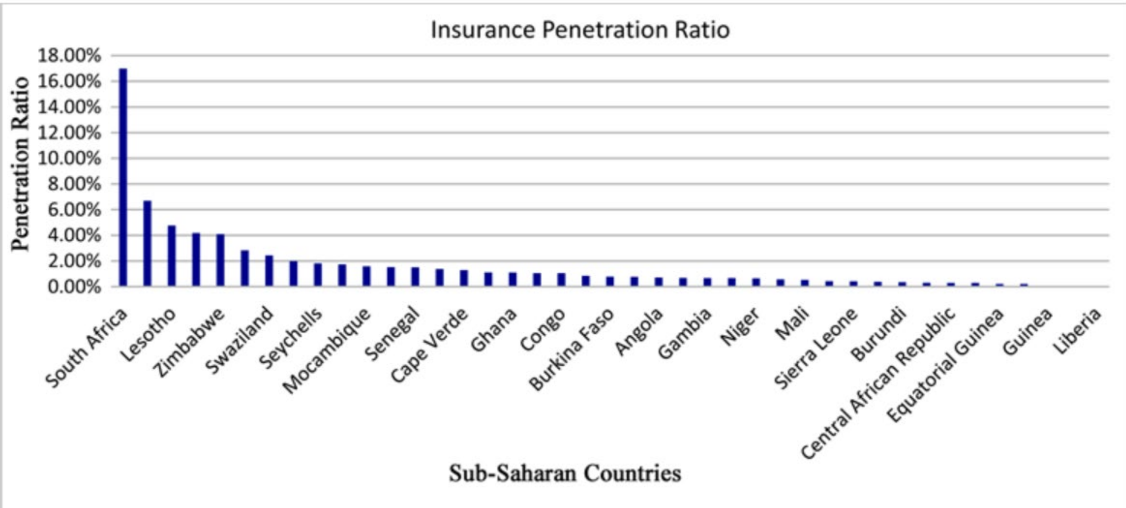

Figure 1. The insurance penetration ratio of Sub-Saharan Africa market

Source: Malambo (2022)

According to Saini and Mokolobate (2011), insurance is a financial risk-management service utilised by individuals or businesses to mitigate potential monetary losses. As noted by Panigrahi et al. (2018), life insurance products protect individuals against personal and unforeseen death. Alhassa and Biekpe (2016) emphasized that demographic factors played a more significant role in explaining life insurance consumption than financial factors. Abdul-Fatawu et al. (2019) defined insurance as a legal agreement in which the insurer, one party, agrees to pay the insured or their beneficiaries a lump sum of money in return for periodic payments known as premiums. According to Rey-Ares, Fernández-López and Castro-González (2023), life insurance plays a crucial role in safeguarding households from financial hardship resulting from personal crises, particularly amid economic turbulence such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Jiang, Liu, X., Liu, N and Xiang (2019) indicated that insurance products are different from other financial products as they are designed and delivered differently. In South Africa, customers purchase insurance products using intermediaries, also known as brokers or financial advisors (Ramchander, 2016). Intermediaries act as a link between insurance providers and customers, functioning as representatives of insurance providers and earning compensation through a commission-based structure typically charged back to the plan (Bai et al., 2022). It is worth mentioning that this study focused on examining the relationship between individual customers and life insurance providers rather than the intermediaries who were thought to represent life insurers as financial advisors or brokers.

The South African life insurance industry is controlled by the Financial Sector Conduct Authority (FSCA), previously known as the FSB, until April 2018 (FSCA, 2021). The strategic objectives of the FSCA for the period 2021-2025 are to achieve fair outcomes for financial customers; promote confidence and integrity in the financial sector; foster the development of innovative, inclusive, and sustainable financial sectors; empower households and small businesses to be financially resilient; and accelerate the transformation of the FSCA into a socially responsible, efficient, and responsive conduct regulator (FSCA, 2023). Financial Advisors or brokers act as intermediaries and provide financial advice to customers, as stipulated by FAIS Act 37 of 2002, which further regulates and supervises the financial services industry to ensure that business is conducted as per the statute

(FSCA, 2021). Ombudsman for long-term insurance is tasked with facilitating disagreements between subscribing members of the long-term insurance industry and policyholders concerning insurance contracts (Ombudsman, 2022)

A report from KPMG highlighted that the top six life insurance providers in South Africa were Sanlam, Old Mutual, Discovery, Momentum Metropolitan, Liberty, and Hollard Life (KPMG, 2023). Sanlam demonstrated exceptional growth of 28% in new business, surpassing the industry average of 19%. While the Ombudsman reported having around fifty-three subscribing members (Ombudsman, 2022), the Prudential Authority listed approximately seventy-five registered long-term insurance providers (South African Reserve Bank, 2023), illustrating the existence of numerous players in the life insurance industry. As of 31 December 2022, the largest insurers commanded a significant 72% of the industry's total assets, as per the South African Reserve Bank (2023). Deloitte's (2022) findings revealed that certain insurance groups experienced robust growth in new business volumes and stable or increasing value of new business (VNB) margins, indicating their ability to generate value in the competitive financial service landscape. According to the KPMG report, VBN and its importance as a key risk indicator (KRI) for the industry exhibited mixed results, suggesting that there is increased pressure in higher LSM segments (KPMG, 2023).

1.3.2. The importance of the insurance industry

The insurance industry is critical to a country's social and economic growth by providing long-term funds in financial markets (Alhassa & Bikepe, 2016). Din, Abu-Bakar and Regupathi (2017) indicated that the life insurance sector positively impacts the economic growth of an emerging country such as South Africa. Makeleni and Sheefeni (2022) stated that within the context of the functional approach proposed by Merton (1995), the insurance sector influences the country's economic growth through capital accumulation, efficient risk management, and as an institutional investor. Dawd and Benlagha (2023) asserted that insurance, like other financial institutions such as banks and stock markets, are key to any country’s economic growth. Malambo (2023) also indicated that insurance contributes to the national economies of many countries by providing employment opportunities, tax payments, investments, savings, and risk stabilisation. Life insurance, which is the focus of this study, is considered by Bah (2022) to be a long-term relationship between consumers and companies. Thus, a more stable legal and political system in a country tends to lead to contracting parties' willingness to initiate business relationships (Bah, 2022).

MarketLine (2020) revealed that the life insurance industry experienced a growth rate of 5% in 2018, with a compound growth rate of 3.3% from 2014 to 2018. This resulted in a market value reaching 38.4 billion US dollars. It was projected that the market value would reach 54.8 billion US dollars by 2023 (MarketLine, 2020). However, Fitch Solutions Group Limited (2023) stated that in 2020, gross life premiums fell to 1.8%, and coverage also lapsed for many consumers during the pandemic. MarketLine (2021) indicates that gross life premium measures the life insurance industry's market value. The Fitch Solutions Group Limited (2023) indicated that South Africa's real GDP contracted by an estimated 8.0% in 2020, owing to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated public and trade restrictions, resulting in a 5.0% contraction in the life market. A report from KPMG revealed that the life insurance industry demonstrated resilience in 2022 following a two-year disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and a volatile global market (KPMG, 2023). The South African Reserve Bank (2023) reported that the net premium income for primary life insurers was over 601 million rand for the year ending 31 December 2022. According to Fitch Solutions Group Limited (2023), the life insurance market in South Africa generated up to 28 billion US dollars in premiums despite a downturn in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting recession. The South African Reserve Bank (2023) indicated that the performance of the life insurance sector improved significantly owing to relief from the number of COVID-19-related claims.

The South African insurance industry comprises two primary sectors: long-term, life, and short-term or non-life insurance (MarketLine, 2020). According to Malambo (2023), life insurance is concerned with insuring individuals, with a focus on long-term coverage, such as whole-life or term insurance, while short-term insurance is focused on protecting property, such as vehicles and buildings. Each sector is represented by a different association, including the South African Insurance Association (SAIA) and the Association for Savings and Investment SA (ASISA) (MarketLine, 2020). SAIA represents the non-life insurance sector, which focuses on safeguarding material and financial assets, such as property and vehicles, with a total of fifty-eight member companies (SAIA, 2020). On the other hand, ASISA represents the life insurance sector, which provides coverage in the event of death or loss of income and can be further divided into term life, whole life, and endowment policies (Abdul-Fatawu, Logubayom & Abonongo, 2019). Life insurance products are generally marketed and sold to customers through intermediaries such as brokers or financial advisors (Ramchander, 2016). An intermediary is defined by FAIS Act 37 of 2002 as an individual authorised to offer financial advice to customers and act as a liaison between insurance companies and customers (FAIS Act 37, 2002). It is important to note that in this study, the life insurance sector was not specifically categorized into term, whole life, or endowment policies but rather as a representation of long-term insurance.

South Africa’s current economic climate is characterised by low consumer confidence and limited disposable income, as indicated by Trading Economics in 2023. According to the latest data from Trading Economics (2023), consumer confidence in South Africa dropped to negative seventeen points in the final quarter of 2023, a decline from minus 16 in the previous three-month period. This figure represents the lowest reading for the fourth quarter in 23 years and is thought to be due to persistent concerns about the country's economic situation. The potential adverse consequences of high levels of load shedding from Eskom, the electricity supplier, and a tightening fiscal policy on economic growth are believed to exacerbate this situation, leading to an increase in lapse ratios in the life insurance sector (Trading Economics in 2023).

According to Alhassa and Biekpe (2016), life insurance serves the purpose of providing income replacement to beneficiaries in the event of the policyholder's death and also functions as a savings instrument for customers. Yuvaraj and Rajendiran (2020) state that life insurance primarily aims to address unforeseen debt or accidents and other hazards that customers may encounter in their daily lives. Ismail, Tin and Chan (2021) emphasise that life insurance is a crucial source of substitute income for a family in the event of a breadwinner's untimely demise. Therefore, life insurance policies offer a range of benefits, including savings for future education and retirement, tax advantages, and protection against health care costs (Ismail et al., 2021).

1.4 Problem statement

Retaining existing customers is currently the greatest challenge facing life insurance providers in the competitive market (Lakshmi & Santhi, 2015). Park and Ahn (2022) indicated that customer defection was a universal phenomenon even before the COVID-19 pandemic, and responding to unsatisfied customers, especially in the life insurance markets, became critical in managing customer churn. According to Yu, Cheng and Lin (2019), the lapse rate is the rate experienced when a valid life insurance policy is involuntarily terminated or has lost the surrender value. According to Deloitte (2022), ASISA reported that 8.4 million risk policies lapsed in 2022 compared to 7.4 million in 2021, which was evidence of South African consumers' "unprecedented hardship". Fitch Solutions Group Limited (2023) stated that in 2020, gross life premiums fell to 1.8%, and coverage also lapsed for many consumers during the pandemic. Sivesan (2019) attributed the lapse rate as the source of customer dissatisfaction with the life insurance sector. The Office of the Ombudsman for Long-term Insurance (OLTI) recorded 16,476 number of complaints in 2022. Most complaints were related to poor service and declined claims (Ombudsman, 2022), indicating that life insurance providers were presented with opportunities to reduce complaints by engaging with their customers in a way that would increase customer loyalty.

Research on customer retention in the life insurance sector in developed countries, including the USA and Germany, as well as a limited number of studies in developing countries such as South Africa, Zimbabwe, Vietnam, and India has been conducted (Biagini et al., 2021; Du Plessis & Roberts-Lombard, 2013; Rai & Medha, 2013; Nguyen et al., 2018; Yuvaraj & Rejendiran, 2020). According to Minta (2018), the topic of customer loyalty has been widely explored in the realm of marketing; however, empirical research on this subject within the life insurance sector in South Africa is scarce. While studies on the factors contributing to customer loyalty in other regions of the world are evident (Rai and Medha, 2013; Ramamoorthy, Gunasekaran, Roy, Rai, and Senthilkumar, 2018; Panigrahi, Azizan, and Waris, 2018; Barusman and Virgawenda, 2019), it appears that there are gaps in the understanding of the antecedents of customer loyalty in the South African life insurance industry. The current study aims to address these gaps and contribute to the literature within the context of the South African life insurance industry, which is considered an emerging market with the highest insurance penetration rate on the African continent.

Previous studies on the factors influencing customer loyalty and repeat purchases have primarily been conducted in industries other than life insurance. For example, studies have been conducted in retail banking (Taoana, Quaye and Abratt, 2021), loyalty programs (Mgiba and Madela, 2020), the cell phone industry (Roberts-Lombard, Makola, Nkosi and Mabhena, 2020), short-term insurance (Petzer and Van Tonder, 2019), and long-term insurance (Du Plessis and Roberts-Lombard, 2013). However, to the best of our knowledge, few studies have investigated the antecedents of customer loyalty and the roles customer satisfaction and trust play as mediators in customer loyalty in the South African life insurance industry.

1.4.1. Main problem

Retention of existing life insurance customers is the biggest challenge in present-day market competition (Lakshmi & Santhi, 2015). This study sought to examine the impact of service quality, complaint handling, customer satisfaction, and trust on customer loyalty in South African life insurance. This study intends to close the knowledge gap in the limited research in this area.

1.4.2. Sub-problems

From the main problem, the study identified two subproblems, which are stated as follows.

1. The first sub-problem sought to explore the relationship and influence of service quality, complaint handling, customer satisfaction and customer trust on customer loyalty within the South African life insurance industry.
2. The second sub-problem investigated the mediating roles of customer satisfaction and trust in the relationship between customer loyalty and the South African life insurance industry.

1.5 Research Objectives

1.5.1. Empirical objectives

The empirical objectives are as follows:

1. To examine the impact of service quality on customer satisfaction in the South African life insurance industry.
2. To explore the impact of service quality on customer loyalty in the South African life insurance industry
3. To probe the impact of service quality on customer trust in the South African life insurance industry
4. To research the impact of complaint handling on customer satisfaction in the South African life insurance industry
5. To investigate the impact of complaint handling on customer loyalty in the South African life insurance industry
6. To examine the impact of complaint handling on customer trust in the South African life insurance industry
7. To explore the mediating influence of customer satisfaction on customer loyalty in the South African life insurance industry
8. To determine the mediating effect of customer trust on customer loyalty in the South African life insurance industry

1.6 Research questions

This study sought to answer the following primary research question: What are the key antecedents of customer loyalty in the South African life insurance industry?

The primary research question was further broken down into the following secondary research questions:

1. To what degree does service quality affect customer satisfaction in the South African life insurance industry?
2. To what extent does service quality affect customer loyalty in the South African life insurance industry?
3. To what extent does service quality affect customer trust in the South African life insurance industry?
4. How does complaint handling affect customer satisfaction in South Africa's life insurance sector?
5. To what extent does complaint-handling impact customer loyalty in the South African life insurance industry?
6. To what degree does complaint handling affect customer trust in the South African life insurance industry?
7. How does customer satisfaction mediate the relationship between service quality and loyalty in the South African life insurance industry?
8. To what extent does customer trust mediate the relationship between complaint-handling and customer loyalty in the South African life insurance industry?

The literature on service quality, complaint handling, customer satisfaction, customer trust, and loyalty was reviewed to understand better and answer the above research questions.

1.7 Significance of the study

Although research on life insurance has primarily been conducted in other regions and industries such as banking, hospitality, and electronic commerce (e-commerce), there is a lack of research in the South African context regarding the mediating roles of customer satisfaction and trust in influencing customer loyalty towards a particular life insurer. The primary motivation behind this study was to examine lapse rates in the life insurance sector and gain a deeper understanding of the factors that contribute to customer retention with their chosen life insurer.

Biagini, Huber, Jaspersen, and Mazzon (2019) demonstrated that rare events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which had severe consequences, can significantly impact economies, resulting in the mass cancellation of life insurance policies. Rai and Medha (2013) found that evaluations and perceptions of service, customer satisfaction, and repeated service transactions, such as customer trust and customer commitment, influenced customer loyalty in the Indian life insurance sector. According to Du Plessis and Roberts-Lombard (2013), a substantial portion of customers strongly agreed that two-way communication is a critical aspect of customer relationship management (CRM) and its connection with long-term insurance organisations. Despite the growing interest in understanding the economic impact and role of life insurance, there is limited research on the mediating role of customer satisfaction, customer trust, and customer loyalty within the life insurance industry in South Africa.

This study adds to the limited literature on the empirical evidence of customer loyalty within the life insurance sector in South Africa. Moreover, it thoroughly investigates the distinct connection between customer satisfaction and customer trust, acting as mediators of customer loyalty in a single research effort. This study's managerial implications allow marketing managers to pinpoint areas of service improvement, thereby better serving their customers and formulating strategic recommendations that would benefit their organisations. Additionally, the study delineates the mediating role of customer satisfaction and customer trust, equipping managers to make well-informed decisions to retain customers and providing insight into the preeminent influence of each mediator on customer loyalty.

1.8 Delimitations of the study

The following limitations of this study were identified.

- This study focused only on life insurance policies, thus excluding non-life insurance such as health, car, and household insurance.
- This research was limited to employed individuals who were thought to possess sufficient disposable income to cover monthly premiums.
- This study used quantitative research, and a qualitative study would have provided better insights into customers' beliefs and emotions towards the life insurer of choice.

- The scope of this study was restricted to customer satisfaction and trust as mediators to determine which of these mediators exerted the most significant influence on customer loyalty.

1.9 Definition of key terms

The key terms that are important for this study are as follows:

1.9.1. Service quality

Alzaydi, Al-Hajla, Nguyen and Jayawardhena (2018) define service quality as a customer's comparison between expectations from a service offering and perceptions of what is actually delivered by the service provider.

1.9.2. Complaint handling

Istanbulluoglu (2017) defined complaint handling as a service provider strategy to resolve service failures and manage customer post-purchase dissatisfaction.

1.9.3. Customer satisfaction

Nguyen et al. (2018) define customer satisfaction as a customer's assessment of a product or service by comparing their perception of a product or service to their expectations.

1.9.4. Customer trust

Sitorus and Yustisia (2018) define customer trust as the hope that customers have that the service provider can credibly and reliably deliver what they have promised.

1.9.5. Customer loyalty

Customer loyalty is defined as a commitment of a customer to repeat purchase a preferred product or service consistently in the future (Lee, 2019).

1.10 Assumptions

The following assumptions were made in this study.

- Customers who purchase life insurance products exhibit distinctive buying patterns compared to those who purchase non-life insurance products.
- The survey respondents had life insurance or renewed a lapsed life insurance contract.
- Respondents answered truthfully and honestly and were willing to contribute to the academic discourse.
- The respondents were not biased in their responses and did not feel coerced into partaking in the study.
- 303 respondents comprising life insurance customers, was deemed representative of the broader population, thereby offering potential for generalisability.

1.11 Structure of the study

The structure of this research paper is presented in Table 1 with the aim of guaranteeing a coherent flow of information.

Table 1. Structure of the study

Chapter	Title	Description
One	Overview of the study	Introduction, the purpose of the study, the context of the study, problem statement, research objectives, research questions, the significance of the study, delimitations of the study, definitions of key terms, the structure of the study, and summary.

Two	Literature review	Introduction, industry background, theoretical grounding, empirical literature, conceptual framework, hypotheses development, and summary
Three	Research Methodology	Introduction, research onion model, research design, sampling design, data collection sources, research instrument, measurement items, data collection and processing, measurement model assessment, measurement model fit indices, structural model assessment, mediating test, limitations, ethical considerations, and summary
Four	Data analysis and presentation of results	Introduction, descriptive statistics, reliability assessment, validity assessment, confirmatory factor analysis, structural model, mediating analysis, and summary
Five	Discussion of results	Introduction, demographic results discussion, hypotheses discussion, and summary
Six	Conclusion, recommendations, limitations, and future research	Introduction, the conclusion of the study, recommendations, implications, limitations, future research, and summary

Source: Own compilation (2023)

1.12 Summary

Chapter One provided a synopsis of the study and the importance of exploring the life insurance sector in South Africa. It outlined the problem statement, research questions, and objectives, which served as guidelines for this study. The chapter underscores the significance of the research, illustrating its scholarly and practical implications for the fields of customer loyalty, strategic marketing planning, and decision-making. Additionally, the chapter delineated the scope of the study, defined the key terms, and made certain assumptions. The chapter concludes with a summary of the study's structure in tabular form, which details the contents of each chapter. Subsequently, the next chapter conducts a comprehensive review of the existing literature to gain a more profound comprehension of the research variables and the theoretical framework that supports the study, with the aim of answering the research questions posed in this study.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the theoretical underpinnings of the study, the expectancy confirmation theory (ECT). It reviews the empirical literature that examines five key research variables: service quality, complaint handling, customer satisfaction, customer trust, and customer loyalty. The chapter concludes with the development of the hypotheses and introduction of the conceptual model.

2.2 Theoretical Grounding

The expectancy confirmation theory grounded the study and assisted in developing a linkage between the study and the proposed research variables.

2.2.1 *Expectancy Confirmation Theory (ECT)*

In today's business environment, organizations are expected to possess a well-defined strategic vision that involves the creation and delivery of exceptional quality products and services to attract and retain customers (Osoko & Muda, 2021). This is supported by Rahi, Mansour, Alharafsheh, and Alghizzawi (2021), who note that Expectancy Confirmation Theory (ECT) has been applied in marketing research to investigate customer pre- and post-purchase behaviours, ranging from initial acceptance to continuous use of services. Osoko and Muda (2021) described ECT as a theory that assesses customer satisfaction based on the perceived quality of goods or services. According to Oliver (1980) and later explained by Tan (2019), ECT explains consumer satisfaction or dissatisfaction based on whether their expectations are fulfilled during post-purchase evaluation. Mahmoud, Hinson, and Anim (2018b) clarified that ECT, also known as the expectancy disconfirmation theory (Zhu, Kuo & Munkhbold, 2016), was developed based on cognitive dissonance theory, which was established by Leon Festinger in 1957. Ye et al. (2023) agree that ECT provides a valid theoretical perspective to explain how product or system can improve their service quality to maintain user loyalty.

The Expectancy Confirmation Theory (ECT) can be used to evaluate customer satisfaction by assessing the difference between a customer's anticipated experience and their actual experience with a product or service (Osoko & Muda, 2021). According to Mahmoud et al. (2018b), customers form expectations prior to purchasing or using a service; if these expectations are not met, they become dissatisfied. ECT defines satisfaction or dissatisfaction with a product or service as an intellectual process determined by perceived usefulness and confirmation, leading to continuance repurchase intention (Khanna, Bhagat and Sharma, 2022). If the expectations are met, the customer is satisfied. The theory has been applied in several marketing studies to predict customer preferences, repurchase intentions, and customer loyalty (Serrano, Shah, and Abramoff, 2018). The findings of these studies can provide valuable insights into the determinants of repurchase intentions and customer satisfaction (Omar, 2018). In addition, Zhu, Kuo, and Munkhbold (2016) found that e-customer satisfaction and e-customer trust, supported by the ECT and SERV-qual model, are critical foundations for e-customer loyalty, suggesting the same principles may apply to non-e-commerce settings.

2.2.2 *Application of expectancy confirmation theory to this study*

ECT is grounded in this study, as it focuses on post-acceptance and post-consumption expectation factors and proposes that satisfaction primarily determines repurchase intentions (Mohd-Any et al., 2019; Rahi & Ghani, 2019). ECT offers a framework for understanding customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction and the perception of life insurance customers with the life insurer based on whether expectations are met during post-purchase evaluation (Fachmi et al., 2020). Companies that strive for high service quality and effectively handle customer complaints can satisfy customers with service offerings, which increases their repurchase intentions. As highlighted by Fachmi et al. (2020), past research has shown that when customers are content with life insurance providers' services, they typically exhibit loyalty towards the company, ultimately bolstering a sustainable competitive advantage. Service quality plays an important role in enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty. Despite widespread research on ECT in various sectors and regions, few studies have explored this theory in the South African life insurance sector, where life insurance penetration is reportedly the highest on the continent (Olayungbo & Akinlo, 2016). Gaining insight into customers' pre- and post-usage expectations, attitudes, and perceptions in the life insurance sector and incorporating the gap model of service quality can assist marketing managers within life insurance service organisations in making strategic decisions that will retain customers and contribute to the company's profit margins and overall sustainability.

2.3 Service Quality

2.4.1. Defining service quality

Service quality has been studied extensively in business and marketing management. According to Alzaydi et al. (2018), service quality refers to the discrepancy between a customer's expectations of a service and their perception of the service provided by the service provider. This definition focuses on customers' perspectives on service quality. Other authors, such as Ramya, Kowsalya and Dharanipriya (2019), have noted that service quality is a difficult concept to define, measure, and evaluate because of its unique characteristics, such as intangibility, heterogeneity, and perishability. Consequently, various authors have provided different definitions of service quality from different perspectives.

According to Alzaydi et al. (2018) and Yaqub, Halim, and Shehzad (2019), service quality can be defined as the customer's general impression of the service provided by the service provider. Kotler and Armstrong (2016) defined service quality as the ability of a service firm to retain its customers. Customer retention is considered to be the best measure of service quality (Ramya et al., 2019). Nema and Jatav (2018) define service quality as a consumer's assessment of the excellence or superiority of a service. Afthanorhan, Awang, Rashid, Foziah and Ghazali (2019) defined service quality as the global evaluation or attitude towards the overall excellence of a service. Nguyen-Phuoc, Su, Tran, Le and Johnson (2020) expressed service quality as the subjective evaluation of customers regarding the overall perfection or superiority of a product or service. According to Agustin, Mahadewi, Irfandi, and Azteria (2022), service quality is defined as the act of fulfilling customer needs and desires while simultaneously balancing their expectations with the delivery of the service.

In summary, service quality is a complex concept that has been defined in various ways by various authors. It is often defined as the customer's perception of the service provided by the service provider and includes factors such as customer satisfaction, customer retention, and overall excellence of the service.

Nema and Jatav (2018) reported that Christian Gronroos proposed that the quality of a service, as experienced by customers, is made up of two components: technical quality, which relates to the features of the service itself, and functional quality, which is concerned with the way the service is provided. Similarly, Deb and Ahmed (2019) categorised service quality into objective and subjective dimensions. Objective service quality is determined by numerical values assessed against established standards based on expert opinions, whereas subjective service quality is gauged based on user perceptions (Deb & Ahmed, 2019). Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985) proposed the service quality gap model, which characterizes service quality as the discrepancy between customer expectations and performance perceptions (Nema & Jatav, 2018). According to these authors, both researchers and managers of service firms agree that service quality is a comparison of customer expectations with the level of service provided. Thus, it can be defined as a measure of how well the delivered service meets customer satisfaction. Consequently, this study defines service quality as the extent to which a life insurance provider's service delivery meets or exceeds customer expectations, as adapted from Alzaydi et al. (2018).

2.4.2. Service quality in life insurance

According to Owusu-Manu et al. (2020), insurance services possess characteristics that distinguish them from manufacturing services, such as customer contact, intangibility, and inseparability between production and consumption. Ramli et al. (2023) assert that service quality is the primary differentiator in the life insurance sector. Researchers such as Gera et al. (2017), Nema and Jatav (2018), and Paposa et al. (2019) contend that life insurance providers often provide credence products with limited cues to indicate quality, compelling customers to rely on extrinsic cues, like brand image, to evaluate the quality of intangible services, such as insurance. Superior insurance services are essential to customer loyalty, as highlighted by Owusu-Manu et al. (2020). Therefore, a service organization's competitive advantage depends on its ability to attract and retain loyal customers. Sivesan (2019) highlighted the significance of service quality within the insurance sector, as it impacts customer satisfaction levels and subsequently influences customer loyalty and retention rates. Nema and Jatav (2018) noted that in the life insurance sector, companies often have similar offerings, making service quality a critical factor in differentiation and competition management. Gera et al. (2017) further explained that high service quality in the life insurance sector enables companies to improve sales, market shares, cross-selling opportunities, customer relations, and corporate image, allowing them to stand out from competitors.

The research done by Masengu and Chitambwe (2017) and Nguyen et al. (2018) revealed a disparity between customer expectations and perceived service in Zimbabwe's and Vietnam's life insurance industries, respectively. These researchers discovered a significant relationship between service quality and corporate image, customer satisfaction, and competitive advantage among life insurance providers. Yuvaraj and Rejendiran (2020) examined the connection between service quality and customer satisfaction in India's life insurance sector and concluded that the best service offered to customers is crucial for achieving customer and employee satisfaction and retention. Additionally, Gera et al. (2017) highlighted the crucial role of service quality in decreasing employee turnover, while Paposa et al. (2019) underscored the significance of fulfilling customer expectations within the life insurance industry. If companies fail to do so, this may result in increased policy lapses due to dissatisfaction with poor service quality, leading customers to switch to alternative providers.

2.4.3. Measuring service quality

Service quality is a multidimensional construct that encompasses individuals' perceptions of their experiences with a service encounter (Korfiatis, Stamolampros, Kourouthanassis, & Sagiadinos, 2019). The difficulty in assessing service quality arises from its multidimensional nature as it cannot be evaluated in the same manner as physical goods. Unlike physical goods, in which quality control can be conducted to verify specifications and reject faulty items, service quality assessment is more complex (Ramya et al., 2019). Ramya et al. (2019) proposed two methods for measuring service quality: the gap model of service quality and performance measures. The service quality model, initially developed by Parasuraman et al. (1985) and subsequently refined in 1988 and 1991, has become widely accepted for evaluating service quality. Known as the SERVQUAL model, this approach allows customers to assess the quality of a service based on their expectations and perceptions, ultimately determining its excellence or superiority (Rejikumar, Sreedharan, & Saha, 2019; Owusu-Manu et al., 2020; Yun & Park, 2022). According to Pakurar, Haddad, Nagy, Popp and Olah (2019), service quality dimensions are used in service quality gaps, implying the differences between customer expectations and perceptions. Panigrahi et al. (2018) and Ramya et al. (2019) elaborated on the five dimensions of service quality that have been accepted by many practitioners and academicians and have been reported in online shopping, hotel services, and retail environment and adapted into the life insurance service sector. Panigrahi et al. (2018) and Ramya et al. (2019) defined five dimensions of service quality as follows:

- Tangibility refers to the physical presence of facilities, equipment, communication materials, and technology offered by a life insurance provider to its customers. This includes information on the quality of the service provided by the company.
- Reliability is the ability of a life insurance provider to perform the promised service dependably and accurately by providing the right service at the right time.
- Empathy refers to the practice of showing unique consideration to customers by the staff of a life insurance provider, demonstrating that each customer is special and valued by the service provider through personalised services.
- Responsiveness is a characteristic of the staff of a life insurance provider that pertains to their readiness and eagerness to offer prompt and effective service to customers. This includes being attentive to customer requests, questions, complaints, and problems and maintaining a positive attitude while addressing these concerns in a timely manner.
- Assurance is defined as an employee's knowledge, courtesy, and ability of the life insurance provider and its employees to inspire trust and confidence in their customers.

According to Mujinga (2019), the service quality gap model has two key objectives: to recognise discrepancies between customer expectations and the actual services provided throughout the service delivery process and to take corrective action to close these gaps and enhance customer satisfaction. To provide high-quality service, it is crucial to bridge the gap between what customers expect and what they receive, which is a central component of the service quality gap model (Parasuraman et al., 1985; Wilson, Zeithaml, Bitner & Gremler, 2012). As Bolton (2016) noted, businesses can benefit from identifying gaps that can help them create exceptional service experiences for their customers. Wilson et al. (2012), Ramya et al. (2019), Mujinga (2019), and Owusu-Manu et al. (2020) further described the five distinct gaps in service quality, with four of the five gaps (gaps 1, 2, 3, and 4) situated on the service provider's side and impacting how the service is delivered, and one gap (gap 5) located on the customer's side, as depicted in Figure 2.

- The knowledge gap, also referred to as gap 1, represents the disparity between the expectations of life insurance customers and the perceptions of life insurance providers' management. This gap arises from the absence of thorough market research and effective upward communications. To bridge this gap, it is essential to implement comprehensive research programs that can provide insights into customer needs and enhance communication systems (Ramya et al. 2019).
- Gap 2: Policy gap refers to the disparity between customer expectations and service quality standards perceived by management in the life insurance industry. This gap arises from management's mistranslation of service policies into rules and guidelines for employees and can be bridged by standardising the service delivery process and setting appropriate organizational objectives (Mujinga, 2019; Ramya et al., 2019).
- The delivery gap represents the disparity between the specified service quality and the service provided to customers. This gap arises because of employees' inadequate training, resulting in an underprepared workforce failing to deliver the promised service. Improving the support system for employees and enhancing human resource management in life insurance providers can help bridge this gap (Ramya et al., 2019).
- The communication gap, commonly known as gap 4, represents the disconnect between the delivery of services and external communication provided by life insurance providers to their customers. This gap is exacerbated by inaccurate or ineffective advertising that can lead to unrealistic customer expectations. To bridge this communication gap, it is essential to establish a robust and effective communication system (Ramya et al., 2019; Mujinga, 2019).
- The service quality gap, also known as the customer gap or gap 5, is a measure of the disparity between the anticipated level of service and the perceived quality of life insurance providers by their customers. This gap arises from disparities in customers' service expectations and perceptions and may be bridged by employing marketing and marketing research techniques to identify, quantify, and track customer expectations and perceptions (Mujinga, 2019; Ramya et al., 2019).

The Service Quality Gap Model proposed by Bitner, Zeithaml, and Gremler (2012) has been employed in various service industries, including healthcare, e-commerce, hotels, and financial services, to devise strategies for delivering quality services to customers. Although the model has been used extensively in various industries, its implementation in the South African life insurance sector has received insufficient attention, especially in relation to customer retention techniques and service quality deficiencies. By addressing these gaps and aligning them with customer expectations, South African life insurance providers can develop effective strategies that ensure consistent, accurate, and personalised service delivery to their clients.

The below diagram depicts the gap model of service quality as adapted from Bolton (2016)

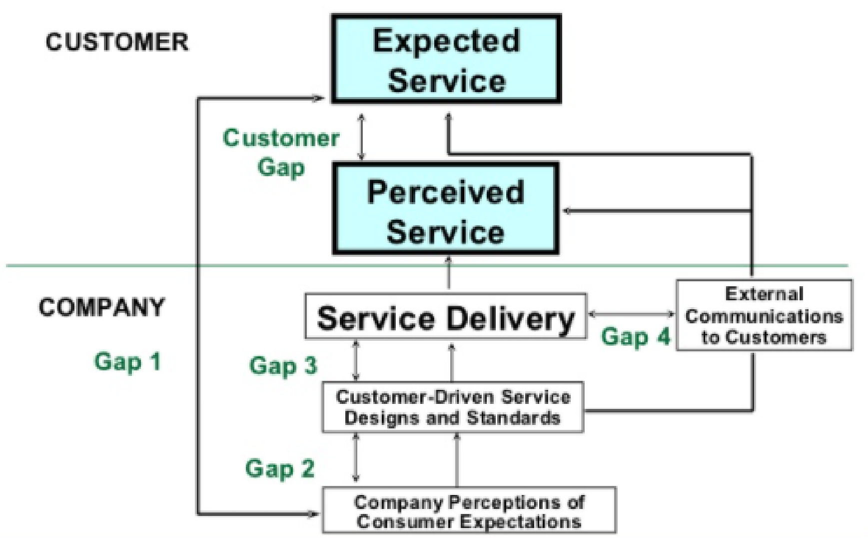

Figure 2. The Gaps Model of Service Quality

Source: Wilson, Zeithaml, Bitner and Gremler (2012)

Numerous studies have been conducted on the connection between service quality and customer loyalty in various industries and regions such as Vietnam, Zimbabwe, and India. However, the South African life insurance sector has not been studied extensively in this context. This research adds to the empirical literature by analysing the relationship between service quality and customer loyalty in the South African life insurance sector.

2.4 Complaint Handling

2.51. Defining complaint handling

Istanbulluoglu (2017) characterised complaint handling as a strategy employed by service providers to resolve service failures and manage post-purchase dissatisfaction among customers. Hsiao et al. (2016) emphasized that achieving zero defects or service failures was an unattainable objective, and despite the best efforts of service providers, defects were an inevitable outcome. Awa, Nwobu, and Igwe (2021) defined service failure as the inability of service performance or product delivery to meet the customer's ideal expectations. Awa et al. (2021) highlighted that unaddressed service failures pose a threat to service providers, leading to customer dissatisfaction, complaints, and grievances. Customers often file complaints when they experience service failure, as noted by Ramphal (2016). According to Istanbulluoglu (2017), effective complaint handling enhances repurchase behaviour and positive word-of-mouth from previously dissatisfied customers. Service providers must, therefore, be equipped to recover from service failures and alleviate consumer dissatisfaction (Jung & Seock, 2017). Salim et al. (2018) stated that dissatisfaction can occur when the level of performance of a product or service is perceived to be between the least acceptable standard and the most unfavourable outcome. Hsiao et al. (2016) posited that customers complain to express their dissatisfaction with a service. Service providers' handling of service failures or customer complaints is known as service recovery, which is influenced by customers' perceived justice and effort, as noted by Cambra-Fierro et al. (2016), Chalmers (2016), Barusman and Virgawenda (2019), and Zaid et al. (2021).

Complaint handling refers to the process by which service providers plan, execute, and implement control measures in response to customer complaints, according to Stauss and Seidel (2019). Cambra-Fierro, Melero-Polo, and Sese (2016) similarly defined complaint handling as a formal organizational procedure for registering and processing customer complaints that is consistent with complainants' needs. Luo, Han, Yu, and Wang (2016, June) described complaint handling as a practice aimed at creating satisfied customers through a customer response path, allowing businesses to improve their processes and practices based on insights obtained from customer complaints. Bakar, Damara, and Mansyur (2020) defined complaint handling as the ability of the service provider to deal with complaints using current and previous transaction processes.

Mahmoud, Hinson, and Adika (2018a) argued that complaint handling encompasses all activities by a service provider to avoid potential conflicts and solve manifested conflicts before they create problems. In the marketing discourse, service recovery, complaint management, conflict handling, service failure handling, and complaint handling are often used interchangeably. However, in this study, complaint handling was used as a construct throughout discussion and writing. Resolving customer complaints and changing the negative attitudes of dissatisfied customers to retain them is critical, especially in the service marketing industry (Ampong et al., 2020). Therefore, this study defines complaint handling as a strategy used by life insurance companies to resolve service failures and manage customers' post-purchase dissatisfaction, as adapted from Istanbulluoglu (2017).

2.5.2. Complaint handling in life insurance

According to Fajriah and Kurnianda (2019), life insurance providers' performance relies heavily on their ability to address claims and manage customer complaints effectively. As reported by Fitch Solutions Group Limited (2023), OLTI in South Africa recorded a substantial increase in the number of complaints received in 2021, mainly attributed to policy lapses resulting from policyholders' inability to pay premiums due to the country's adverse economic conditions. The proportion of complaints regarding service shortcomings by life insurance providers has increased from 29.36% in 2020 to 34.86% in 2021. This surge was primarily caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which presented significant challenges to some life insurers' capacity to fulfil their promises as per their commitments (Ombudsman Annual Report, 2021). Babuna et al. (2020) argued that liquidity issues contributed to the rise in customer complaints, as many life insurance providers struggled to fulfil customer claims due to the increase in claims triggered by the pandemic. Mao et al. (2022) found that the number of complaints filed by policyholders against insurance providers in Pakistan has significantly increased in recent years, mostly related to service deficiencies caused by the insurance service workforce. Ramli et al. (2023) highlighted that the reasons for the low penetration rates of life insurance in Malaysia include delays in remitting premiums from policy owners to insurers, misrepresentation of policy benefits and terms and conditions, and the failure of agents to explain the benefits of the products sold. Additionally, there have been instances of pressure-selling tactics being used to influence customers (Ramli et al., 2023)

The significance of service recovery in the life insurance sector cannot be emphasized enough, as it is vital for retaining and acquiring new customers, ultimately functioning as a competitive edge for the long-term viability and growth of the business (Piaralal, Bhatti, Piaralal and Juhari, 2016; Moa et al., 2022). Research conducted by Piaralal et al. (2016) in the Malaysian life insurance sector found that customer service orientation, training, empowerment, affective organizational commitment, role stressors, and emotional exhaustion collectively influenced the execution of service recovery programs by employees. Chalmers (2016) emphasised that the role of a complaint handler in the financial services sector, such as in the life insurance sector, involves managing expectations and investigating complaints to such an extent that both aspects are considered equally important. Piaralal et al. (2016) emphasised that staff members who managed customer problems treated customers politely, and handled customer complaints would be more successful if life insurance service providers considered that training components were essential for improving these skills. The study conducted by Barusman and Virgawenda (2019) found that service recovery played a positive and significant role in fostering customer loyalty within the Indonesian life insurance sector. Moa et al. (2022) declared that customer service employees of life insurance providers played a significant role in the service recovery process, sustaining their reputation by building the confidence of their customers. According to Rehman, Samad, and Rather (2020), while there has been significant research on service failure, complaint handling, and service recovery in various industries such as hotels, mobile phone buyers, airline passengers, and the retail industry, it is noteworthy that research examining complaint handling in the South African life insurance sector has been relatively scarce.

2.5.3. Measuring complaint handling

According to Stauss and Seidel (2019), a crucial factor for the successful completion of complaint-handling tasks is the satisfaction of the complainant. It is essential to understand which aspects of the service provider the customer is assessing and the importance of these aspects in the formation of complaint satisfaction or dissatisfaction when evaluating the complaint-handling process (Stauss and Seidel, 2019). Bergel and Brock (2018) argued that customer satisfaction with complaint resolution is a key factor in determining overall satisfaction and future loyalty. Additionally, service providers must identify what influences customers' evaluation of their complaint-handling experiences (Bergel & Brock, 2018). As proposed by Cai and Chi (2018), utilising the scale of complaining efforts can help to effectively handle customer complaints and reduce obstacles to direct customer complaints. According to Cai and Chi (2018), customer satisfaction with the complaint-handling process is determined by three aspects of customer complaint efforts: procedural effort, which refers to the physical exertion and resources required to express a complaint; cognitive effort, which relates to the type of mental energy used to process information; and affective effort, which is associated with the emotions that customers experience while investing limited physical effort and relying on cognitive processing. Stauss and Seidel (2019) asserted that customers evaluate complaint satisfaction or dissatisfaction based on three dimensions, namely the outcome achieved (appropriateness or fairness outcome), the interaction with the service provider (friendliness, empathy, helpfulness, initiative, and reliability), as well as the complaint handling process (accessibility, and promptness).

According to Stauss and Seidel (2019), researchers have proposed a theoretical approach to evaluating the complaint management process as an alternative to the satisfaction-oriented approach. Prior studies on service recovery, as highlighted by Jung and Seock (2017), have examined perceived justice as part of customers' evaluation process in the relationship between service recovery and satisfaction. Cambra-Fierro et al. (2016) argued that perceived justice plays a crucial role in determining customer satisfaction with complaint handling. According to Jung and Seock (2017), as well as Stauss and Seidel (2019), perceived justice refers to how customers evaluate the fairness of the service provider's activities and is categorized into three dimensions: distributive justice (outcome of the service provider's decision), procedural justice (interpersonal behaviour of employees), and interactional justice (complaint handling process). Petzer, De Meyer-Heydenrych and Svensson (2017) posited that successful complaint handling leads to a sense of perceived justice for the customer, ultimately resulting in satisfaction. According to Cambra-Fierro et al. (2016), a company's efforts to resolve customer problems can positively affect customer satisfaction. Similarly, Ogbeide, Boser, Harrinton, and Ottenbacher (2017) highlighted the importance of an effective complaint-management process in increasing customer satisfaction and repeat purchase intentions. Life insurance providers must identify the aspects of the complaint-handling process that customers evaluate to manage post-purchase dissatisfaction and resolve complaints efficiently and effectively.

2.5 Customer Satisfaction

2.6.1. Defining customer satisfaction

According to Konuk (2019), a strong correlation exists between high customer satisfaction levels and improved market performance, as well as the ability to maintain a sustainable competitive advantage. According to Ramamoorthy et al. (2018), customer satisfaction plays a pivotal role in fostering customer loyalty, which ultimately leads to increased profitability and performance. In a competitive environment, delivering high-quality services that satisfy customers is crucial for sustaining competitive advantage (Yadav & Rai, 2019). Satisfied customers are more inclined to continue using the service and recommend it to others through positive word-of-mouth, as evidenced by research conducted by Hu, Teichert, Liu, Li, and Gundyreva (2019) and Konuk (2019). The American Marketing Association (AMA), as well as other marketing literature and prominent marketing practitioners and academicians, have emphasised the centrality of customer satisfaction or value in the marketing process (Kotler & Armstrong, 2016). Triatmanto et al. (2016) argue that the overall quality of a product or service, perceived value, and customer expectations influence customer satisfaction. Prior to making a purchase, customers form expectations, and after the purchase, they compare their expectations with perceived performance. If their expectations are met, customers become satisfied; otherwise, they become dissatisfied (Lamb et al., 2015; Ruefenacht, 2018).

According to the literature review, customer satisfaction is a multifaceted construct that has been defined and conceptualised differently by various researchers. Lamb et al. (2015) posited that customer satisfaction arises from the disconfirmation paradigm, where a product or service meets the customer's expectations. Jung and Seock (2017) described customer satisfaction as an emotional, favourable, and subjective evaluation resulting from the customer's psychological state related to their purchase behaviour. Nguyen et al. (2018) characterised customer satisfaction as customers' evaluation of a product or service by comparing their perception of satisfaction with their anticipated level of satisfaction (Nguyen et al., 2018). Paposa et al. (2019) described customer satisfaction as an emotional response to what was anticipated by the customer and what they actually received. Afthanorhan et al. (2019) defined customer satisfaction as the level of a person's felt condition resulting from comparing a product or service's perceived performance. Kiumarsi et al. (2020) stated that customer satisfaction is a customer's psychological response to their previous experiences, as they compare the expected and perceived performance. According to the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI), customer satisfaction is the result of several factors, including customer expectations, perceived quality, perceived value, customer complaints, and customer loyalty (Paposa et al., 2019). In this study, customer satisfaction with life insurance providers is defined as a customer's assessment of service by comparing their perception of service with their expectations, as adapted from Nguyen et al. (2018).

2.6.2. Customer satisfaction in life insurance

According to Kannan (2018), customer satisfaction is a crucial aspect for insurance providers as it involves assessing the level of awareness and satisfaction among customers regarding their investments in risk-free avenues. Paposa et al. (2018) suggest that life insurance providers must develop innovative strategies to remain competitive in a market where customer satisfaction is a top priority. Gera et al. (2017) argued that the outcomes of life insurance purchases are often delayed and do not lead to immediate customer satisfaction. Similarly, Paposa et al. (2019) state that when a customer purchases a life insurance policy, the outcomes are not immediate and do not result in immediate customer satisfaction. Panigrahi et al. (2018) emphasized that due to the liberalization of the financial sector, the life insurance sector faces intense competition to increase customer satisfaction and trust.

Nguyen et al. (2018) assert that customer satisfaction in the life insurance sector can be attributed to several factors, including corporate image, service quality, and perceived value. According to Nguyen et al. (2018), improving service quality and corporate image can result in greater customer satisfaction, which may result in customer loyalty. Panigrahi et al. (2018) conducted a study to examine the connection between the quality of service, trust, and customer satisfaction, and their impact on purchase intentions for life insurance. Their findings showed that customer satisfaction, trust, and SERVQUAL factors together lead to purchase intentions. According to Ramamoorthy et al. (2018), enhancing customer perceptions of service providers' reliability in the life insurance industry can significantly affect their satisfaction. This finding was consistent with previous studies that showed service providers' reliability and responsiveness to be important predictors of customer satisfaction. According to Ramamoorthy et al. (2018), customer satisfaction has the potential to impact behavioural intentions in the Indian life insurance market, including word-of-mouth and repurchase intentions.

Although there has been significant research on customer satisfaction and purchase intentions in the life insurance industry in other countries, there has been a noticeable lack of such research in the South African life insurance sector. This study endeavours to bridge the gap in the existing literature by exploring the intervening role of customer satisfaction in shaping customer loyalty within the South African life insurance sector.

2.6.3. Measuring customer satisfaction

Measuring customer satisfaction is of paramount importance to businesses, as emphasised by Gajewska et al. (2019). This emphasis is rooted in the customer-orientation philosophy and the continuous improvement principles of modern enterprises. Paposa et al. (2019) identified two primary approaches to customer satisfaction: transaction-specific satisfaction and cumulative satisfaction. Transaction-specific satisfaction pertains to customer experience and use of the service in a single transaction, as highlighted by Paposa et al. (2019) and Shared (2019). On the other hand, cumulative satisfaction refers to the overall satisfaction with the service and experience gained over time, as highlighted by Paposa et al. (2019) and Shared (2019). Stauss and Seidel (2019) suggest that service organizations can employ either a satisfaction-maximizing strategy to enhance customer satisfaction or a dissatisfaction-minimizing strategy to minimize customer dissatisfaction.

Gajewska et al. (2020) suggested that customer satisfaction can be evaluated using various models such as the SEVRVQUAL model, Expectancy-Disconfirmation model, Performance Only Model (Servperf), Attribute importance model, Attribution model, Affective model, Multiple process model, and others. Ruefenacht (2018) posited that customer satisfaction is rooted in the post-purchase evaluation of a product or service and is assessed through the expectancy-disconfirmation paradigm. According to Oliver (1980) and Rejikumar et al. (2019), the expectancy-disconfirmation paradigm posits that satisfaction is the difference between expectations and perceived quality. When performance meets expectations, it is confirmed, and when it exceeds expectations, it leads to positive disconfirmation and satisfaction. Serrano et al. (2018) found that both expectation and disconfirmation jointly predict customer satisfaction. Afthanorhan et al. (2019) and Park and Ahn (2022) suggested using the customer satisfaction index to assess satisfaction at the service provider level from the provider's perspective to gauge its impact. Fornel et al. (1996) suggested using the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) to measure and improve the performance of firms, industries, and economic sectors (Afthanorhan et al., 2019).

2.6 Customer Trust

2.7.1. Defining customer trust

Trust is a crucial element in personal and professional relationships, as demonstrated by Agyei, Sun, Abrokwah, Penney, and Ofori-Boafo's (2020) research. It has been widely studied in various academic fields including sociology, social psychology, economics, and marketing. Building and maintaining long-term customer relationships requires trust, as indicated by Setiawan and Sayuti (2017). Mahmoud et al. (2018a) also emphasized the importance of trust in developing relationships with customers. Morgan and Hunt (1994) argued that trust arises when one party depends on the trustworthiness and integrity of the other party. From a relational perspective, trust can be understood as the belief that the customer is willing to trust their exchange partner with honesty and integrity, as noted by Minta (2018). Sitorus and Yustisia (2018) defined customer trust as the hope that customers have that the service provider can credibly and reliably fulfil their promises. According to Bakar et al. (2020), customer trust is the customer's anticipation of the service provider's capability to meet their demands in a timely manner. Meanwhile, Leninkumar (2017) suggested that customer trust encompasses the attitudes, emotions, and actions displayed by a customer when they have faith in a company's commitment to act in their best interests.

Yunus, Ibrahim, and Amir (2018) defined customer trust as a psychological state that can be formed based on the anticipation of the intentions or behaviours of others. The literature suggests that when trust is present, it can reduce uncertainty, establish credibility, and ensure the stability of exchanges, ultimately providing the trusting partner with the confidence and motivation to continue the relationship (Ndubisi & Nataraajan, 2018; Minta, 2018). Tabrani, Amin, and Nizam (2018) argued that it was a widely accepted belief that customer trust would lead to loyalty. Therefore, this study defines customer trust as the expectation that life insurance providers will fulfil their promises reliably and credibly.

2.7.2. Customer trust in life insurance

Life insurance is typically regarded as a highly complex and credence product, and as such, customers often struggle to comprehend the nature of the products they have purchased. Consequently, customers tend to rely heavily on the information and facts provided by salespersons (Talwar & Ali, 2017). In the context of marketing, trust is widely recognised as a vital component in fostering connections between sellers and buyers, ultimately leading to customer satisfaction and loyalty, as highlighted by Sitorus and Yustisia (2018). Talwar and Ali (2017) posited that customer trust in a salesperson emerges when the salesperson demonstrates honesty and acts in the best interests of the customer. Panigrahi et al. (2018) emphasized that customer trust is a vital prerequisite for the success of any industry, although insurance companies often face challenges in establishing customer trust through the provision of quality service. Customers typically seek long-term relationships with insurance providers in order to mitigate future risks and uncertainties (Panigrahi et al., 2018). Agyei et al. (2020) further argued that trust serves to minimize perceived risks, thereby reinforcing customers' commitment to their service providers. Panigrahi et al. (2018) argued that it is imperative to identify the factors that impact customers' trust in life insurers, given the increasing opportunities to grow and enhance business activities through the provision of quality service to customers. Fachmi et al. (2020) emphasised that the level of customer trust in life insurers plays a crucial role in determining their level of satisfaction and loyalty in the life insurance industry. However, when trust is absent, it can lead to a decrease in customer satisfaction and weaken customer loyalty.

Agyei (2020) devised a four-dimensional model of trust in the life insurance sector encompassing trust in the service provider, trust in the regulator, trust rooted in the economy, and trust grounded in information. Talwar and Ali (2017) identified two forms of customer trust in the life insurance industry that can influence customer loyalty: trust in the salesperson and trust in the life insurer. According to Fachmi et al. (2020), the level of customer trust can affect both customer satisfaction and loyalty within the life insurance industry.

As per the discourse provided, extensive empirical research has been conducted on customer trust in the life insurance sector. This study makes a meaningful contribution to the prevailing body of literature on South Africa's life insurance industry.

2.7.3. Measuring customer trust

According to Talwar and Ali (2017), customer trust is typically evaluated in two dimensions: frontline employees and management policies and practices. These dimensions may be independently perceived by customers during service exchanges, as stated by Talwar and Ali (2017). For instance, a customer may trust the service provider's management but have less trust in frontline employees, or vice versa. According to Bakar et al. (2020), three elements of customer trust were determined to be important in assessing service providers: operational competence, operational benevolence, and problem-solving orientation. The significance of complaint handling in shaping customer trust in service recovery was highlighted by Bakar et al. (2020). They stressed that the service provider's ability to resolve issues through both past and current transaction processes is a critical determinant of customer trust.

Pristiyono, Juliana, and Prayoga (2022) further stated that indicators of customer trust include management, employee contact, and salespeople. They also emphasised that customer trust is closely related to the best service, consistency, and keeping promises. Given the nature of life insurance products, it can be assumed that relevant indicators of customer trust may include employee contact, salespersons, service quality, credibility, reliability, the ability to fulfil promises, and other factors that customers perceive as important for building trust.

In summary, customer trust is a significant element of service delivery and can be affected by a range of factors, such as the expertise, goodwill, and issue-resolving approach of service providers, as well as how well they handle complaints and keep their promises. Understanding these factors and indicators can help service providers build and maintain customer trust, thereby leading to increased customer satisfaction and loyalty.

2.7 Customer Loyalty

2.8.1. Defining customer loyalty

Practitioners and academics have widely recognised the importance of customer loyalty, especially in the field of marketing (Nguyen-Phuoc et al., 2020). According to Das, Nayyar and Singh (2019), customer loyalty is a latent force that is difficult to identify, and marketers face challenges in determining the key factors that influence it. Utami (2015) contended that the concept of customer loyalty was primarily concerned with attitudes and behaviours. Behavioural loyalty is considered important for companies as it enhances profit margins, while loyalty helps companies overcome obstacles faced by customers (Utami, 2015). Boonlertvanich (2019), supported by Agyei et al. (2020), defined customer loyalty in two ways: behavioural and attitudinal loyalty. Boonlertvanich (2019) argued that behavioural loyalty refers to customers' inclination to continue using a service provider and recommend the service to others. Ruefenacht (2018) defined attitudinal loyalty as customers' commitment to remaining with a preferred company and may encompass beliefs of superiority over competing offers. According to Setiawan and Sayuti (2017), customer loyalty is a multifaceted concept that encompasses both attitudes and behaviours. It is defined as the intention to continue utilising a service from the same company, endorse the service or brand to others, and demonstrate commitment by refraining from switching to competitors. This study adopts a composite approach to customer loyalty, similar to that proposed by Lee (2019) and Suhartanto et al. (2021), which incorporates both behavioural and attitudinal loyalty.

According to Leninkumar's (2017) definition, customer loyalty is characterised by the frequent service patronage of a business and the recommendation of the company to other customers. Tabrani et al. (2018) similarly view customer loyalty as the customer's intention to make repeated purchases over a prolonged period, thereby fostering a continuous relationship with the company or brand. Utami (2015) posited that customer loyalty entails a commitment to consistently acquiring a preferred product or service in the future. Agyei et al. (2020) characterize customer loyalty as a customer's propensity or inclination to repeatedly purchase from the same seller or brand, which is largely influenced by the perception that the value obtained from this particular seller or brand exceeds that of other available options. In essence, this study characterizes customer loyalty as a strong and enduring dedication to consistently purchasing or utilising a preferred product or service, regardless of external influences or marketing strategies that may encourage choices, as highlighted by Lee (2019).

2.8.2. Customer loyalty in life insurance

According to Kaur and Soch (2018) and Das et al. (2019), customer loyalty plays a crucial role in determining the financial success of a business organization. Loyal customers tend to engage in repeat purchases, advocate for the brand, and pay a premium price, which ultimately contributes to the organisation's overall performance and share of the market. Despite the widespread study of customer loyalty in the marketing literature, empirical research on customer loyalty within the insurance industry has been relatively scarce (Minta, 2018). Fachmi et al. (2020) highlight that previous studies show that customer satisfaction with a life insurer leads to loyalty, allowing life insurers to achieve sustainability. Talwar and Ali (2017) emphasise the importance of life insurers in maintaining cordial relationships and long-lasting associations with customers, as it increases the likelihood of acquiring new businesses through cross-selling and positive recommendations.

According to Ainiyah, Nella and Sjahrifa (2020), customer loyalty is a vital aspect of business operations and practices, particularly in the context of life insurance. Nguyen et al. (2018) emphasized that recognizing factors that influence customer satisfaction was essential for life insurance providers to attract and retain customers. Research indicates that retaining current customers is more financially advantageous than obtaining new ones (Fattah, Dahleez, Darwazeh, & Al Alawi, 2021). Utami (2015) highlighted several advantages for service providers that stem from customer loyalty, such as decreased marketing expenses, lower transaction costs, decreased customer churn, enhanced cross-selling opportunities, and increased positive word of mouth. Gera et al. (2017) argued that customer retention led to increased opportunities for cross-selling, higher prices, positive word-of-mouth behaviour, and greater efficiency in serving customers due to the experience curve effect.

Customer retention is viewed as a critical factor for the economic and commercial success of life insurance companies, as in other industries (Gera et al., 2017; Fattah et al., 2021). Fattah et al. (2020) suggest that the selling cost of an insurance policy cannot be recouped unless the policy is renewed for at least three to four additional years. Similarly, Fachmi et al. (2020) highlighted a global trend of customer defection in the life insurance sector, with 15% of customers in Ethiopia failing to renew their policies between 2010 and 2011 and 26% of customers switching to other providers, as reported by the American Satisfaction Index in 2013. Park and Ahn (2022) also noted that customer defection was a widespread issue, even before the Covid-19 pandemic. According to Park and Ahn (2022), addressing unhappy customers and effectively managing complaints are crucial in preventing customer churn in the South Korean life insurance industry. Nguyen et al. (2018) highlighted the importance of enhancing service quality and corporate image as crucial factors in attaining customer satisfaction and loyalty in the Vietnamese life insurance sector. According to Marcos and Coelho's (2017) study, a substantial and noteworthy association was observed between the quality of services rendered and the level of customer loyalty in the Portuguese life insurance sector. Agyei et al. (2020) conducted a study on the Ghanaian life insurance sector and uncovered that customer engagement served as a vital component in fostering customer loyalty, while simultaneously mediating the relationship between trust dimensions and customer loyalty. In their 2022 research into the South Korean life insurance sector, According to Park and Ahn's research, the customer churn ratio fluctuated between 8.8% in 2019, 8.5% in 2020, and 8.7% in 2021. They attributed the rising trend in churn rates to economic and environmental changes such as rising interest rates and unfavourable market conditions, which have led to high unemployment rates. It would be interesting to examine how similar economic conditions in the South African macroeconomic environment impact the South African life insurance market.

In the aforementioned discussion, it has been pointed out that past research on customer loyalty in the life insurance industry mostly took place in other countries, with a scarcity of such studies in South Africa. This study seeks to address this deficiency by examining the connection between the elements that affect customer loyalty and those that promote customer retention in the South African life insurance sector, thereby adding to the empirical literature on this subject.

2.8.3. Measuring customer loyalty

According to Lee (2019) and Suhartanto et al. (2021), loyalty assessment typically employs three approaches: behavioural, attitudinal, and a combination of both. The behavioural approach evaluates loyalty based on the number of transactions or repeat purchases as well as the duration of the relationship. However, the attitudinal approach is believed to reflect a customer's strong intention to purchase the same brand in the future (Lee 2019; Suhartanto et al. 2021). These measures are useful for managers to improve exchange relationships, increase advocacy by enhancing service quality, and maintain customer satisfaction throughout the client's life journey. Ramamoorthy et al. (2018) further emphasised the importance of behavioural drivers in life insurance. Customers demonstrate behavioural loyalty through their likelihood of recommending services to friends and family, their intentions to keep or renew an existing policy with the life insurer, and purchase a new policy from the same life insurer. Therefore, marketing managers need to have a better understanding of behavioural drivers to keep customers loyal to life insurers and brands. The attitudinal method for assessing customer loyalty is a valuable tool for marketing managers as it allows them to gain a deeper understanding of customer attitudes and beliefs, which can be used to predict future commitment to a life insurer's services. By implementing strategies that prioritise high-quality services and effective customer complaint resolution, managers can encourage strong levels of customer loyalty and positive word-of-mouth. Attitudinal loyalty, which refers to a customer's preference for a life insurer and their commitment to continuing their business, can be better understood through the attitudinal approach, which involves examining customer beliefs and feelings.

Therefore, to gain a deeper understanding of the connections between these concepts, it is essential to explore their theoretical underpinnings and conceptual framework as well as the directional impacts they exert on one another. The subsequent section delves into the theoretical foundations of the relationships between the constructs and examines empirical evidence.

2.8 Conceptual framework and hypotheses development

2.9.1. Service quality, customer satisfaction, customer trust, and customer loyalty

Various marketing studies have employed the five dimensions of service quality–reliability, assurance, tangibility, empathy, and responsiveness; to assess the quality of services (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988). These dimensions align with disconfirmation theory (Alsini, 2017; Almohaimmeed, 2017; Mohmood, Rana & Kanwal, 2018). According to Sivesan

(2019), providing high-quality service is crucial for the survival of a business as it contributes to evaluating customer satisfaction and loyalty. Researchers have classified service quality as the primary driver of satisfaction and a key factor in customer loyalty (Borishade, Ogunnaike, Salau, Motilewa & Dirisu, 2021).

Service quality is widely recognised as a subjective phenomenon determined by customers (Pheng & Rui, 2016). Kumar and Almoula (2020) emphasized the importance of companies and marketing practitioners paying close attention to service marketing tools and the 7Ps to enhance the quality of their service offerings. Iddrisu et al. (2015) argued that delivering quality service involves consistently meeting customer expectations, which can be evaluated by determining whether the service delivery meets, exceeds, or falls short of customer expectations.

Prior research examined the impact of service and food quality on customer satisfaction. According to Almohaimmeed (2017), both factors have considerable influence on customer satisfaction levels. Makanyeza and Chikazhe (2017) demonstrate that service quality is positively correlated with customer satisfaction. Swanson, Su, and Chen (2016) highlighted the importance of service quality in determining customer satisfaction, a concept supported by prior studies across diverse tourism sectors, including cruises, restaurants, and golf courses. Kiumarsi et al. (2020) found that service innovation had a direct impact on service loyalty in Malaysian post offices, as shown in their study on the effect of service quality on customer satisfaction. A study by Latif et al. (2023) revealed that service quality has a positive impact on customer satisfaction in the Malaysian life insurance industry. Based on these findings, the proposed hypothesis is as follows:

H1: Service quality influences customer satisfaction.

A great deal of research indicates that evaluating service quality depends on a customer's perception of whether the service satisfies their expectations and the perceived level of performance they offer (Triatmanto et al., 2016). According to Karunaratna and Kumara (2018), within a service framework, quality is generally based on the perceived competence, responsiveness, and empathy of people with whom they interact. Therefore, it is essential for organisations to continuously provide these dimensions. Service and relationship quality have been found to be antecedents of various customer loyalty behaviours, such as repeat purchases, positive word-of-mouth, and propensity to pay more (Su et al., 2016). Makanyeza and Chikazhe (2017) established that service quality played a crucial role in determining customer loyalty within the Zimbabwean banking sector. Nguyen-Phuoc et al. (2020) emphasised the significance of service quality as a crucial determinant of customer loyalty towards a specific brand. Fattah et al. (2021) explored the connection between service quality, customer satisfaction, perceived value, and customer loyalty in the Malaysian health insurance industry and found a positive relationship between these variables. Additionally, it was discovered that customer-perceived value played a partial and indirect role in the relationship between service quality and customer loyalty, while customer satisfaction had a partially mediating and positive impact on this relationship in the health insurance sector. A study conducted by Rimawan et al. (2017) in the packaging industry in Indonesia discovered that service quality did not appear to have a significant impact on customer loyalty. Thus, the following hypothesis:

H2: Service quality influences customer loyalty.

According to the literature, intangibility and inseparability of services are essential elements of service quality that customers consider when assessing whether a service meets their expectations (Jeaheng, Al-Ansi & Han, 2020). Therefore, dissatisfied customers are less likely to support a service. Rimawan et al. (2017) stated that this support is grounded in the belief that the service provider will fulfil their expectations. However, low service quality does not build confidence in customers' minds (Hariguna & Berlilana, 2017). The importance of trust in the insurance industry cannot be overstated, as it is essential in fostering strong relationships between customers and life insurers (Hariguna & Berlilana, 2017). Service, system, and information quality positively impact customer trust (Hariguna & Berlilana, 2017). Trust is critical as a foundation for partnerships between buyers and sellers, as it helps build relationships (Sitorus & Yustisia, 2018). Osman et al. (2016) found that service quality had a positive and significant relationship with customer trust.

As reported by Cuong and Khoi (2019), service quality was found to be a key factor in establishing customer trust in convenience stores in Vietnam. This conclusion was supported by Setiawan, Wati, Wardana, and Ikhsan (2020), who reported that service quality had a substantial and favourable impact on customer trust in the airline industry in Indonesia. Consistent with these results, Osman et al. (2016) highlighted the importance of quality services in establishing trust by emphasising their fundamental nature. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H3: Service quality influences customer trust.

2.9.2. Complaint handling, customer satisfaction, and customer trust on customer loyalty

Several studies have suggested that employee skills enhance the perception of complaint acceptance (Ogbeide et al., 2017). For instance, employees should be able to listen carefully and attempt to interpret and understand the client's level of frustration when receiving a complaint from a client. Previous research has examined the antecedents of complaint-handling processes and their impacts on customer satisfaction (Cambra-Fierro et al., 2016). Ogbeide et al. (2017) found that prompt and polite handling of customer grievances improves customer relations and achieves complaint satisfaction. Iqbal, Hassan, Sharif, and Habibah (2017) investigated the extent of customer complaint handling by the service firm and discovered that customer satisfaction and loyalty were moderated by complaint handling. Cambra et al. (2016), in their study of customer engagement in complaint handling, found that perceived justice and perceived effort had a positive and significant relationship with customer satisfaction.

Additionally, promptness and customer satisfaction have a positive relationship in the hospitality industry (Ogbeide et al., 2017). Obasi, Chukwu, and Amaechi (2020), in their study on the banking industry, concluded that efficient and effective complaint handling significantly and positively impacted customer satisfaction. Petzer et al. (2017) found that interactional and distributive justice experienced in the service recovery efforts of a bank significantly and positively influenced service satisfaction, but it had no direct effect on behavioural intention towards the service provider. Salim et al. (2018) hypothesized that customer complaints have a positive effect on satisfaction. Ahmed, Vveinhardt, Warraich and Baloch (2020), in their study within the airline industry, found that complaint handling and an effective system of complaint resolution drive customer satisfaction. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H4: Complaint handling influences customer satisfaction.

Retaining current customers is beneficial for organisations as it reduces the expenses associated with acquiring new ones, which ultimately boosts profit margins (Nataraj & Rajendran, 2018). Srivastava and Rai (2018) highlighted that it is five times more expensive to acquire new customers than to retain existing ones. According to Leninkumar (2017), many marketing organisations rely on customer loyalty to gain a competitive edge. Srivastava and Rai (2018) asserted that organizations typically view customer loyalty as a crucial factor in achieving a competitive advantage, which ultimately contributes to their overall success and profitability. Iqbal et al. (2017) indicated that dissatisfied customers are no longer loyal to an organisation. Ahmed et al. (2020) argued that promptness in correcting a customer's complaint is necessary for successful service recovery and complaint handling. Salim et al. (2018) in the banking industry found that while complaint handling did not influence customer loyalty, it did have a positive impact on customer satisfaction. According to Petzer et. (2017), interactional and distributive justice were found to have no direct impact on behavioural intentions. Mahmoud et al. (2018a) determined that trust and complaint handling played a crucial role in customer satisfaction, which in turn influenced customer retention in the telecommunications industry in Ghana, as per their findings. Siddiqi, Khan, and Sharna (2018) emphasized the importance of a well-functioning complaint resolution system in enhancing customer loyalty. According to Barusman and Virgawenda (2019), service recovery demonstrated a favourable and noteworthy impact on customer loyalty. Against this backdrop, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H5: Complaint handling influences customer loyalty.

According to Mahmoud et al. (2018a), complaint handling is crucial for maintaining long-term relationships with customers. Although complaints may not be desirable, they serve as valuable feedback for companies. The literature suggests that when customers receive an unsatisfactory response to their complaint, it leads to a loss of trust in the organisation (Ramphal, R, 2016; Cambra-Fierro et al., 2016). Chaparro-Pelaez, Hernandez-Garcia, and Uruena-Lopez (2015) found trust to be a key factor in building relationships between buyers and sellers and can mediate the relationship between loyalty and the service recovery process. A study by Paparoidamis, Katsikeas, and Chumpitaz (2019) in the B2B industry found a positive link between supplier complaint service handling and customer trust. Matikiti, Mpinganjira, and Roberts-Lombard (2019) discovered that satisfaction with the recovery process in the airline industry depended on three key factors: overall satisfaction, trust, and commitment. According to Bakar et al. (2020), service failures are an unavoidable aspect of any business, and it is essential to have efficient service recovery processes in place to rebuild customer trust. The research carried out by Bakar et al. (2020) uncovered that a structured system for addressing complaints can greatly enhance customer confidence. Based on the results of our analysis, we propose the following hypothesis for further exploration:

H6: Complaint handling influences customer trust.

2.9.3. Customer satisfaction and Customer trust on Customer loyalty

Leninkumar (2017) argued that while customer satisfaction is often considered an indicator of high customer loyalty, this is not always the case. However, research has shown a positive correlation between customer satisfaction and loyalty. A study conducted by El-Adly (2019) on the hotel industry in the UAE revealed that customer satisfaction had a direct and positive influence on customer loyalty. Similarly, Slack and Singh (2020) discovered that service quality served as a critical predictor of customer satisfaction and exerted both direct and indirect effects on customer loyalty through customer satisfaction. A positive correlation was discovered between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty by S. Dam and T. Dam (2021) in their research on the Vietnamese supermarket service industry. Devi and Yasa (2021) found that customer satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on brand loyalty. Based on this evidence, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H7: Customer satisfaction influences customer loyalty.

Trust plays a vital role in fostering customer loyalty, and has been extensively researched in numerous sectors (Leninkumar, 2017; Mahmoud et al., 2018b). According to Leninkumar (2017), trust is associated with stronger emotions and can predict loyalty better than other factors. Mahmoud et al. (2018b) posited that trust played a crucial role in managing relationships and had a favourable effect on customer loyalty, ultimately resulting in customer retention. Siddiqi et al. (2018) proposed that trust had a positive impact on customer loyalty, and their research demonstrated that trust played a significant role in shaping customer loyalty. According to Cuong and Khoi (2019), customer loyalty can be understood as an unwavering dedication to repeat business with a preferred service provider, even in the face of external factors and marketing campaigns that may encourage switching behaviour. Previous research had found that customer trust positively influenced customer loyalty (Cuong & Khoi, 2019). Utami (2015) revealed a significant relationship between customer trust and customer loyalty. A study conducted by Sitorus and Yustisia (2018) in the Indonesian banking industry demonstrated that customer trust played a significant role in fostering customer loyalty, as it has a positive impact. The study conducted by Mohd-Any et al. (2019) revealed that customer trust played a crucial role in determining customer loyalty in the airline industry. These findings are consistent with the broader body of research highlighting the critical importance of trust in customer loyalty. Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis:

H8: Customer trust influences customer loyalty.

2.9.4. The mediating role of customer satisfaction on customer loyalty

The relation between customer satisfaction, service quality, and loyalty is vital for businesses. According to Kaura, Prasad, and Sharma (2015), customer satisfaction serves as both a mediator and moderator of the relationship between service quality and customer loyalty. The research conducted by Kaura, Prasad, and Sharma (2015) revealed that customer satisfaction serves as a crucial element in this association and acts as a mediator in three of the four industries, emphasising its significance in shaping the connection between these variables. Makanyeza and Chikazhe (2017) investigated the banking industry in Zimbabwe and found that customer satisfaction served as a mediating factor in the relationship between perceived service quality and customer loyalty. Tandon, Kiran and Sah (2017) also confirmed that website quality can impact repurchase intention by enhancing customer satisfaction in online transactions. According to a study conducted by Lie, Sudirman, Efendi and Butarbutar (2019) on application-based transportation services, customer satisfaction was found to mediate the relationship between service quality and consumer loyalty. Similarly, a study conducted by Lesmana, Sutarman and Sunardi (2021) in the tourism industry in Jakarta found that customer satisfaction fully mediated the relationship between service quality and customer loyalty.

Devi and Yasa (2021) discovered that customer satisfaction partially facilitates the connection between service quality, perceived value, and brand loyalty in Bali's airline industry. According to the results of multiple studies, it is evident that customer satisfaction holds a crucial position in the connection between service quality and customer loyalty. The following hypothesis can be formulated:

H9: Customer satisfaction mediates the impact of service quality on customer loyalty.

2.9.5. The mediating role of customer trust on customer loyalty

Mohd-Any et al. (2019) investigated the factors that contribute to customer loyalty in the Malaysian airline industry. Their findings revealed that customer trust and satisfaction partially mediated the relationship between service recovery and customer loyalty. Similarly, Amoako, Dzogbenuku, and Kumi (2021) investigated the mediatory role of trust in the relationship between service recovery and customer loyalty in the Uber sharing economy in Ghana. The study found that trust mediated the relationship between service recovery performance and customer loyalty. The same was tested and confirmed from a South African perspective (Shumba & Saruchera, 2023). Mahmoud et al. (2018) investigated the impact of trust, loyalty, and conflict resolution on customer retention in the mobile telecommunications sector in Ghana. The results indicated that trust and conflict handling had an indirect effect on customer retention through customer satisfaction. Chang and Hung (2018) investigated the relationship between service recovery and relational selling behaviour on trust and satisfaction in the banking industry in Taiwan. The findings showed that trust and satisfaction played a significant mediating role in the relationship between service recovery and customer loyalty. Based on previous research findings, we propose the following hypothesis:

H10: Customer trust mediates the impact of complaint handling on customer loyalty.

The literature review investigated the connection between service quality, complaint handling, and customer loyalty, as well as the mediating roles of customer satisfaction and trust in this connection. The conceptual model and hypotheses are illustrated in Figure 3.

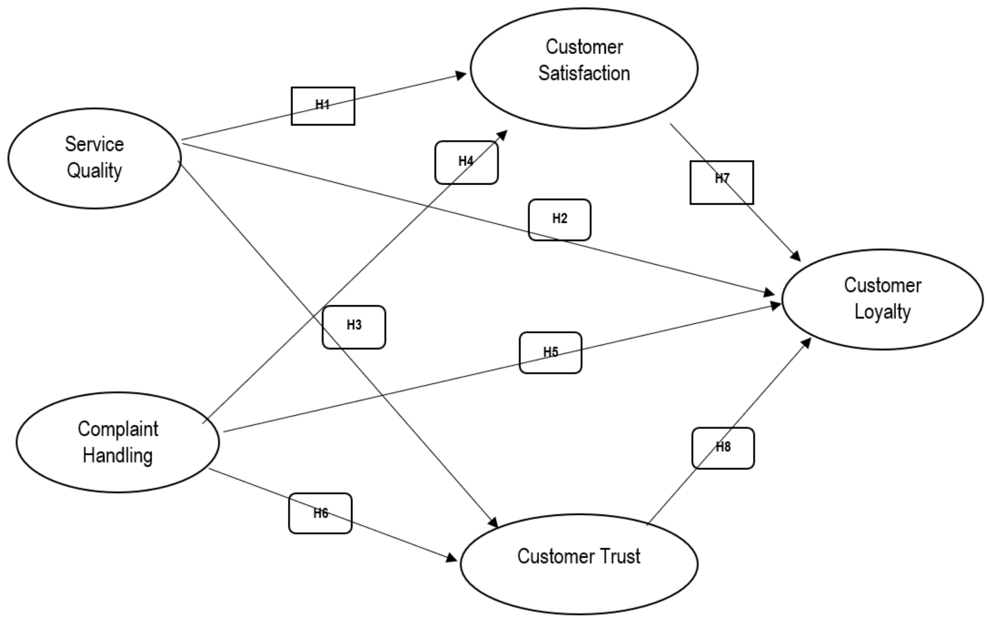

Figure 3. The conceptual framework for the study

Source: Author's compilation after reviewing the literature

2.9 Summary

The literature review identified eight hypotheses examining the connection between service quality, complaint handling, customer satisfaction, customer trust, and customer loyalty, with customer satisfaction and customer trust as mediating variables. Building on previous research, this study aims to tackle the problem statement that customer retention in the life insurance industry is the most challenging in current competition. This study aims to determine whether there is a relationship between these variables in the South African life insurance industry, which was tested using the research methodology explained in the following section.

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Chapter three offers a comprehensive discussion of the data collection process and research instrument utilised, including their measurement items, academic sources, and measurement scales. This chapter delves into the use of statistical software packages, specifically IBM SPSS version 27, AMOS version 27, and SmartPLS version 3, which were employed to analyse and interpret the dataset. Structural equation modelling (SEM) was used to test the measurement model using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) was used to evaluate the structural model using SmartPLS. This method was used to estimate the relationships between observed variables and their latent variables for hypothesis testing. Lastly, this chapter addresses the ethical considerations of this study.

3.2 Research Onion Model

According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), research methodology is a systematic process that involves gathering and examining data to address a particular issue, uncovering novel insights, and confirming existing information. The research methodology employed in this study was based on the research onion model developed by Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2019), as shown in Figure 4.

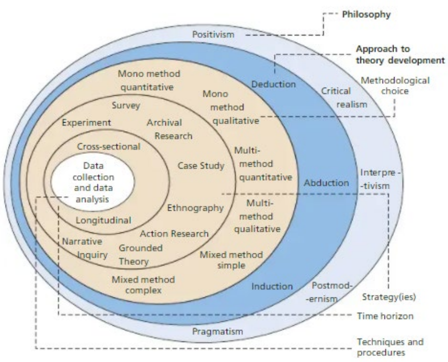

Figure 4. The research onion model

Source: Saunders et al. (2019).

Deb, Dey, and Balas (2019) characterised research as a systematic and objective process of knowledge discovery or theory development motivated by the desire to contribute to or expand existing knowledge. Leavy (2017) defined research methodology as a plan to conduct research. Casula, Rangarajan, and Shields (2021) posited that the type of research employed depends on the research purpose and can be categorised as exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory research. Exploratory research, as defined by Casula, Rangarajan, and Shields (2021), involves the examination of new subjects or areas of study that are under-researched. Leavy (2017) noted that descriptive research allows researchers to describe individuals, groups, activities, events and situations. Camilleri (2018) emphasised that descriptive research does not address questions about why, when, and how characteristics occur but rather allows researchers to test hypotheses about cause-and-effect relationships. Casula et al. (2021) further explained that descriptive research answers the "what" question and does not concern itself with causes, providing researchers with a deeper understanding of social phenomena. Leavy (2017) described explanatory research as a type of study that examines the reasons behind the relationships between causes and effects, as well as the causes of certain phenomena, and provides evidence to support causal connections. Explanatory research, sometimes referred to as causal research, is used to understand the relationship between two or more variables (Sarstedt & Mooi, 2019). Haydam and Steenkamp (2020) argued that explanatory studies aim to establish causal relationships among phenomena.

In line with these factors, this study utilised a descriptive methodology that allows for the collection of quantitative data for statistical analysis using a representative sample from the target population. Moreover, descriptive research offers a comprehensive description of the independent, moderating, and dependent variables central to the research study.

3.2.1. Research Philosophy

The concept of research philosophy encompasses a set of principles and presuppositions concerning knowledge generation (Al-Ababneh, 2020). Saunders et al. (2019) contended that the chosen philosophy underpins a researcher's perception of reality and permits the researcher to defend the central ideas being examined cohesively. According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), it is essential to identify the philosophical ideas that influence research, as they have an impact on the practice of research. A research paradigm can be considered as a perspective or system that shapes the way knowledge is organised and categorised into ontology and epistemology (Leavy, 2017; Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). Bogna, Raineri, and Dell (2020) defined the research paradigm as the "underlying belief system or worldview that guides the researcher, not only in the selection of methods but also in fundamental ontological and epistemological ways." In contrast, epistemology is a philosophical framework that encompasses beliefs about the methods used in research and the nature of the knowledge itself (Leavy, 2017). Abu-Alhaija (2019) defined epistemology as a theory of knowledge that specifies what can be known and the criteria used to justify it as valid knowledge.

Researchers have used various methods for categorising and naming paradigms to guide their work. Rehman and Alharthi (2016) have identified the philosophical foundations of three primary paradigms: positivism, interpretivism, and critical theory. Leavy (2017) identified six groupings of paradigms: postpositivism, interpretive, critical, transformative, pragmatic, and aesthetic intersubjective. Al-Ababneh (2020) distinguishes four types of paradigms: positivism, realism, interpretivism, and pragmatism, as depicted in the research onion. Creswell and Creswell (2017) acknowledged the ongoing debate regarding the worldviews or beliefs researchers bring to enquiry and highlighted four paradigms: postpositivism, constructivism, transformative, and pragmatism. Abu-Alhaija (2019) explained that positivism aims to develop objective knowledge through a thorough and systematic measurement and observation of a steady reality. Park, Konge, and Artino (2020) declared that the primary goal of positivistic enquiry was to generate explanatory associations or causal relationships that led to the prediction and control of the phenomena in question.

Alharahsheh and Pius (2020) claimed that adopting a positivistic paradigm would result in the following outcomes:

- The researcher perceives organisations and other social entities as genuine, holding the same perspective of physical objects and natural occurrences as tangible entities.
- Concerning epistemology, the researcher concentrated on uncovering observable and quantifiable facts and patterns. It is crucial that these observable and measurable phenomena contribute to the credibility and significance of data.

- The researcher aimed to uncover the causal connections between the data collected to facilitate the development of broader, scientifically inspired generalisations about the law. Additionally, the researcher intends to incorporate fundamental universal rules and principles to elucidate and substantiate the analysed behaviour or occurrences within organisations.

Considering the previously mentioned points, the study selected a positivistic paradigm because it provided a structure for the research, focusing on strict rules and methods to generate unbiased information.

3.2.2. Research Approach

The second level of research onion, as outlined by Saunders et al. (2019), pertains to the methods that researchers can utilise when conducting a study grounded in theoretical foundations. Saunders et al. (2019) identified three approaches to theoretical development: deductive, abductive, and inductive. Panke (2018) characterised deductive reasoning as a top-down approach wherein the researcher commences with a theory about a phenomenon or belief and investigates the impact of a variable on other variables. Haydam and Steenkamp (2020) referred to abductive reasoning as the logic associated with attempting to explain a surprising event to determine its cause. In contrast, inductive reasoning is deemed a bottom-up approach, wherein the researcher initiates with specific observations and measurements, using a broad focus to identify potential variables for future study and to formulate general conclusions or theories (Panke, 2018; Mitchell, 2018). Pearse (2019) argued that the deductive approach differed from the abductive and inductive approaches in that it applied a theoretical proposition derived from a literature review to data collection and analysis.

This study used a deductive method to investigate the impact of service quality, complaint resolution, and customer satisfaction and trust on customer loyalty in the South African life insurance sector. The deductive method enables the examination of outcomes to determine the connection between variables' significance and either validates or refutes the hypotheses formulated (Khaldi, 2017). Additionally, the deductive approach is more efficient as it requires time to set up the study prior to data collection and analysis.

3.2.3. Research Choices

The selection of methodology is contingent on the research questions, which are predicated on the research objectives (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Khaldi (2017) identified various criteria that researchers could employ to identify the most suitable research choices depending on whether the data are numerical or narrative. Saunders et al. (2019) outlined three research choices in their research onion: mono-method, mixed-method, and multimethod. According to Saunders et al. (2019), a mono-method involves the use of either a quantitative or qualitative method for data collection. Mixed-methods research integrates the collection, evaluation, and amalgamation of both quantitative and qualitative data into one project, leading to a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter (Leavy, 2017). Brannen (2017) posited that mixed methods involve the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection; however, data analysis is performed using only one perspective.

Creswell and Creswell (2017) defined quantitative research as a method for testing theories and hypotheses by examining the relationship between variables that can typically be measured on an instrument; thus, numerical data can be analysed using statistical procedures or software. Quantitative research is expressed in numbers, graphs, and tables, requires a large number of respondents, uses closed (multiple choice) questions, is objective, and allows replication of the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Leavy, 2017; Saunders et al., 2019). Indu and Vidhukumar (2019) identified three types of quantitative studies: experimental, interventional, and non-experimental or observational. Experimental studies are further categorised into true experimental, quasi-experimental, and pre-experimental research or case studies (Khaldi 2017; Leavy 2017; Creswell & Creswell 2017). Quantitative research follows a positivistic and deductive approach (Saunders et al., 2019).

On the other hand, qualitative research is defined as a means of investigating and understanding the meaning that individuals or groups ascribe to social or human problems by focusing on exploring ideas and formulating theories or hypotheses (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Khaldi, 2017). Qualitative research is analysed by summarising, categorising, and interpreting data, which are expressed in words, require fewer respondents, and use open-ended questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Leavy, 2017; Khaldi, 2017; Saunders et al., 2019). Khaldi (2017) identified two types of qualitative study: interactive and non-interactive. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research follows a constructivist paradigm and is more inductive in its approach (Khaldi, 2017; Saunders et al., 2019).

According to Creswell and Creswell (2017) and Leavy (2017), the main distinction between qualitative and quantitative research methodologies lies in the type of instrument used. In quantitative research, the instrument is independent of the researcher or research team; as such, it is structured and designed to collect valid and reliable data (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). By contrast, qualitative studies rely on researchers or research teams as instruments (Brannen, 2017). This study used a quantitative methodology that employed deductive reasoning to validate, refute, or support existing theories, as per Leavy (2017). The quantitative research approach was chosen for its ability to measure variables and test relationships between them, which permits the examination of cause-effect relationships between variables and the validation of hypotheses designed to explore the factors influencing customer loyalty in the South African life insurance sector, as noted by Khaldi (2017). Additionally, the positivistic research paradigm supports the quantitative research method, making it objective in the pursuit of knowledge (Khaldi, 2017).

3.2.4. Research Strategies

Research strategies comprise the fourth layer of the research onion model proposed by Saunders et al. (2019) and are aimed at determining the means by which researchers gather data for their study. According to Melnikovas (2018), research strategies serve as a comprehensive approach that enables researchers to select the primary data collection method or methods that will aid in answering their research questions and achieving their objectives.

Saunders et al. (2019) identified seven research strategies, as outlined and explained below.

- An experiment, which is expressed as scientific and rigid in structure, is used to test the causal effects of a phenomenon or belief in a group. Experimental designs rely on hypothesis testing, and data collected could be statistically analysed (Leavy, 2017)
- The survey design provides a quantitative description of trends, attitudes, and opinions of a population or tests for associations among variables of a population by studying a sample

of that population (Creswell & Creswell 2017). Surveys allow the researcher to collect large amounts of data from a sample and generalise it to a larger population by asking respondents standardised questions that can be analysed statistically (Leavy, 2017).

- A case study involves examining a single element, such as an individual or a group, and analysing their connection to other elements in the context (Kothari, 2017). Thomas (2021) defines a case study as the valuation of a single unit to establish its key features and draw generalisations.
- Action research, also termed participatory action research, is a community-based study characterised by a practical approach to a specific research problem conducted through observations and communications with other people (Leavy, 2017).
- Grounded Theory enables researchers to gather and analyse data, generate new insights, and apply these insights to guide subsequent rounds of data collection and analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).
- Ethnography involves close observations and interviews as well as cultural interactions in a natural setting over a long period (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).
- Archival research is a study conducted on existing materials and is applied to facilitate the investigation of historical documents and textual materials produced by and about organisations (Ventresca & Mohr, 2017).

This research used a survey design, a widely accepted method for gathering numerical data on the trends, attitudes, and opinions of a population based on a sample, as highlighted by Creswell and Creswell (2017). Surveys enabled the collection of a large volume of data from respondents, thereby enhancing the objectivity of the study. Moreover, by incorporating structured questionnaires into the survey design, the study's results can be generalised to a broader sample population (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

3.2.5. Research Time Horizons

Saunders et al. (2019) stated that research studies can be categorised as either cross-sectional or longitudinal. According to Indu and Vidhukumar (2019), a cross-sectional design assesses the exposure and outcome of study participants at the same point in time. However, this design does not allow for differentiation between whether exposure precedes the outcome or vice versa. Leavy (2017) explained that longitudinal studies are conducted multiple times to measure changes over time. This research used a cross-sectional design in which data on the research variables were collected at a single point in time. The quantitative study was conducted from February 2021 to October 2021, with a pilot study in May 2021, data collection from June 2021 to August 2021, and the analysis and reporting of results at the end of October 2021.

3.2.6. Techniques and Procedures

During the final stage of the research process, a research design must be developed for data collection and analysis to enable the researcher to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses (Saunders et al., 2019).

3.3 Research design

According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), research design comprises formal procedures for collecting, analysing, and interpreting data in studies, such as those in the quantitative or qualitative realm. The choice of research design, as suggested by Khaldi (2017), is contingent on the researcher's desire to investigate a causal relationship or past or present events between variables, leading to the option of experimental or non-experimental research designs. As per Mouton (1996, cited in Singh, 2019), research design can be defined as a set of guidelines and instructions to follow when addressing a research problem. Creswell and Clark (2018) argued that research design aids in constructing a sample population, administering an intervention to gather data, and creating a research instrument to ensure the validity and reliability of data collection. An intervention, as described by Creswell and Creswell (2017), is a variable that acts as a catalyst and is introduced into a population for a study to determine if the variable has a significant impact on the population. Kothari (2017) posited that research aimed at testing a research hypothesis is referred to as hypothesis testing research, which can be categorised into either experimental or non-experimental research designs.

Experimental research designs that investigate the influence of interventions on dependent variables utilise scientific approaches to manipulate independent variables as per Creswell and

Creswell (2017). According to Leavy (2017), independent variables are those that could potentially impact the dependent variable and can be manipulated by the researcher. On the other hand, the dependent variable is influenced or affected by the independent variable in a research study (Leavy, 2017). An intervening variable such as a moderator or mediator can potentially mediate or moderate the influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable (Rogers & Revesz, 2020).

Haug (2018) highlighted that in an experimental research design, researchers typically manipulate one or more variables, usually the independent variable. They then measure the result of the manipulation on one or more additional variables while simultaneously controlling all other variables (Haug, 2018). MacInnes (2017) suggested that experimental research designs incorporate a scientific methodology for manipulating independent variables to establish cause-and-effect relationships. In experimental research designs, such as laboratory and field experiments, the researcher controls and manipulates variables in a controlled and regulated environment to study the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable and establish a cause-and-effect relationship (MacInnes, 2017; Fred, Nuru, & Robert, 2020). Hancock, Stapleton and Mueller (2019) maintained that experimental research designs are used to investigate cause-and-effect relationships as the independent variable is manipulated to observe its effect on the dependent variables.

Non-experimental research designs are often criticised for their inability to control the impact of independent variables on dependent variables as well as the environment in which they are studied (Gambo, 2016). This is because ethical concerns and the abstract nature of factors such as gender and age make it impossible to alter the independent variable (Khaldi, 2017). Creswell and Creswell (2017) identified two primary types of non-experimental research designs: causal-comparative research and correlational design. In causal-comparative research, the researcher compares two or more groups to establish a cause that has already occurred, whereas in correlational research, the researcher describes and measures the association between two or more variables (Creswell & Creswell(2017).

According to Khaldi (2017), non-experimental research encompasses a diverse array of studies, as illustrated in the following section.

- Descriptive research enables researchers to gather data on the current conditions, situations, and occurrences.
- Causal-comparative research is intended to explore the association between variables and to establish whether a causal relationship exists. This research is conducted to explore the relationships between variables and detect any causal connections that may exist.
- Correlational studies aim to determine the probable connections between variables, although these connections may not necessarily be current.
- Ex-post facto research primarily focuses on the effect, followed by an attempt to determine possible causes and questions about the effect after the cause has been established. The role of the researcher in this method is to report the outcome of the action.
- Surveys are typically used to capture the perspectives of a substantial number of individuals at a specific moment, and there have been no documented endeavours to prove a causal relationship between the two variables.

This study used a causal-comparative approach to examine the factors that impact customer loyalty in the South African life insurance sector. This study was conducted using a non-experimental research design, which is known for its high level of external validity and ability to be generalised to a larger population.

3.4 Sampling Design

When constructing a research design, it is essential to develop a sampling design and select an appropriate data-collection method (Sarstedt & Mooi, 2019). As stated by Clark and Steel (2019), the sample design comprises the specifications of the methods used to select population units within the sample. This design is typically devised to estimate summary statistics, such as means and proportion prevalence. According to Hancock et al. (2019), sampling design refers to the strategies and techniques employed in choosing a representative sample from the target population to extend the researcher's conclusions to a larger population.

3.4.1. Population

The target population, as defined by Schindler (2019), encompasses all individuals of interest to a researcher. To facilitate generalisation, the participants must be drawn from the target population, as suggested by Hancock et al. (2019). The study's potential population of interest was comprised of South African citizens aged ≥ 18 years with life insurance policies. According to ASISA (2022), there were 14.3 million income earners in South Africa with sufficient life and disability insurance to cover 45% of their households' total insurance needs. However, these figures were calculated quarterly, which may have affected their accuracy (ASISA, 2022). Consequently, this was the total population at the time of data collection.

The sampling frame, as per Mweshi and Sakyi (2020), refers to a subset of the population from which the sample will be chosen. According to Lohr (2019), the sampling frame can include individuals, households, or institutions, and the sampling frame for this study comprised South African individuals aged between 18 and 65 years with life insurance policies.

3.4.3. Sample size

Lohr (2019) defined the sample size as the number of participants chosen from the intended population. Rahi, Alnaser and Ghani (2019) pointed out that determining the correct sample size was a significant challenge for researchers. Sim, Kim and Suh (2022) emphasised that determining the appropriate sample size is an important and unresolved issue in the use of mediation models. Thus, opinions regarding the sample size that a researcher can use vary. Creswell and Clark (2018) and Mweshi and Sakyi (2020) argued that quantitative research typically favours larger sample sizes to conduct statistical tests and make claims about generalisation to the population in question. Oribhabor and Anyanwu (2019) noted that a small sample size can result in a Type I error (false positive), while a large sample size can lead to a Type II error (false negative). Rahi et al. (2019) referenced Joreskog and Sorboom (1996) as asserting that a minimum of ten observations is necessary for conducting CFA. According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2007), a minimum sample size of 300 valid responses was recommended for factor analysis. Hair et al. (2020) emphasised the importance of having a minimum sample size of 200 for structural equation modelling.

Consequently, this study selected a sample size of 303 participants, taking into account the guidelines and constraints of time.

3.4.5. Sampling method

A crucial decision in a quantitative study involves selecting sample elements using population information to develop sampling methods that provide reliable estimates (Clark & Steel, 2022). According to Sarstedt and Mooi (2019), the sampling process involved selecting cases from the population. Sampling approaches can be broadly classified into probability and non-probability methods. Probability sampling is a method grounded in probability theory that provides each member of the population with a fair chance of being selected for the sample. This can be achieved through various techniques such as simple random sampling, stratified random sampling, systematic random sampling, cluster sampling, and multistage sampling (Leavy, 2017; Sarstedt & Mooi, 2019; Bhardwaj, 2019). However, non-probability sampling does not provide every individual in the population with an equal chance of being included in the sample, and it is further divided into judgemental or purposive sampling, convenience sampling, snowball sampling, and quota sampling (Leavy, 2017; Hancock et al., 2019; Sarstedt & Mooi, 2019). Quantitative research frequently employs probability sampling methods, which reduce sampling errors (Leavy, 2017). Nevertheless, non-probability sampling techniques such as convenience sampling may be utilised in specific situations (Leavy, 2017). Sampling errors occur when a sample is biased (Leavy, 2017). Convenience sampling is a method of selecting participants in which the researcher chooses individuals based on their availability and allows them to opt-in if they desire to take part (Leavy, 2017; Stratton, 2021). Convenience sampling is considered less costly, quicker, and simpler to use than other forms of sampling, can be used to develop hypotheses, and is often employed in quasi-experimental designs, survey research, and other study designs (Leavy, 2017; Stratton, 2021).

In light of the aforementioned circumstances, this study employed non-probability convenience sampling to identify the study components owing to the inaccuracy of the population count. Table 2 presents the sampling plan proposed in this research.

Table 2. Sampling Plan for the Study

Target population- South Africans with life insurance	14.3 million (ASISA, 2022) was the total population at the time of data collection.
Sample size	n = 303.
Sampling type	Non-probability convenience sampling
Data Collection	Data were collected using a survey link designed by Qualtrics Surveys and circulated on LinkedIn, WhatsApp groups, Twitter, Facebook, and via email.

3.5 Data Collection sources

Creswell and Clark (2018) emphasised that data collection in research studies primarily aims to gather information that can be used to answer research questions. Identifying data collection sources is one of the several interconnected steps in the data collection process. Sarstedt and Mooi (2019) noted that deciding on data collection methods typically involves choosing between using existing data and conducting primary research. Data collection sources are generally categorised into primary and secondary (Singh, 2019). Primary data, as defined by Camilleri (2018), refers to information that is not currently available but is necessary to address the problem at hand. The researcher generated primary data to address specific research questions as guided by Sitorus and Yustisia (2018).

In contrast, secondary data are existing data collected by another researcher for another purpose and may be used for the current research problem (Camilleri, 2018; Sarstedt & Mooi, 2019). Given the lack of readily available secondary data for the constructs to be investigated, particularly within the South African life insurance context, this study opted to use primary data. To collect primary data, the study used a survey questionnaire as a data collection tool.

3.6 Research instrument and measurement items

This study employed a self-administered questionnaire to collect the data. The questionnaire was developed on the basis of the variables outlined in the conceptual model. This study utilised a cross-sectional research design that involves the collection of data at a specific point in time that connects two or more variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The questionnaire was structured to allow respondents to choose from a predetermined set of options (Bhattacherjee, 2012). Section A collected general information about the respondents, while Sections B to F addressed the five research constructs proposed in the conceptual model. The completion of the questionnaire took approximately 10 minutes and consisted of closed-ended questions that used a five-point Likert scale ranging from "1 = strongly disagree" to "5 = strongly agree." This allowed for more precise responses and gave respondents the option of choosing a neutral answer (Bhattacherjee, 2012).

This study regarded the service quality construct as an overall construct and utilised six items to measure service quality. The items were adapted and modified from those described by Nguyen et al. (2018), Mahmoud et al. (2018a), and Minta (2018). In addition, four items measuring complaint-handling constructs were adapted from Mahmoud et al. (2018b) and Ahmed et al. (2020). Five items measuring customer satisfaction were adapted and modified from Nguyen et al. (2018), Mahmoud et al. (2018a), Minta (2018), and Cuong and Khoi (2019). Three items measuring customer trust constructs were adapted from Nguyen et al. (2018), Mahmoud et al. (2018a), Minta (2018), and Cuong and Khoi (2019). Finally, six items measuring the customer loyalty construct were adapted from Nguyen et al. (2018), Mahmoud et al. (2018a), Minta (2018), and Cuong and Khoi (2019).

3.6.1. Pilot study

According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), pilot testing is an essential step in establishing the content validity of scores on an instrument by evaluating the internal consistency of its items and improving the format and instructions. According to Leavy (2017), pilot testing is a comprehensive trial of a research study designed to evaluate the appropriateness of the language, assumptions, and research instruments. To test the flow and design of the questionnaire and the reliability and validity of the study, a questionnaire link was sent via email and WhatsApp to twenty-six randomly selected respondents, who were mainly students from the Wits Business School's Management of Marketing in Strategic Marketing 2020 cohort. Participants were requested to provide feedback on the appropriateness and simplicity of the study. Modifications were implemented following feedback from the pilot study, including the substitution of a measurement item. "my life insurer gives me a feeling of trust" with "I have confidence in my life insurer" to eliminate ambiguity and repetition. The feedback also indicated that the study took less than 10 minutes to complete, and thus, the completion time of the questionnaire was reduced from 15 minutes to less than 10 minutes to encourage participation from the respondents in the final study. Owing to the small sample size (26 participants), an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted using IBM SPSS 27 to compute the Cronbach's alpha of each item using reliability analysis statistics. Baistaman, Awang, Afthanorhan, and Rahim (2020) deemed a Cronbach Alpha score of above 0.70 as acceptable. The choice to expand data collection using a larger sample size was made following the results of the pilot study, which had scores between 0.879 and 0.958 and met the predetermined criteria.

According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), it is essential to guarantee that data collection aligns with the research objectives or study questions because this can considerably influence the overall quality and efficacy of the research process. Saunder et al. (2019) defined data collection as the process of gathering relevant information from various sources to provide valid and reliable answers in the analysis. In this study, a non-probability convenience sampling method was employed, as it allowed respondents to be approached at their convenience, minimising interruptions in their daily activities. Data were collected using a survey link created by Qualtrics Surveys, which was posted on a variety of social media platforms including LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp, and Telegram. Additionally, the survey link was emailed to individuals, and requests were made to institutions, such as Wits University, to bulk e-mail the link to students in the Faculty of Commerce Law and Management.

Demographic information on the participants was collected using closed-ended multiple-choice questions. The questions pertained to the respondents' gender, age, education level, employment status, and the name of the life insurer to which they belonged. This information was collected to gain a better understanding of the participants and their backgrounds.

3.7 Data processing and analysis

Leavy (2017) posits that data analysis assists researchers in answering the question, "What does it all mean?" by generating comprehensible interpretations of the raw data. Data analysis involves detailed descriptions of the strategies employed by the researcher to analyse and interpret data, including the use of computer software programs (Leavy, 2017). Dawson (2019) defines data analysis as the processes and methods used to analyse data and draw conclusions. Creswell and Clark (2018) emphasised that in a quantitative study, the researcher begins by converting raw data into a useful form for analysis, which involves assigning numeric values to each response. Data analysis and interpretation were performed using IBM SPSS version 27. To confirm the hypothesised relationships between variables, a structural equation modelling (SEM) method was employed to carry out a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using IBM AMOS version 27 through an empirical approach. Structural path modelling was performed using SmartPLS software to examine the relationship between latent variables and their theoretical foundations and to validate the model's fit. SPSS, a statistical package for the social sciences, is a computer package specialising in quantitative data analysis that is widely used by market researchers and can handle large datasets (Sarstedt & Mooi, 2019). Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) is a statistical software application that is widely utilised for fitting structural equation models, particularly for confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). This software package was used to evaluate the extent to which the measured variables effectively represented the underlying constructs (Hancock et al., 2019). Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) is a statistical technique that enables researchers to simultaneously estimate the direct, indirect, and moderating effects of multiple constructs while accounting for measurement error (Ringle, Sarstedt, Mitchell, and Gudergan, 2018).

Quantitative data analysis allows researchers to employ statistical software packages including SPSS, AMOS, and SmartPLS for both descriptive and inferential statistics. These tools offer researchers the opportunity to utilise statistical methods and techniques to analyse data and draw meaningful conclusions (Hair et al., 2018; Hair et al., 2021; Mehmetoglu & Venturini, 2021). Descriptive statistics involves the examination of data for patterns and comparisons between constructs (Holcomb, 2017). In contrast, inferential statistics enable researchers to draw conclusions and make predictions about a population based on data collected from a sample, focusing on the relationships between and among variables (Vieira, 2017). It is important to note that when a population is large, a sample is drawn, and the results from the sample are generalised to the population; that is, to infer that what is true of the sample is also true of the population (Holcomb, 2017). This study utilised descriptive and inferential statistics to interpret the raw data and make inferences.

3.8.1. Descriptive statistics using IBM SPSS 27

According to Hancock et al. (2019), descriptive statistics involves analysing the frequencies of responses, calculating the average of each response, and determining the spread or dispersion of a dataset. These statistics are used to summarise and present data using techniques such as means, medians, and modes, as well as charts, tables, and graphs (Cronk, 2019; Mishra, 2019). Descriptive statistics are further categorised into measures of central tendency and spread or dispersion, as identified by Sarstedt and Mooi (2019). Central tendency measures, including the mean, median, and mode, provide information on where the values in a dataset are centred, using a single value to represent the sample (Leavy, 2017; Sarstedt & Mooi, 2019). The mean, which is also known as the average, is calculated by dividing the sum of all observations by the number of observations, and can only be determined on an interval or ratio scale (Llaudet & Imai, 2022). Median is the middle value of the dataset when arranged in order and can be calculated by arranging the data in either ascending or descending order. Mode, which is the most frequent value in a dataset, is often the most common value in a dataset (Leavy, 2017; Cronk, 2019; Yadav, Singh, & Gupta, 2019). According to Yadav et al. (2019), the concept of bimodality can be applied to situations with multiple modes. The mean is a commonly used measure of central tendency, as it is well-defined, easy to calculate, and widely understood (Sarstedt & Mooi, 2019; Yadav et al., 2019).

Additionally, the mean is based on all observations of the given data and is useful for mathematical and statistical analyses (Sarstedt & Mooi, 2019; Yadav et al., 2019). According to Andrade (2020), standard deviation (SD) serves as a valuable measure for gauging the dispersion of values in a sample, which can be instrumental in providing a concise description of the sample. In this investigation, the mean and standard deviation were applied to evaluate both measures of central tendency and dispersion as well as to summarise the collected data.

3.8.2. Inferential statistics using IBM SPSS 27

According to Leavy (2017), inferential statistics were employed to estimate the population from which the sample was chosen and test the hypotheses. In accordance with Vieira (2017) and Andrade (2020), inferential statistics estimate population parameters from sample statistics, considering the sampling error, which is the difference between a parameter and a corresponding statistic, as the population parameters are unknown. Cronk (2019) characterized inferential statistics as methods that allow researchers to make inferences about a population by using a sample. Vieira (2017) explained that there are two types of estimates a researcher can make regarding a population: point estimates and confidence interval (CI) estimates. A point estimate is a single-value estimate of a parameter; for example, a sample mean is a point estimate of a population mean, while a confidence interval is a range of values where the parameter is expected to lie, expressed as a percentage (Vieira, 2017).

According to Mishra (2019), inferential statistics focus on predicting the connection between dependent and independent variables using multiple linear regressions within a 95% confidence interval. Cronk (2019) elaborated that multiple linear regression analysis allows for the prediction of one variable from several other variables, assuming all variables are interval or ratio scaled and the dependent variable is normally distributed around the prediction line. MacInnes (2017) emphasised that regression analysis enables the estimation of the relationship between one dependent variable and one or more independent variables in a straight line. It is worth noting that this study employed multiple regression analysis (MRA) as it involves more than one independent variable. According to Sarstedt and Mooi (2019), the regression models are generally represented as follows:

$$y = \alpha + \beta_{1}x_{1} + e$$

where y represents the dependent variable that the research is trying to explain, α represents the intercept of the regression model and signifies the dependent variable if the independent variable is zero. The independent variable is indicated by x_1, while $\beta_{1,}$ which stands for beta, indicates its coefficient, displaying how a change in an independent variable impacts the dependent variable if other independent variables are held constant; *e* denotes the equation error (Sarstedt & Mooi, 2019).

When conducting a linear regression, Cronk (2019) highlighted three essential components of the output that the researcher must review: model summary, analysis of variance (ANOVA), and coefficients of determination. The model summary presents the values of R and its square (R2), which serve as the coefficient of determination and standard error of the estimate (MacInnes, 2017). According to Sarstedt and Mooi (2019), the coefficient of determination (R2) is a statistical tool employed in regression analysis to illustrate the proportion of variance of the dependent variable accounted for by the independent variables. In the cross-sectional marketing research context, R2 values between 0.10 and 1 can be used as a rule of thumb, where 0.10 can be described as weak and 0.90 as a substantial linear association (Sarstedt and Mooi, 2019). Hair, Risher, Sarstedt, and Ringle (2019) considered R2 values of 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 as substantial, moderate, and weak, respectively.

The measure of dispersion, known as the standard error of the estimate, is depicted in the model summary as the standard deviation of the error term and the square root of the mean square residual or error (Stockemer, 2019; James et al., 2021). It is used to assess the accuracy of predictions and indicates the extent to which the independent variable fails to predict the scores of the dependent variable (Stockemer, 2019; James et al., 2021). According to Cronk (2019) and James et al. (2021), a smaller standard error of the estimate indicates a better fit, suggesting that the sample is representative of the population, whereas a larger value indicates a worse fit.

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) is an essential element of a researcher's work, permitting the assessment of variations in a dependent variable based on the levels of one or more independent variables (Cronk, 2017; MacInnes, 2017). Commonly referred to as the f-test, it examines the means of more than two independent groups to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between at least two of the groups (Vieira, 2017). The ANOVA output serves as an indicator of the model's validity, with a value of less than 0.05, suggesting a significant linear regression (Cronk, 2019). Moreover, the f-test evaluates the adequacy of the regression equation by assessing its predictive power (Stockemer, 2019).

- In the concluding part of the output, the coefficients present both standardised and unstandardised sets, accompanied by their corresponding t-statistics and levels of significance (Cronk, 2019). This section allows for precise predictions, as the regression coefficient output reflects the connection between independent and dependent variables (Stockemer, 2019). The significance of individual coefficient p-values is typically assessed through rigorous examination (Sarstedt and Mooi, 2019).In social sciences, consumer sciences, and education, the level of significance or alpha is commonly set at 0.05 or 5% (Vieira, 2017). The table of coefficients includes various statistics, such as the p-values for individual coefficients, as specified by Stockemer (2019):

    - Unstandardised regression weights illustrate the connection between the independent and dependent variables, and their significance was tested.
    - The standard error indicates the extent of the variation in the predicted coefficient, and a smaller standard error for the regression weight simplifies the interpretation of the relationship.
    - The standardised regression coefficient, or beta, allows researchers to gauge the strength of each independent variable relative to the dependent variable, as it can be challenging to compare the magnitude of the coefficients of the independent variables.
    - The T-value compares the unstandardised regression with the predicted value of zero by dividing the unstandardised coefficient by the standardised error. Generally, a higher t-value suggests a higher probability of a statistically significant relationship.
    - The significance value (alpha level) indicates the likelihood that a specific independent variable affects the dependent variable.

3.8.3. Structural Equation Modelling

Mehmetoglu and Venturini (2021) reported that Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) has been widely employed by researchers over the past 30 years because of its capacity to integrate conventional statistical techniques, including linear regression, factor analysis, and path analysis, while also enabling the estimation of intricate models that incorporate latent variables. Hair et al. (2021) referred to SEM as a method that enables researchers to model and estimate complex relationships between multiple dependent and independent variables simultaneously. Baistaman et al. (2020) pointed out that the Constructed Response Model (CRM) approach involves two models: a measurement model and a structural model for path estimation. Baistaman et al. (2020) further explained that the CRM is used to determine the validity and reliability of the measurement model using factor loadings involved in the study.

Mehmetoglu and Venturini (2021) highlighted two primary methods for conducting SEM analysis: covariance-based SEM (CB-SEM) and partial least-squares SEM (PLS-SEM), also known as PLS path modelling. According to Benitez, Henseler, Castillo and Schuberth (2020), SEM has two types of estimators: covariance- and variance-based. Hair et al. (2021) stressed the significance of CB-SEM in either supporting or refuting theoretical frameworks, whereas PLS-SEM was introduced as a causal-predictive method for SEM, focusing on explaining the variance of the model's dependent variables. Benitez et al. (2020) characterized PLS-SEM as a complete variance-based estimator that is capable of determining linear, nonlinear, recursive, and non-recursive structural models. According to Hair et al. (2019), CB-SEM has traditionally been the favoured method for examining intricate relationships between observed and latent variables; however, in recent times, PLS-SEM has gained popularity among many researchers as the preferred SEM approach.

According to Sarstedt, Hair, Cheah, Becker, and Ringle (2019), composite-based methods for modelling complex relationships between observed and latent variables have gained significant traction in the social sciences. PLS-SEM has attracted particular attention in marketing discourse and related fields of business research. Hair et al. (2019) attributed this to the fact that PLS-SEM allows for the estimation of complex models containing numerous constructs, indicator variables, and structural paths without imposing distributional assumptions on the dataset. PLS-SEM is a causal-predictive approach that emphasises prediction in estimating statistical models, and its structures are designed to provide causal explanations (Hair et al., 2019). Sharma, Shmueli, Sarstedt, Danks, and Ray (2018) also noted that PLS-SEM's popularity is due to its ability to analyze the causal relationship between latent variables. Mehmetoglu and Venturini (2021) argued that researchers generally prefer PLS-SEM to CB-SEM when their study's objective is to explain as much variance as possible on the endogenous or dependent variable and when CB-SEM fails to converge. Ringle et al. (2018) emphasized that the structural model establishes connections between constructs through a set of paths, which usually reflects the study's hypotheses.

In this study, SEM was employed to establish the causal interaction between variables from the research instrument with the support of the CFA approach using AMOS and PLS-SEM to examine structural stability by demonstrating links between constructs and testing hypotheses using the SmartPLS software package. Ringle et al. (2018) suggested a two-part approach for assessing PLS-SEM outcomes: an evaluation of the measurement model and an examination of the structural model, which will be thoroughly explored in the subsequent chapter.

3.8 Measurement model assessment

According to Sarstedt, Ringle, and Hair (2017), measurement models illustrate the relationship between a construct and its related indicators. As stated by Ringle et al. (2018), researchers must differentiate between reflectively and formatively specified constructs when evaluating measurement models. According to Sarstedt et al. (2017), reflective measurement models exhibit a direct connection between the construct and its indicators, where the indicators are deemed erroneous expressions of the hidden construct. However, in formative measurement models, the relationship is from indicators to constructs, and there is no requirement for strong correlation, as in reflective measurement models (Sarstedt et al., 2017). According to Hair, Howard, and Nitzl (2020), reflective measurement models are made up of composite latent constructs, where measured variables are thought to be impacted by their underlying latent variables. By contrast, formative measurement models are combinations of indicators that form the construct, and the internal consistency concept related to reflective measurement models cannot be applied to them (Hair et al., 2020). In this study, a reflective measurement model was used in the measurement model assessment as it utilised reflectively measured constructs. Hancock et al. (2019)

emphasised the crucial role of the reliability and validity of the research instrument in ensuring the integrity of any research study. Rogers and Revesz (2020) defined reliability as the consistency of the measurement results, which is necessary to ensure the soundness and replicability of data collection. Although reliability is a prerequisite for validity, it does not guarantee it (Rogers and Revesz, 2020). According to Hancock et al. (2019), ensuring the validity of an instrument enables researchers to gauge its effectiveness in measuring its intended constructs, thereby safeguarding the credibility and reliability of their findings. Hair et al. (2020) emphasised the importance of establishing minimum guidelines for measurement models to evaluate the validity of structural models. Hair et al. (2021) outlined four criteria for assessing reflective measurement models, and offered practical guidelines for their application. These are briefly described below.

3.9.1. Indicator reliability

According to Hair et al. (2021), loadings known as indicator loadings, which are also referred to as outer or factor loadings, are bivariate correlations between a construct and its indicators. These loadings determine an item's absolute contribution to its assigned construct as stated by Hair et al. (2021). According to Hair et al. (2020), evaluating construct reliability and assessing reflective measurement models begins with estimating these loadings and their significance. According to Ringle et al. (2018) and Sarstedt et al. (2017), standardised loadings above 0.70 are considered ideal, as they indicate that the construct accounts for more than 50% of the variance of the indicator and exhibits a satisfactory level of reliability. However, Afthanorhan, Awang, and Aimran (2020) suggested that standardised loadings above 0.60 and sometimes lower were acceptable depending on the rationale. Hair et al. (2021) suggest that removing indicators with a value between 0.40 and 0.70 should only be undertaken if it enhances internal consistency reliability or convergent validity. This study used indicator loadings to establish an item's definitive contribution to its assigned construct as suggested by Hair et al. (2021).

3.9.2. Internal consistency reliability

Internal consistency reliability is utilised to determine how well all components of an instrument assess the same construct, as stated by Cronk (2019). Hair et al. (2021) reported that the second phase of reflective measurement model assessment involves evaluating internal consistency reliability. Composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha coefficient are widely used measures of internal consistency reliability within the social sciences, and values between 0.60 and 0.90 are typically considered acceptable (Hair et al., 2020; Taber, 2018). Hair et al. (2019) warned that values of 0.95 and above could be problematic as they indicate that the items are almost identical and redundant, which may affect construct validity. Construct validity was established using a set of fitness indices produced by the CFA (Baistaman et al., 2020). Cronbach's alpha coefficient, denoted by the symbol α, represents the average correlation among all the items in the instrument and is considered a less precise measure of reliability compared to composite reliability, as the items are unweighted (Hair et al., 2019). According to Ringle et al. (2018) and Hair et al. (2019), composite reliability is considered the upper limit of internal consistency reliability, and can effectively depict the internal consistency of the constructs. To verify the dependability of the results, this study used Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability measures.

3.9.3. Convergent validity

In reflective measurement models, convergent validity is a crucial aspect that assesses the accuracy of the construct by demonstrating that a test designed to measure a particular construct actually measures that construct (Ringle et al., 2018). Convergent validity is assessed by examining the correlation between a construct, as defined by introspection, and its associated indicators (Hair et al., 2019). Trait factor loadings, which represent the strength of the association between the latent variables of traits and their indicators, are the primary measure of convergent validity (Hancock et al., 2019). Higher factor loadings signify greater convergent validity (Hancock et al., 2019).

Sarstedt et al. (2017) proposed that AVE, which measures the degree of convergence among indicators by explaining the variance of the items, can be utilised to evaluate convergent validity. Hair et al. (2021) defined AVE as the grand mean value of the squared loadings divided by the indicators associated with the construct, calculated by dividing the sum of the squared loadings by the number of indicators. Ringle et al. (2018) proposed an AVE value of 0.50 or higher as a rule of thumb, as it implies that the construct explains 50% or more of its items' variance that makes up the construct.

3.9.4. Discriminant validity

Discriminant validity is essential for validating constructs and ensuring that each captures a unique phenomenon in a statistical model (Franke & Sarstedt, 2019). Sarstedt and Mooi (2019) emphasise the importance of discriminant validity in guaranteeing that a measure is unique and represents a phenomenon of interest that other measures in a structural model do not capture; therefore, they should not correlate very highly. To establish discriminant validity, Franke and Sarstedt (2019) emphasised the importance of showing that the correlation between two latent variables is lower than unity and that they are distinct.

In academic research, the Fornell-Larcker criterion and cross-loadings are commonly used to evaluate discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981, as cited in Hair et al., 2021). Fornell and Larcker (1981, as cited in Hair et al., 2021) introduced the traditional metric, which entails comparing each construct's average variance extracted (AVE) to the squared inter-construct correlation of the same construct and ensuring that the shared variance between constructs does not exceed their AVE. Conversely, the Fornell-Larcker criterion has faced criticism for its shortcomings in evaluating discriminant validity, as indicated by Benitez et al. (2020). Benitez et al. (2020) posited that the Fornell-Larcker criterion is flawed as it depends on consistent factor loadings and cannot detect discriminant validity issues when indicator loadings on a construct vary minimally. To address this weakness, Hair et al. (2021) recommended avoiding the Fornell-Larcker criterion and instead using the heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlation (HTMT) as a better alternative for assessing discriminant validity.

The Hierarchical Test of Measurement Invariance (HTMT), as originally proposed by Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2015), utilises the multitrait-multimethod matrix (MTMM) to determine discriminant validity and is said to be more effective in achieving higher specificity and sensitivity rates compared to traditional cross-loading criteria and Fornell-Lacker (Ab Hamid et al., 2017). The HTMT approach allows researchers to contrast the correlation between construct indicators with the correlation within the same constructs (Franke & Sarstedt, 2019). According to Benitez et al.

(2020), two approaches exist for assessing HTMT: either by contrasting it against a predetermined benchmark, or by constructing a confidence interval to determine whether it falls below a predetermined threshold. Hair et al. (2021) posited that discriminant validity issues arise when the HTMT values are high. Henseler et al. (2015) recommended a threshold of 0.90 for highly similar constructs and 0.85 for more distinct constructs as a general guideline.

3.9 Measurement model fit.

According to Kamaruddin, Yap and Deni (2020), assessing the fit of a model is a crucial aspect of SEM because it enables the researcher to evaluate the coherence of the theoretical model with empirical data. According to Dash and Paul (2021), after conducting reliability and validity assessments, the model fit is evaluated, and subsequently, the structural model is examined. As previously mentioned, AMOS software was employed to conduct CFA to validate the measurement model and assess the model fit. Dalila, Latif, Jaafar, Aziz and Afthanorhan (2020) emphasized that it is necessary to fulfil the fitness indexes prior to executing the structural model. Baistaman et al. (2020) categorized the fitness indexes into three types: absolute, incremental, and parsimonious, along with their ideal threshold values.

3.10.1. Chi-square

Chi-square, denoted by ($\chi 2$), is an absolute fit measure commonly used in statistical analysis to assess the disparity between sample and matrix covariance data (Dash and Paul, 2021). While it is important to consider the sample size when evaluating the chi-square value, other fit indices should also be considered (Afthanorhan et al., 2019). According to Dash and Paul (2020), a chi-square test with a degree of freedom ($\chi 2/df$) value of less than three is typically used as a measure of the model fit.

3.10.2. Goodness-of-fit index (GFI)

The goodness-of-fit index (GFI) is a measure used by researchers to evaluate the extent to which a proposed model fits the data compared with a null model (Joreskog and Sorbom 1982, as cited in Wang et al., 2020). According to Joreskog and Sorbom (1993 as cited in Dash & Paul, 2019), GFI provides an alternative to the Chi-square test and estimates the proportion of the variance provided by the projected covariance of the population. The GFI is an absolute fit measure with values ranging from 0 to 1; however, Wang et al. (2020) proposed a threshold value greater than 0.90 as a good measure of model fit, while Dash and Paul (2019) suggested a value greater than 0.95 for smaller samples and lower factor loadings.

3.10.3. Adjusted goodness-of-fit Index (AGFI)

The Adjusted Goodness-of-fit index (AGFI) was developed by Joreskog and Sorbom (1984) to overcome the limitations of the Goodness-of-fit index (GFI), as stated by Wang et al. (2020). The GFI tends to increase as more parameters are added to the model, which may result in an overestimation of the model fit. The AGFI, like the GFI, is affected by sample size and exhibits a certain degree of downward bias; however, it becomes more stable with an increase in sample size (Wang et al., 2020). However, Kamaruddin et al. (2020) challenged the notion that the GFI and AGFI are influenced by sample size. The AGFI is also an absolute fit measure, with values ranging from 0 to 1 and a widely accepted threshold of 0.90 for a good model fit (Dash & Paul, 2019).

3.10.4. Root mean square error approximation (RMSEA)

The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) is a widely used measure of absolute fit that assesses the degree of deviation between model parameter values and their population covariance matrices (Husain, 2019). According to Shi and Maydeu-Olivares (2020), RMSEA enables researchers to evaluate the degree of discrepancy resulting from approximation on a per-degree-of-freedom basis. Husain (2019) cites Browne and Cudeck (1993) as suggesting that RMSEA values ranging from 0.05 to 0.08 are indicative of a good model fit. However, Dash and Paul (2019) proposed a more stringent threshold of 0.07 or lower for a good model fit.

3.10.5. Standardized Root mean square residual (SRMSR)

The standardized root mean square residual (SRMSR) is a measure of the average residual value obtained by comparing the variance-covariance matrix of the hypothesized model to the sample data variance-covariance matrix (Husani, 2019). To calculate The SRMSR, which serves as an absolute fit measure, the fitted residuals must be divided by their standard error (Dash & Paul, 2019). The SRMSR is dependent on parameter estimates and is expected to be relatively robust as long as the sample size is sufficient (Shi and Maydeu-Olivares, 2020). SRMSR values range from 0 to 1, with a widely accepted threshold value of 0.05 or less (Dash & Paul, 2019). Husain (2019) proposed a threshold value of 0.08 or less as a good measure of model fit.

3.10.6. Normed fit index (NFI)

The Normed Fit Index (NFI) is a widely utilised incremental fit measure that is employed to evaluate the proposed model against the null model, as stated by Bentler and Bonett (1980) and cited in Dash and Paul (2019). The NFI compares the chi-square value of the proposed model with that of the null model, which assumes that all measured variables are uncorrelated, as noted by Husain (2019). This is considered the worst-case scenario. As asserted by Dash and Paul (2019), the NFI is a sensitive measure of fit that is influenced by the sample size and, hence, should not be considered in isolation. According to Husain (2019), a good measure of model fit is achieved when the NFI value is greater than 0.90 or close to or greater than 1.

3.10.7. Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI)

The Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) was first introduced by Tucker and Lewis (1973) as a means to assess the relative decrease in misfit per degree of freedom. Also referred to as the non-normed fit index (NNFI), it serves as an incremental fit measure index that remains unaffected by sample size. Additionally, it encourages the use of simpler models while discouraging the use of more complex models. This addresses the issues posed by NFI (Dash & Paul, 2019; Dalila et al., 2020). Cai, Chung and Lee (2023) explain that TLI provides additional information beyond other indices such as RMSEA. A TLI value of 0.90 or greater indicates a good model fit (Dash & Paul, 2019; Shi et al., 2019).

3.10.8. Comparative fit index

According to Shi and Maydeu-Olivares (2020), the comparative fit index (CFI) is a measure of incremental fit that evaluates the improvement of a proposed model over a baseline model in terms of fitting the data. As Husain (2019) explained, CFI is a measure of the comparison between hypothesised models and the null model. Bentler (1990), as cited in Dash and Paul (2019), developed the CFI to address the issue of small sample sizes in which the NFI was sensitive. CFI is a normed fit index with values ranging from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating a better fit, as stated by Shi et al. (2018). Dash and Paul (2019) proposed a threshold value of 0.90 CFI, which serves as a good indicator of the model fit.

3.10.9. Parsimonious fit measures

According to Husain (2019), parsimonious fit measures are a type of goodness-of-fit that connect the model with several estimated coefficients to reach an optimal model fit. Dash and Paul (2019) introduced the Parsimonious Goodness-of-fit index (PGFI) and parsimonious normed fit index (PNFI) to penalise model complexity. The PGFI is derived from GFI, whereas the PNFI is derived from NFI (Dash & Paul, 2019). Husain (2019) states that PGFI values range from 0 to 1, with a recommended value greater than 0.50 for a good model fit measure. PNFI values, on the other hand, are recommended to be between 0.60 and 0.90 for a good model fit measure (Husain, 2019). Dash and Paul (2019) presented a table of model fit indices and their corresponding cut-off marks.

Table 3. Model fit indices and level of acceptance

The Chi-square of the estimated model	p-value >0.05
Chi-square upon the degree of freedom X^2/df	<3 (even <5)
Goodness-of-fit (GFI)	>0.95 (0.90 too)
Adjusted goodness-of-fit (AGFI)	>0.90

Standardized root mean square residual (SRMSR)	<0.05
Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA)	<0.08
Tucker-lewis Index (TLI)	>0.90
Normed fit index (NFI)	>0.90
Comparative fit index (CFI)	>0.95
Parsimonious goodness-of-fit index (PGFI)	>0.50
Parsimonious normed fit index (PNFI)	>0.50

Source: Dash and Paul (2019)

3.10 Structural model assessment

According to Hair et al. (2019), once the measurement model is deemed satisfactory, the subsequent step involves evaluating the structural model. In line with Sarstedt and Mooi (2019), the structural model encompasses the relationship between the exogenous and endogenous constructs. Hair et al. (2019) provided standard assessment criteria for structural models, including R2 and Q2, and the statistical significance and relevance of the path coefficients. Hair et al. (2021) suggested a systematic approach to structural model assessment, which is summarised in Table 4.

Table 4. Steps in Structural Model Assessment

Assessing structural model results

Step 1 Assess collinearity issues of the structural model
Step 2 Assess the significance and relevance of the structural model relationships
Step 3 Assess the model's explanatory power
Step 4 Assess the model's predictive power
Step 5 Model comparisons

Source: Hair et al. (2021).

According to Hair et al. (2021), structural model coefficients are determined by estimating a series of regression equations. Sarstedt and Mooi (2019) indicated that, for successful regression, data requirements should have minimal or no collinearity. Collinearity is an issue that arises in data when two independent variables are highly correlated (Sarstedt & Mooi, 2019). Hair et al. (2021) recommend the use of variance inflation factor (VIF) values to assess potential collinearity. VIF values above five suggest potential collinearity issues, values between three and less than five indicate uncritical collinearity issues, and VIF values below three indicate unproblematic collinearity issues (Hair et al., 2021).

Evaluating the importance and applicability of structural model connections entails scrutinising the importance and relevance of path coefficients (Hair et al., 2021). According to Ringle et al. (2018), the evaluation of significance relies on bootstrapping standard error as the basis for calculating the p-value or confidence intervals of the path coefficients. Bootstrapping is a non-parametric approach that tests the statistical significance of several PLS-SEM outcomes, such as path coefficients, Cronbach's alpha, HTMT, and R2 values (Ramayah et al., 2018; Hair et al., 2021). Hair et al. (2021) emphasized that a path coefficient is significant at the 5% level if the value of zero does not fall within the 95% confidence interval. The relevance of path coefficients is typically between -1 and +1, with coefficients closer to -1 indicating strong negative relationships and those closer to +1 suggesting strong positive relationships (Hair et al., 2021).

Examining the coefficient of determination (R^2) for endogenous constructs is essential for evaluating the model's explanatory power (Hair et al., 2021). The explanatory power of the weights, also known as in-sample predictive power (Rigdon, 2012, as cited in Hair et al., 2021), enhances the interpretability of the dimensions. The R^2 value ranges from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating greater in-sample predictive power (Hair et al., 2021). According to Ringle et al. (2018), R^2 values of 0.25, 0.50, and 0.75 are considered weak, moderate, and strong, respectively. By analysing the f-square values, a researcher can also assess the impact of removing a selected predictor construct on an endogenous construct's R^2 value (Hair et al., 2021). According to Hair et al. (2021), effect sizes with f-squared values of 0.005, 0.01, and 0.025 were categorised as small, medium, and large, respectively.

Out-of-sample predictive power, or the ability to forecast future observations, is essential for evaluating a model's effectiveness (Tsamardinos, Greasidou and Borboudakis, 2018; Hair et al., 2021. According to Hair et al. (2021), the notion that R^2 is an appropriate measure of a model's predictive power has been refuted, as many researchers had previously believed. R^2 measures explanatory power rather than predictive power (Hair et al., 2021). Hair et al. (2021) suggested PLSpredict, a sample-based procedure using k-fold cross-validation, to evaluate the predictive power of a model (Hair et al., 2021). According to Shmueli et al. (2019, as cited in Hair et al., 2021), the implementation of PLSpredict involves assessing the model on a training sample and estimating its predictive performance on a holdout sample. The root mean square error (RMSE) and mean absolute error (MAE) are two metrics proposed by Hair et al. (2021) for evaluating the predictive power of a model.. RMSE is used to quantify the prediction error (Hair et al. 2021). RMSE is calculated by squaring the root of the average of the squared differences between the predictions and actual observations (Hair et al., 2021). The Mean Absolute Error (MAE) is a measure of the average difference between estimated values and actual observations, with equal weight given to each individual difference (Hair et al., 2021). It is crucial to evaluate the metrics by comparing the Root Mean Square Error (RMSE) or MAE values of each indicator to the benchmark of a simple linear regression model (LM). A lower RMSE or MAE value compared to the LM benchmark indicates high predictive power (Hair et al., 2021). Shmueli et al. (2019) presented guidelines for comparing the values of RMSE or MAE with those of LM, as referenced by Hair et al. (2021):

- If most of the indicators in the PLS-SEM analysis have smaller prediction errors than the naive LM benchmark, the model has high predictive power.
- If the majority of the same number of indicators produce similar prediction errors, this suggests medium predictive power.
- If only a few indicators have lower prediction errors, this indicates a low predictive power.
- If PLS-SEM analysis has higher prediction errors than the LM benchmark, the model lacks predictive power.

The assessment of structural models includes a final and optional step known as model comparison, as outlined by Hair et al. (2021). According to Hair et al. (2021), evaluating models requires considering multiple configurations and theories, with an emphasis on their predictive capabilities. Hair et al. (2021) suggest using several metrics for model comparisons, including the Bayesian information criterion (BIC) and Geweke and Meese's criterion (GM). The BIC value should be minimised for a specific target construct, as recommended by Hair et al. (2021). Hair et al. (2021) suggested that the BIC value should be reduced for a particular target construct.

3.11 Mediating effect

Cheah et al. (2021) stated that a mediated relationship occurs when one or more variables intervene in transmitting the influence between two or more variables, such as the relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. This study aimed to investigate the mediating role of customer satisfaction and trust on customer loyalty. According to Hair et al. (2021), mediation is a process in which a mediator, or construct, comes between two connected constructs. A construct is considered to be a mediator to the extent that it carries the influence of a given independent variable on a given dependent variable (Hair et al., 2021). Cheah et al. (2021) emphasised that mediation analysis allows the researcher to examine whether a change in the independent variable leads to changes in the mediator, which ultimately results in changes in the dependent variable. In the conduct of research, the researcher must consider three different paths: the direct path, first-stage path, and second-stage path (Cheah et al. 2021). Hair et al. (2021) distinguished between direct, indirect, and total effects. A direct effect describes the relationship between two constructs with a single arrow, whereas an indirect effect involves a sequence of relationships with at least one intervening construct. The total effect comprises both direct and indirect effects (Hair et al. 2021). Hair et al. (2021) classified mediation into three categories: complementary, where both the indirect and direct effects are significant and support each other; competitive, where the indirect and direct effects are significant but oppose each other; and indirect only, where indirect effects are significant but the direct effect is insignificant.

Devi and Yasa (2021) argued that the assessment of the mediation effect is contingent on the Value Accounted For (VAF). The purpose of the VAF is to assess the magnitude of the indirect effect when compared to the overall impact of mediation (Mohd-Any et al., 2019). A VAF value greater than 80 per cent signifies full mediation, whereas a value between 20 and 80 per cent indicates partial mediation. Conversely, a VAF below 20 per cent indicates no mediation (Mohd-Any et al., 2019; Devi & Yasa, 2021). Hair et al. (2021) suggested that the use of the Sobel (1982) test to assess the mediating effect should be discontinued. Instead, bootstrapping of the sampling distribution of the indirect effect should be employed because it provides greater statistical power than the Sobel (1982) test. In this study, the bootstrapping methodology in SmartPLS was employed to assess the mediating influence of customer satisfaction and trust on customer loyalty through service quality and complaint handling.

3.12 Research methodology limitations

One of the technical limitations of this study was the difficulty in obtaining a representative sample for a nationwide survey. This challenge is not unique to this study, as similar difficulties were reported in other studies. For example, in a study on India's life insurance industry conducted by Ramamoorthy, Gunasekaran, Roy, Rai, and Senthilkumar (2018), the following limitations were identified:

- Additional investigations are required to verify the applicability of the model in other industries, as it has only been assessed within a specific context.
- The researchers had no control over the construction of customer lists from which the sampling was drawn.

- Future research should explore satisfaction determinants via interviews and focus groups for a deeper understanding of the key drivers in the life insurance sector and the influence of customer relationship management on loyalty.

3.13 Ethical Considerations

According to Deb et al. (2019), ethics encompasses a set of principles that distinguish acceptable behaviour from unacceptable conduct and right from wrong. Ethical clearance was obtained from Wits University prior to initiating the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants and institutions involved in the study. Research participants were informed about the study's purpose and assured that participation was voluntary and that they would not be coerced. The participants were informed that they would remain anonymous and could withdraw from the study at any time if they felt uncomfortable. Furthermore, participants were informed that their responses would be used exclusively for the study and that their participation would contribute to the enrichment of academic discourse. Data collection and reporting were conducted honestly, without altering or falsifying responses.

3.14 Summary

The methodology section of this study presents the suitability of the positivistic paradigm, deductive approach, quantitative research, survey design research strategy, cross-sectional research time-frame, and the techniques and procedures used in this study. The sampling design and plan were also drawn. The design of the instrument for data collection was modified from that of prior research. A pilot study was conducted to evaluate the internal consistency of the measurement items and enhance the questions and format of the final study. The data collection process, data analysis, and the use of various software packages are discussed. The mediating effects of customer satisfaction and trust were also discussed. Finally, the limitations and ethical considerations of this study have been presented. The subsequent section delves into data analysis and presents the results of this research.

CHAPTER 4. DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

Chapter Four is devoted to the examination and presentation of the data analysis results. To accomplish this task, SPSS version 27, AMOS, and SmartPLS software packages were employed as tools for data interpretation, validation, and analysis. This section presents and discusses the results of the study, providing insights into whether the various hypotheses posed were proven or disproven. The analysis commences with a discussion of the respondents' demographic profiles, followed by a brief review of the measurement items and their corresponding results. The reliability and validity of the measurement model were assessed, and the outcomes of this evaluation are presented. Finally, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural path models were employed to evaluate the model fit and test the hypotheses of the study.

4.2 Descriptive statistics

Mahmoud et al. (2018a) emphasized the importance of conducting a descriptive analysis before validation and further analysis. According to Holcomb (2017), it is essential to summarise large amounts of data to produce an intelligible description of results. Descriptive statistics enable researchers to identify patterns and summarise data (Cronk, 2019). In the previous section, SPSS was utilised to analyse the data and generate descriptive statistics, including frequencies and cumulative percentages of the respondents, as well as the mean and standard deviations of the measurement items. The results of this study are discussed below.

4.2.1. Demographic profile of the respondents

In total, 544 responses were obtained from the survey. Of these respondents, 112 did not complete the survey entirely, leaving 432 respondents (100%) who did. Of the 432 respondents, three did not provide consent, and 126 indicated they did not have life cover and were thus removed from the sample, resulting in 303 responses that were analysed and used in the study, representing a response rate of 56%. This section provides an overview of the respondents' demographic profiles, including their gender distribution, age categories, educational attainment, employment status, and choice of life insurance provider.

Table 5. Gender distribution

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Female	170	56.1
	Male	132	43.6
	Prefer not to say	1	0.3
	Total	303	100.0

The gender distribution data provided valuable insights into the male and female populations included in this study. As shown in Table 5, male participants comprised 43.6% (132 out of 303) of the sample, while female participants accounted for 56.1% (170 out of 303) of the total sample. Interestingly, respondents who did not specify their gender comprised the smallest percentage at 0.3%, which corresponds to only one out of the 303 respondents.

Table 6. Age distribution

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	35-44	129	42.6
	25-34	99	32.7
	45-54	53	17.5
	18-24	11	3.6
	55-64	9	3.0
	65+	2	0.7
	Total	303	100.0

Respondents were categorised into six age groups: 18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, and 65 and above. This classification was intended to gain insight into which age group consisted of the highest and lowest percentages of respondents. As depicted in Table 6, the 35-to 44-year-old age group had the highest percentage of respondents (42.6%, 129 out of 303) among the total sample.

Conversely, the 65 years and above age group had the lowest percentage of respondents (0.7%, 2 out of 303) in the total sample. The 45-to-54-year-old and 55-64-year-old age groups accounted for 17.5% (53 out of 303) and 3% (9 out of 303), respectively.

Table 7. Education level

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Post-graduate	146	48.2
	Degree	61	20.1
	Diploma	57	18.8
	High School	39	12.9
	Total	303	100.0

The objective of the education level measure was to gauge respondents' level of education, which is crucial given the intricacy of life insurance products. As illustrated in Table 7, education level was classified into four categories: postgraduate, undergraduate, diploma, and high school. Among the total sample of 303 respondents, those with postgraduate education constituted the largest proportion, accounting for 48.2% (146 out of 303). In contrast, individuals who had finished high school constituted the smallest proportion of the sample, accounting for 12.9% (39 of 303) of the total population.

Table 8. Employment Status

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Employed	266	87.8
	Self-employed	21	6.9
	Student	12	4.0
	Unemployed	4	1.3
	Total	303	100.0

The employment status measure aims to provide information on the proportion of respondents who are employed and capable of contributing to monthly life insurance premiums. According to the data presented in Table 8, the majority of respondents were employed, accounting for 87.8% (266 of 303) of the total sample. Only a small percentage of respondents were unemployed, representing 1.3% (four out of 303) of the total sample.

Table 9. Life Insurers

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Discovery	148	48.8
	Other	41	13.5
	Old Mutual	35	11.6
	Liberty	32	10.6
	Sanlam	18	5.9
	Momentum	14	4.6
	1 Life	8	2.6
	PPS	7	2.3
	Total	303	100.0

The primary objective of this enquiry was to establish life insurance companies that constituted the majority of the respondents and those with the least representation. As shown in Table 9, Discovery Life had the highest proportion (48.8%, 148 out of 303) of the overall sample. Notably, 13.5% (41 of 303) of the total sample were identified with other life insurance providers outside the scope of the study. It is worth mentioning that PPS had the least number of respondents, amounting to 2.3% (7 out of 303) of the overall sample.

4.2.2. Results of measurement items

This section presents a summary of the responses to each construct based on a five-point Likert scale, with anchors ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). The results were derived from five constructs: service quality (SQ) with six measurement items, complaint handling (CH) with four measurement items, customer satisfaction (CS) with five measurement items, customer trust (CT) with three, and customer loyalty (CL) with six measurement items. The following table displays the descriptive statistics of the measurement items derived from the survey data and processed using SPSS software. This is accompanied by a brief discussion of the results as well as a summary of the means and standard deviations for each item.

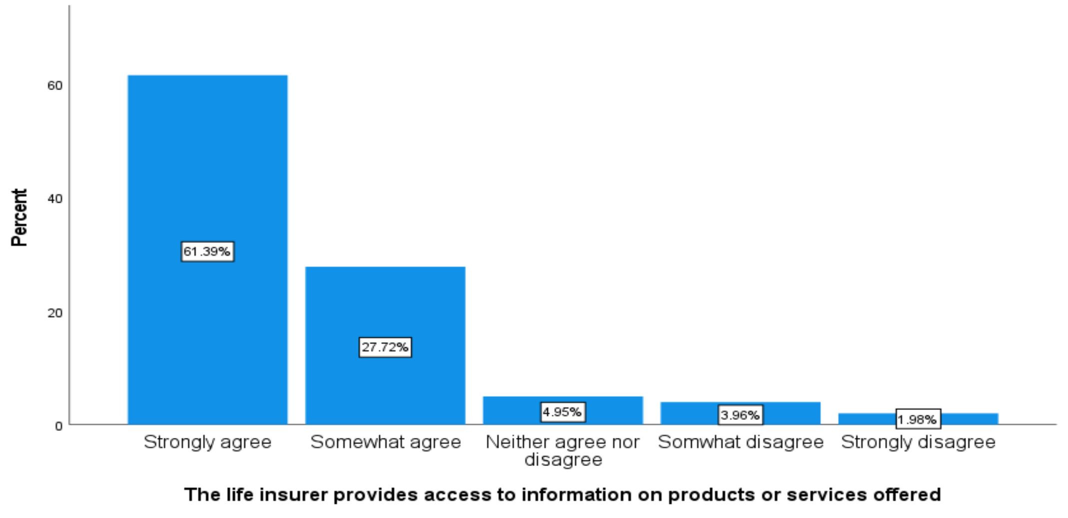

Figure 5. Measurement item SQ1

Source: Author’s compilation from the survey results (2023)

As depicted in Figure 5, a substantial majority of the 303 respondents (61.39%) strongly agreed with the statement that the life insurer grants access to information on its products or services. Conversely, only 4.95% of the respondents remained neutral, whereas the smallest group that strongly disagreed accounted for 1.98% of the total sample.

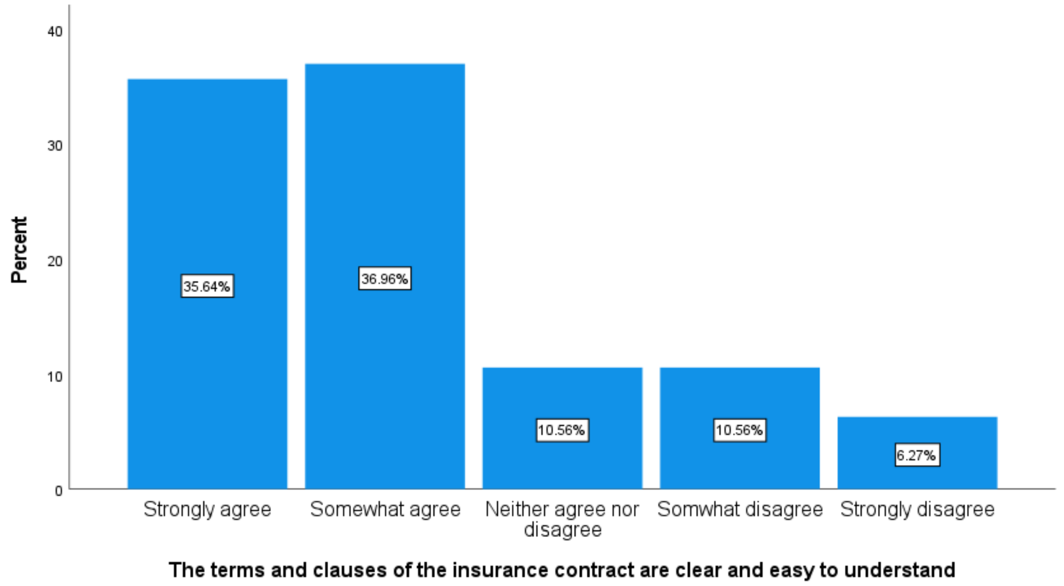

Figure 6. Measurement item SQ2

Source: Author's compilation from the survey results (2023)

In Figure 6, it can be observed that a substantial percentage of respondents, 36.96%, somewhat agreed with the assertion that the terms and clauses of the insurance contract were clear and easily comprehensible. The statement was largely agreed upon by a considerable percentage of the respondents, with 35.64% strongly agreeing with it. In contrast, the smallest group (6.27%) strongly disagreed with this statement.

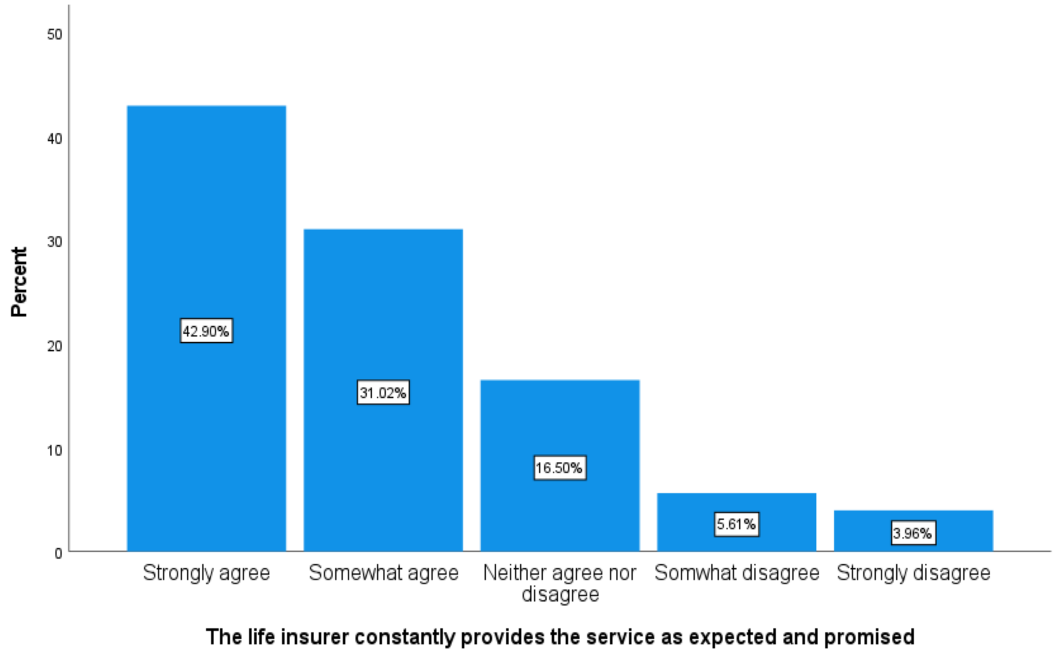

Figure 7. Measurement item SQ3

Source: Author's compilation from the survey results (2023)

As depicted in Figure 7, a significant portion of the respondents (42.90%) expressed strong agreement with the assertion that the life insurer consistently delivered the expected and promised levels of service. Conversely, the smallest group of respondents, constituting 3.96% of the total, exhibited strong disagreement with the statement in question.

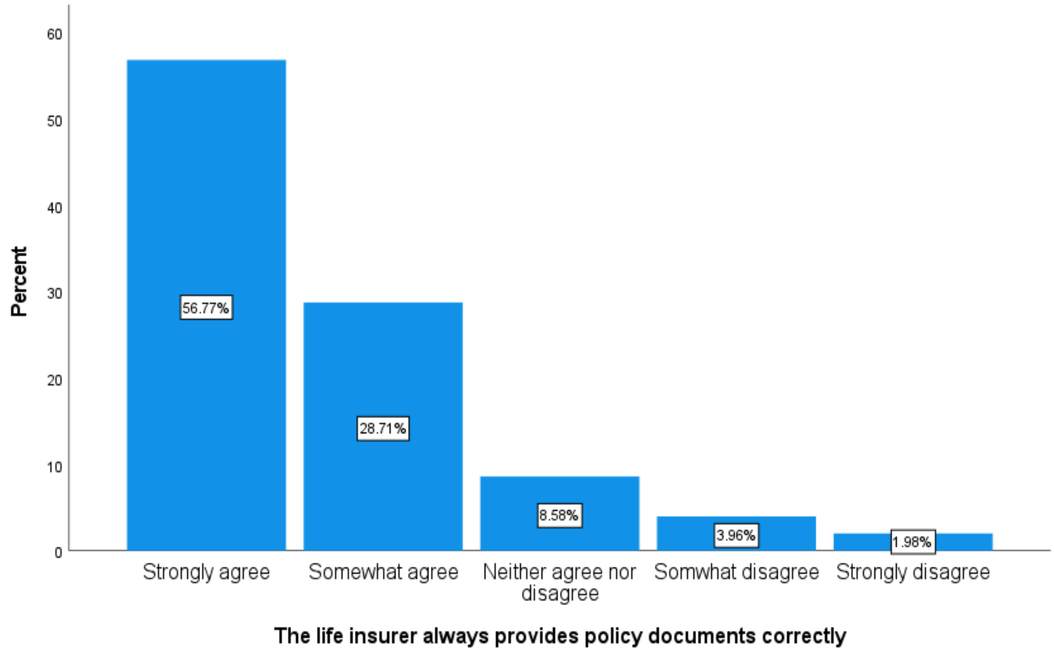

Figure 8. Measurement item SQ4

Source: Author's compilation from the survey results (2023)

According to the data in Figure 8, most respondents (56.77%) strongly agreed that life insurers consistently provided accurate policy documents. However, the smallest proportion of respondents, equivalent to 1.96% of the total sample, strongly disagreed with this statement.

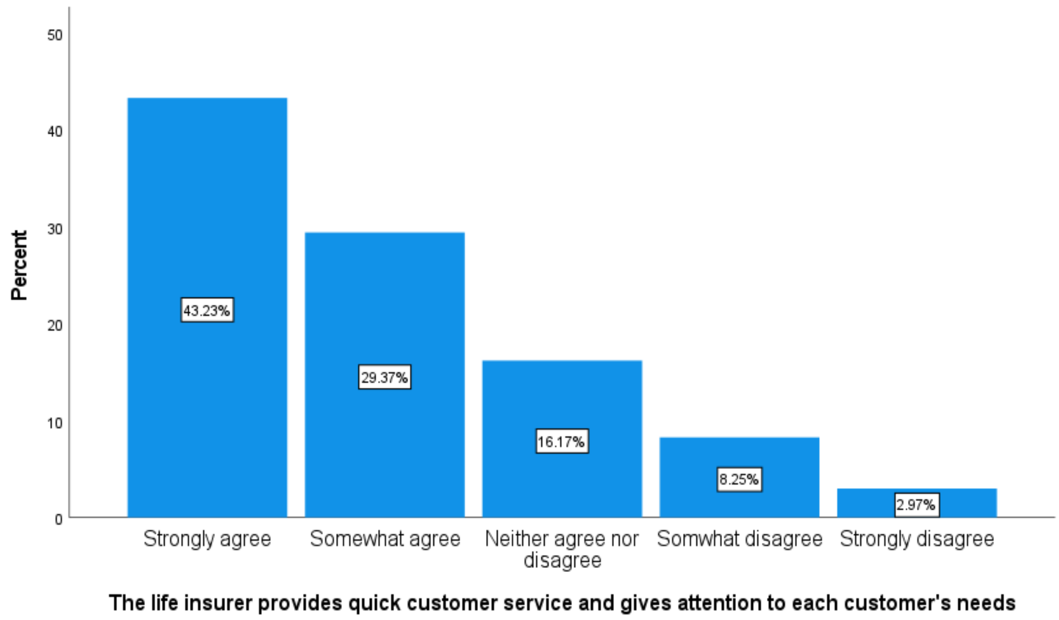

Figure 9. Measurement item SQ5

Source: Author's compilation from the survey results (2023)

According to the data presented in Figure 9, a significant portion of the respondents (43.23%) expressed strong agreement with the notion that life insurance companies offer prompt customer service and pay heed to the unique needs of each customer. On the other hand, 2.97% of the respondents voiced strong disagreement with this statement.

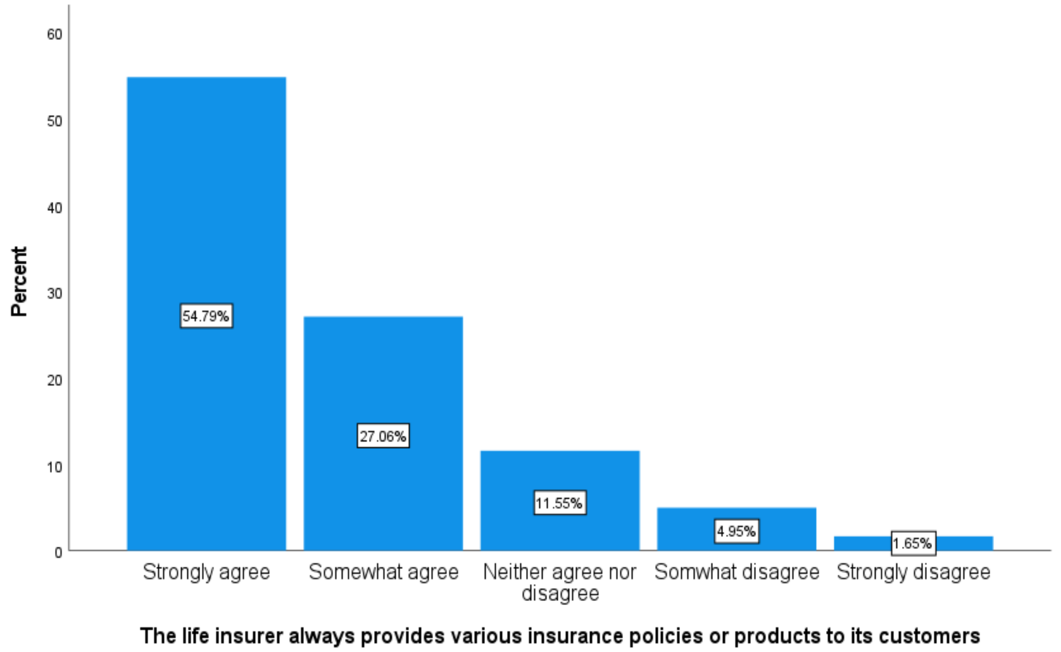

Figure 10. Measurement item SQ6

Source: Author's compilation from the survey results (2023)

The results displayed in Figure 10 indicate that a significant majority of respondents (54.79%) strongly agreed with the notion that life insurance providers consistently offer a range of insurance policies or products to their customers. In contrast, only a minority of respondents (1.65% of the total) expressed a strong dissenting view of this issue.

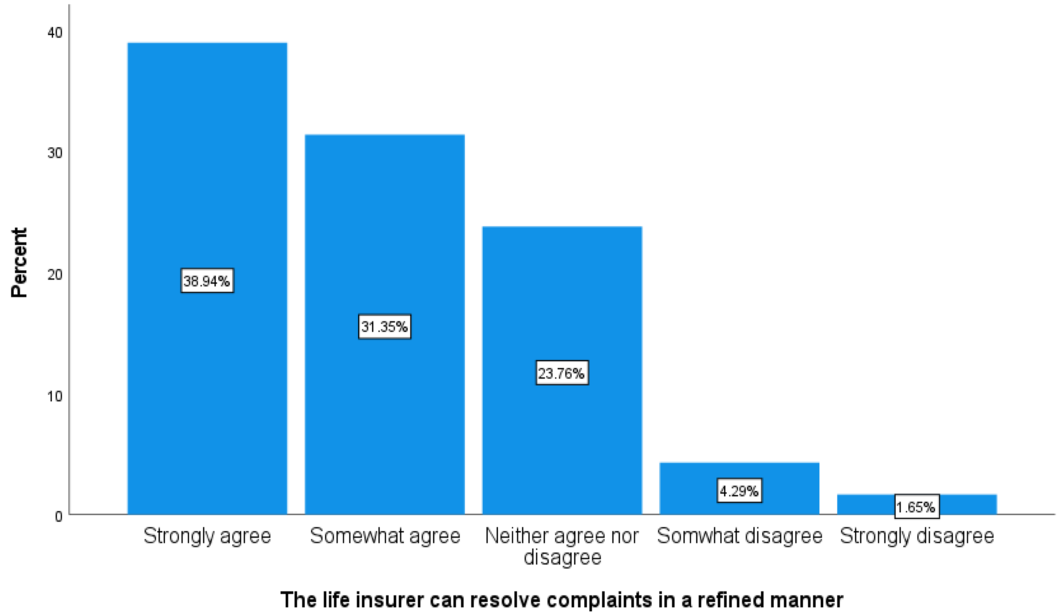

Figure 11. Measurement item CH1

Source: Author's compilation from the survey results (2023)

As depicted in Figure 11, a substantial portion of the respondents (38.94%) expressed strong agreement with the assertion that life insurance providers are adept at addressing complaints in a refined manner. On the other hand, only 1.65% of respondents voiced strong disagreement with the same assertion.

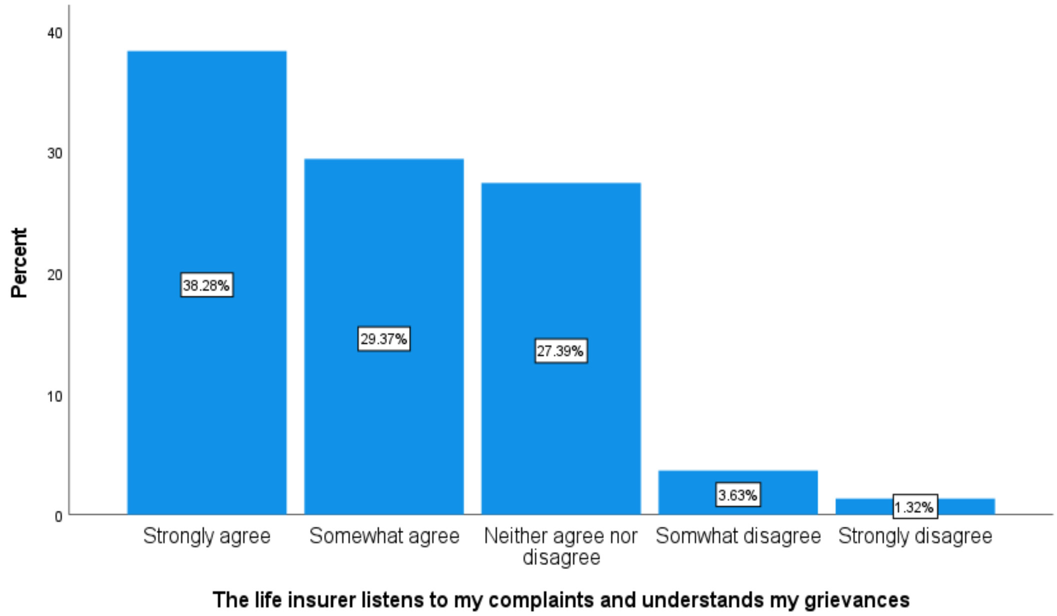

Figure 12. Measurement item CH2

Source: Author's compilation from the survey results (2023)

As depicted in Figure 12, a substantial proportion of 38.28% of the respondents expressed a strong agreement with the assertion that the life insurer considers their grievances and listens to their complaints. On the other hand, only 1.32% of respondents strongly disagreed with this statement.

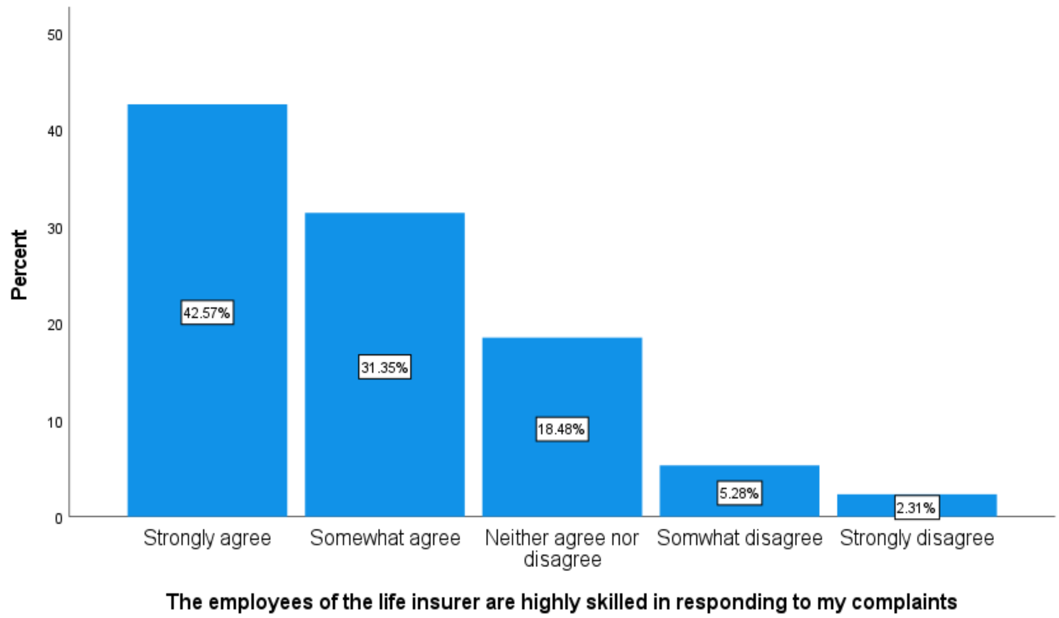

Figure 13. Measurement item CH3

Source: Author's compilation from the survey results (2023)

According to the data presented in Figure 13, a substantial proportion (42.57%) of respondents strongly agreed with the statement that life insurer employees were highly skilled in addressing their complaints. On the other hand, a relatively small proportion of 2.31% of the respondents expressed strong disagreement with this statement.

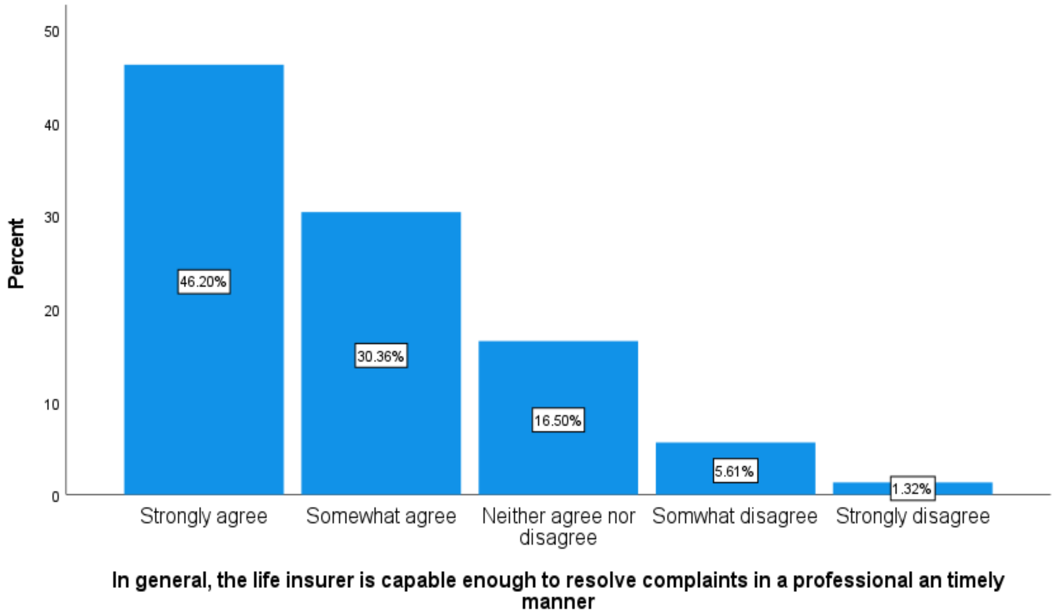

Figure 14. Measurement item CH4

Source: Author's compilation from the survey results (2023)

According to the data presented in Figure 14, a significant proportion of respondents (46.20%) strongly agreed that insurance providers were capable of addressing complaints in a professional and timely manner. However, only a small percentage of respondents (1.32%) expressed strong disagreement with this statement.

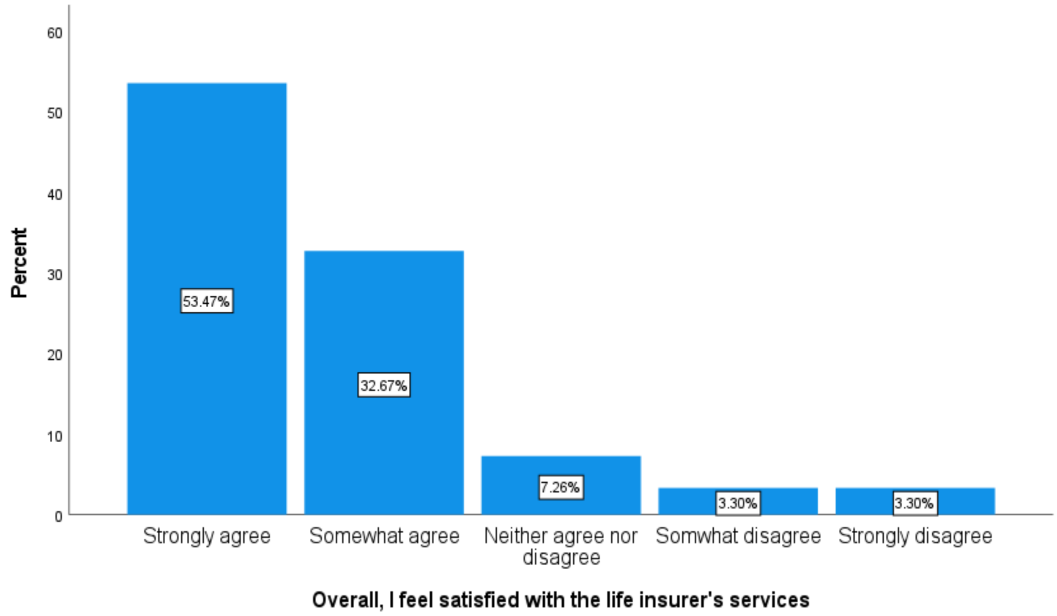

Figure 15. Measurement item CS1

Source: Author's compilation from the survey results (2023)

According to the data presented in Figure 15, the majority of the respondents (53.47%) strongly agreed with the statement that they were content with the services provided by life insurers. However, only 3.30% of respondents held contrary views and strongly disagreed with this statement.

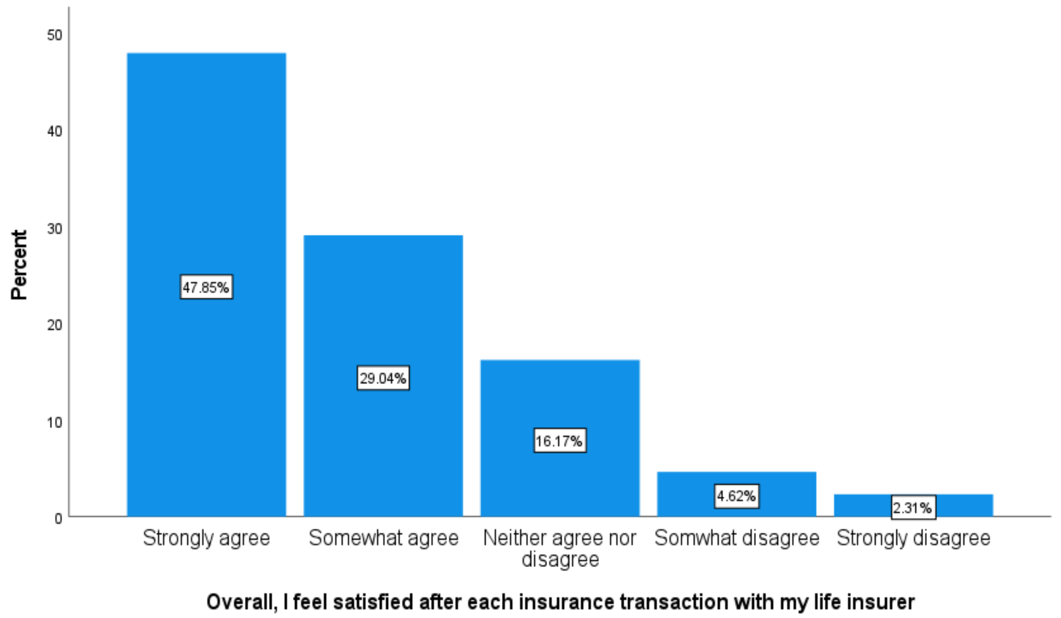

Figure 16. Measurement item CS2

Source: Author's compilation from the survey results (2023)

As depicted in Figure 16, nearly half of the respondents (47.85%) strongly agreed with the statement that they were satisfied with their life insurer following each insurance transaction. However, the smallest group that strongly disagreed with the statement comprised only 2.31% of respondents.

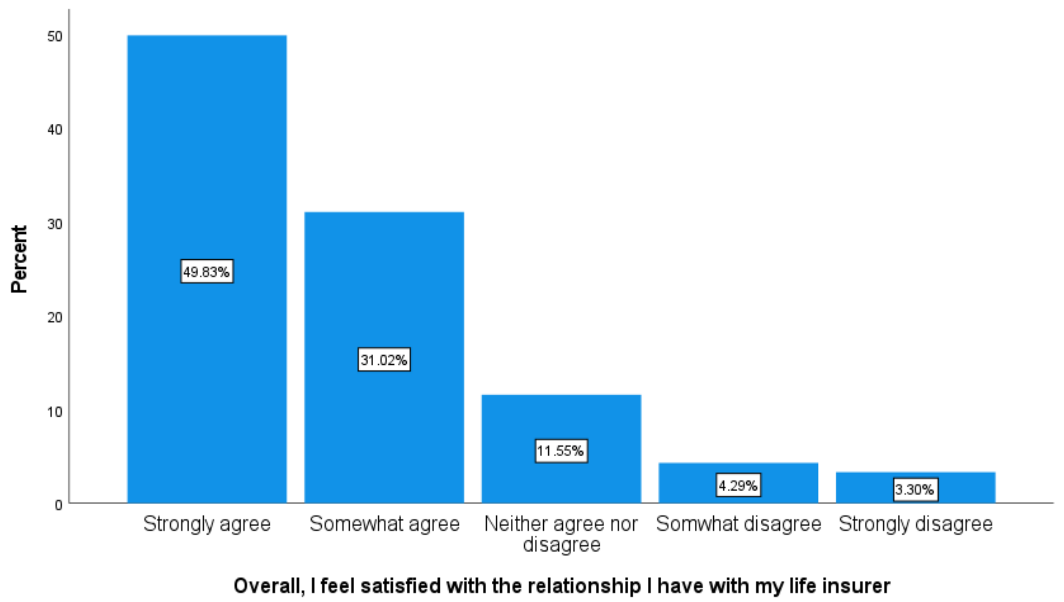

Figure 17. Measurement item CS3

Source: Author's compilation from the survey results (2023)

As illustrated in Figure 17, a significant proportion of respondents (49.83%) expressed strong agreement with the assertion that they were satisfied with their life insurance provider. However, 3.30% of respondents expressed strong disagreement.

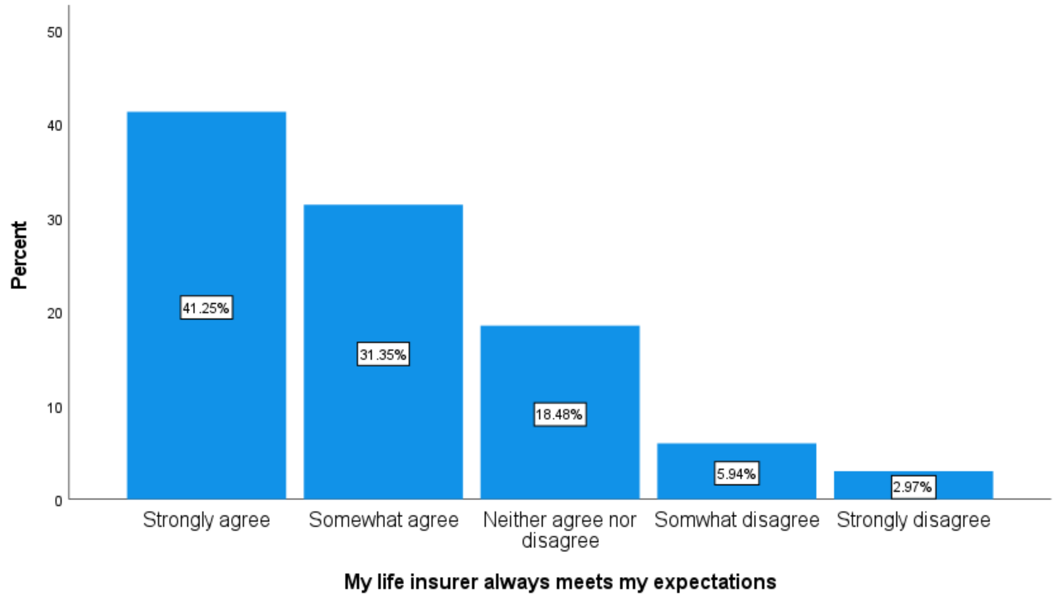

Figure 18. Measurement item CS4

Source: Author's compilation from the survey results (2023)

According to the data presented in Figure 18, approximately 41.25% of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement that their life insurers consistently fulfilled their expectations. On the other hand, 2.97% of the respondents strongly disagreed with this statement.

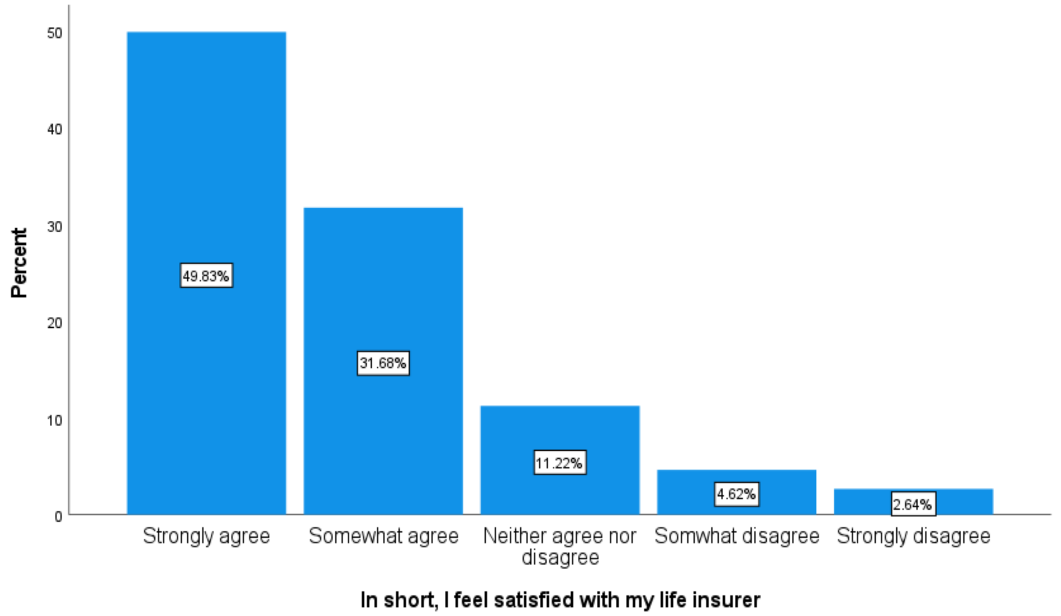

Figure 19. Measurement item CS5

Source: Author's compilation from the survey results (2023)

Figure 19 indicates that a significant proportion of respondents (49.83%) strongly agreed that they were satisfied with their life insurers. Meanwhile, the smallest demographic that expressed strong disagreement with this statement was 2.64%.

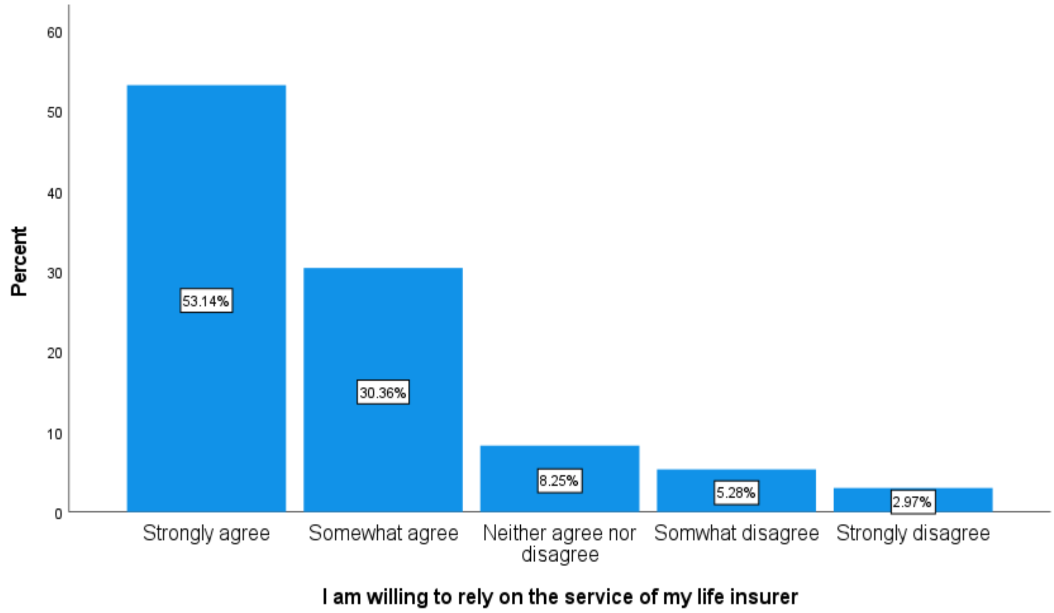

Figure 20. Measurement item CT1

Source: Author’s compilation from the survey results (2023)

In Figure 20, the majority of respondents (53.14%) indicated strong agreement with the statement that they were willing to rely on the services of their life insurer. However, a small proportion of respondents (2.97%) strongly disagreed with this statement.

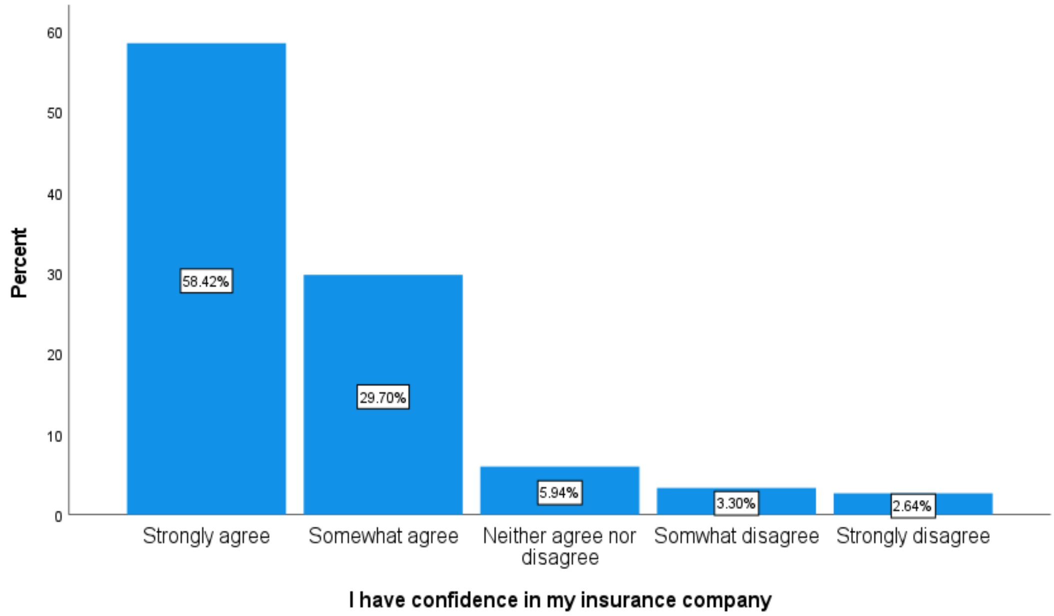

Figure 21. Measurement item CT2

Source: Author’s compilation from the survey results (2023)

The majority of respondents (58.42%) strongly agreed with the statement that they had confidence in their life insurers, as demonstrated by the data in Figure 21. However, only a small percentage (2.64%) of respondents strongly disagreed with this statement.

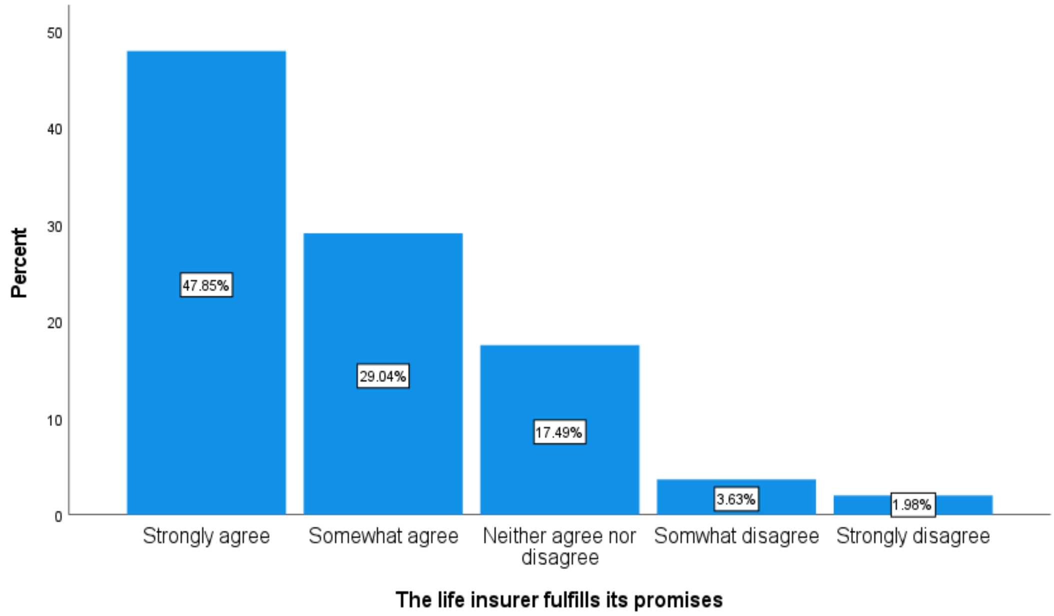

Figure 22. Measurement item CT3

Source: Author’s compilation from the survey results (2023)

As depicted in Figure 22, a substantial portion of the respondents (47.85%) unequivocally agreed that their life insurers fulfilled their promises. Conversely, only 1.98% of respondents disagreed with this statement.

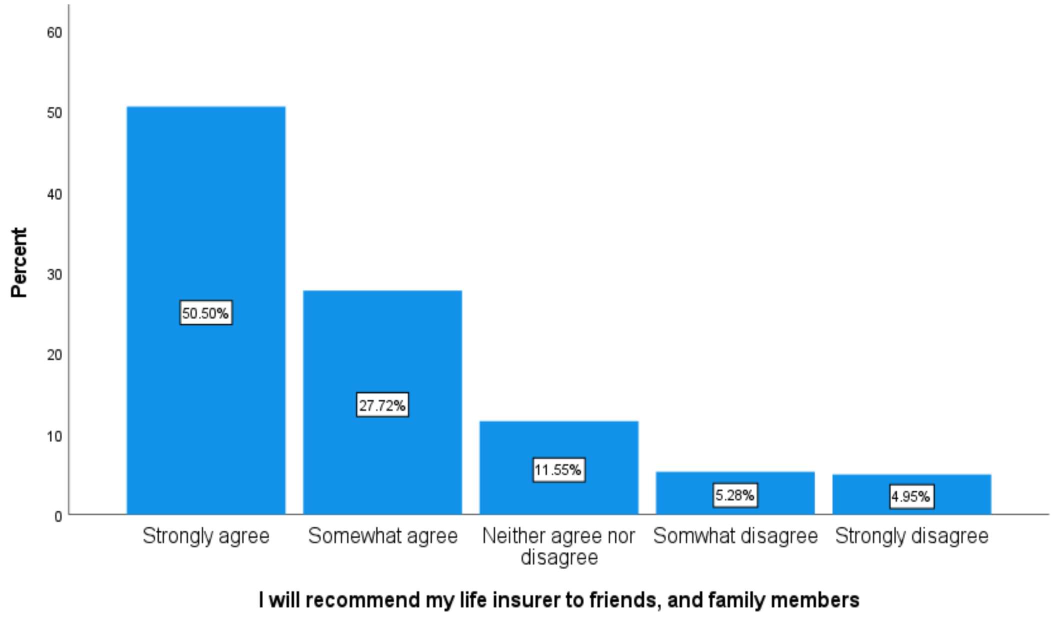

Figure 23. Measurement item CL1

Source: Author’s compilation from the survey results (2023)

As depicted in Figure 23, 50.50% of the participants unequivocally surveyed their agreement with the notion of recommending life insurers to acquaintances and loved ones. On the other hand, only 4.95% of the respondents voiced strong disagreement with the statement in question.

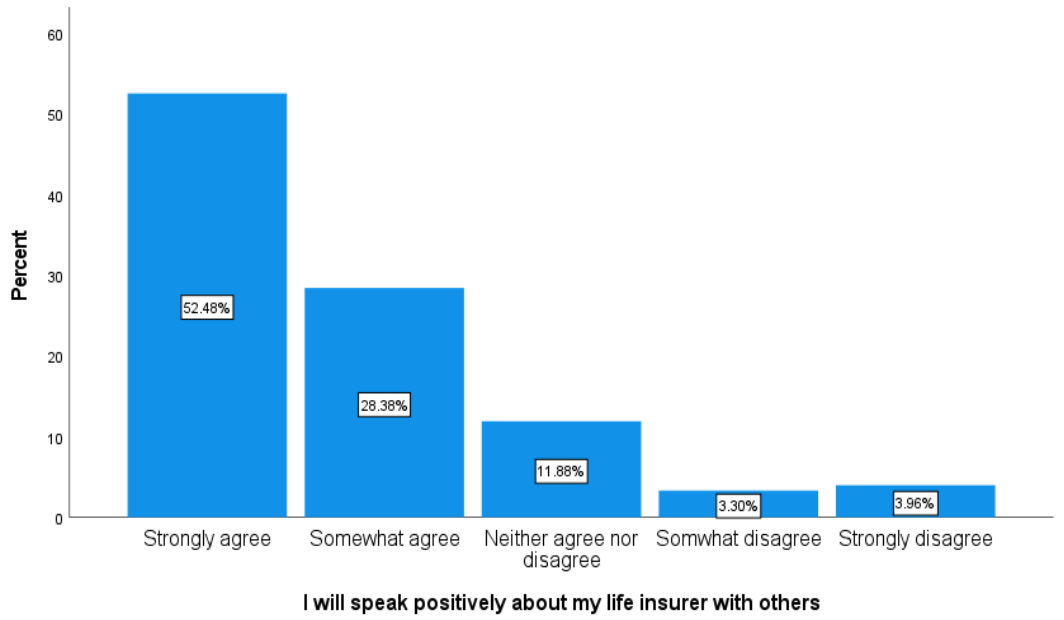

Figure 24. Measurement item CL2

Source: Author's compilation from the survey results (2023)

In Figure 24, the majority of the participants (52.48%) expressed strong agreement with the statement that they would eagerly discuss their life insurance with others. However, only a small proportion of participants (3.96%) strongly disagreed.

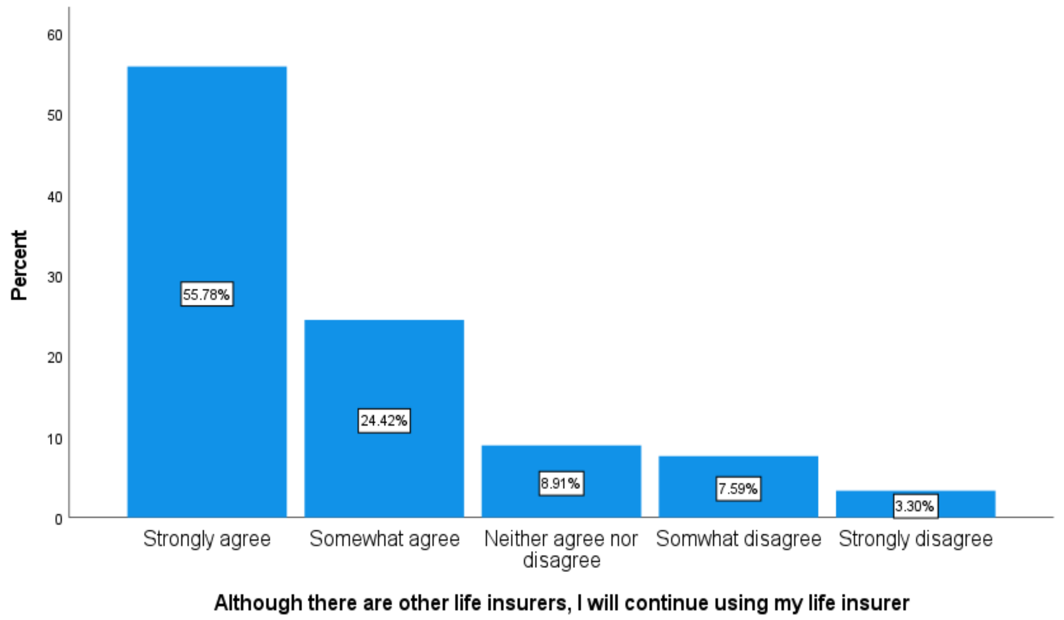

Figure 25. Measurement item CL3

Source: Author's compilation from the survey results (2023)

As illustrated in Figure 25, a substantial majority of the respondents (55.78%) expressed strong agreement with the assertion that they will continue to utilise life insurers despite the presence of alternative options. In contrast, only 3.30% of respondents strongly disagreed with this statement.

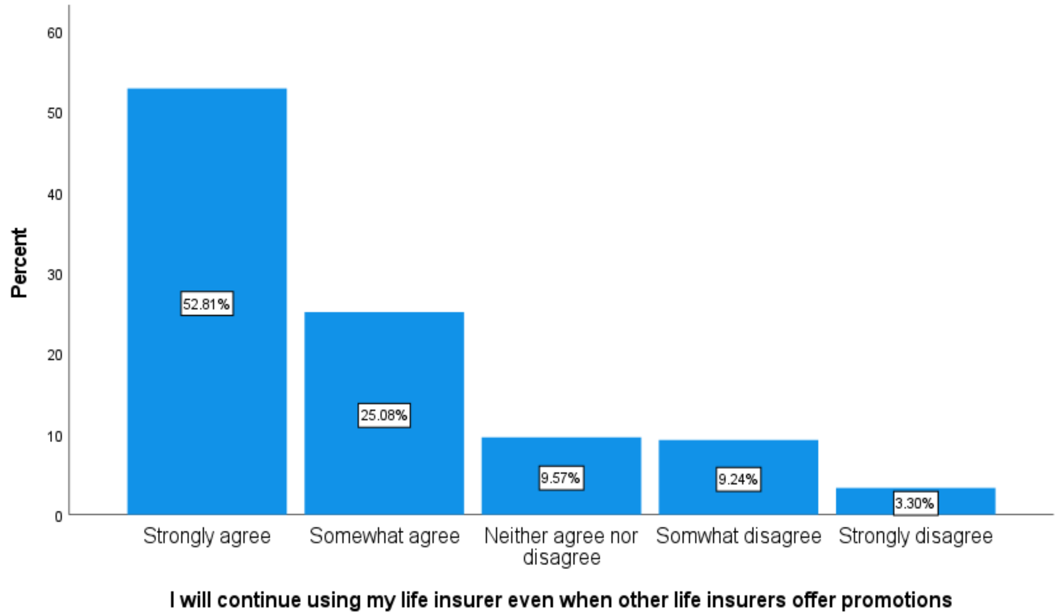

Figure 26. Measurement item CL4

Source: Author's compilation from the survey results (2023)

As indicated in Figure 26, the majority of respondents (52.81%) expressed strong agreement with the statement that they would continue using their life insurer even when other insurers offered promotions. Conversely, only 3.30% of respondents strongly disagreed with this statement.

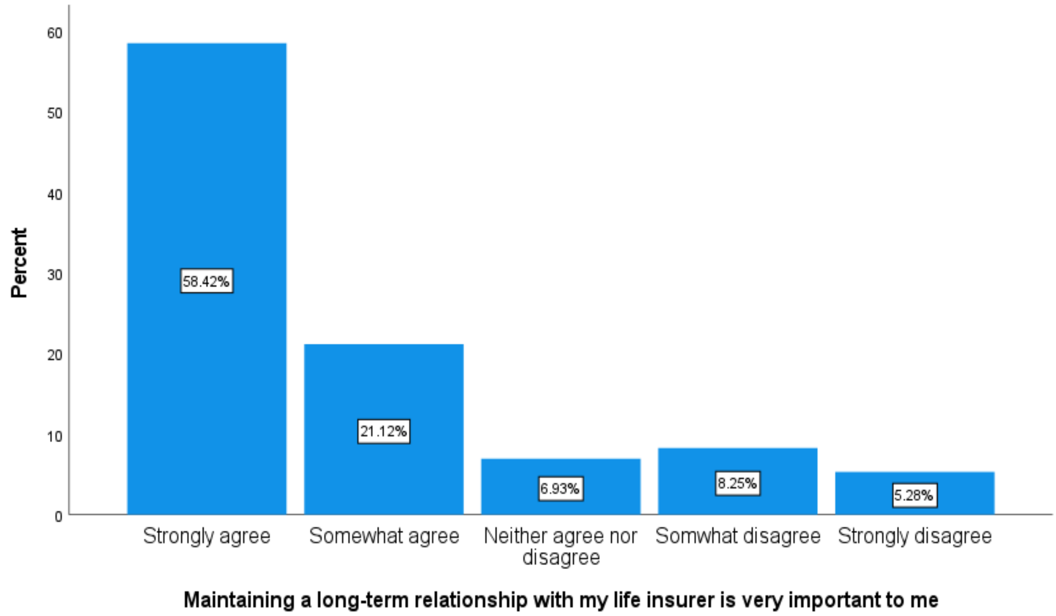

Figure 27. Measurement item CL5

Source: Author’s compilation from the survey results (2023)

As depicted in Figure 27, among the 303 respondents, a substantial proportion (58.42%) strongly agreed with the statement that fostering a long-term relationship with their life insurer was of paramount importance to them. On the other hand, 5.28% of respondents strongly disagreed with this statement.

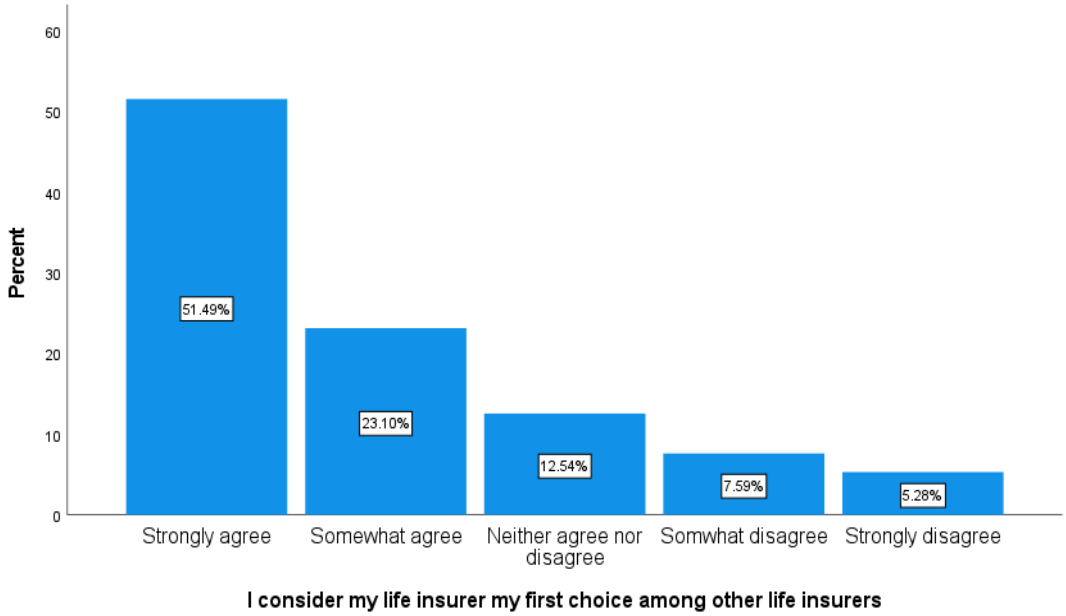

Figure 28. Measurement item CL6

Source: Author's compilation from the survey results (2023)

As Figure 28 shows, 51.49% of the respondents indicated that they would strongly consider their life insurers as their first choice among other life insurers. However, 5.28% of the respondents strongly disagreed with this statement.

According to Llaudet and Imai (2022), descriptive statistics, particularly the mean and standard deviation, can effectively summarise the primary features of a variable's distribution. The mean acts as the central point of the distribution, while the standard deviation reflects the variation or dispersion relative to this central point (Llaudet & Imai, 2022). As indicated in Table 10, the mean values for each construct and its corresponding statement from the survey questionnaire were greater than one, as specified below.

Table 10. Summary of the descriptive statistics of each construct

Research Construct			Descriptive Statistics	
			Mean Value	Standard Deviation
Service Quality (SQ)	SQ1 SQ2 SQ3 SQ4 SQ5 SQ6	1.57 2.15 1.97 1.66 1.98 1.72	1.841	0.817
Complaint Handling (CH)	CH1 CH2 CH3 CH4	1.98 2.00 1.93 1.85	1.943	0.891
Customer Satisfaction (CS)	CS1 CS2 CS3 CS4 CS5	1.70 1.84 1.80 1.98 1.79	1.823	0.934
Customer Trust (CT)	CT1 CT2 CT3	1.75 1.62 1.83	1.731	0.899
Customer Loyalty (CL)	CL1 CL2 CL3 CL4 CL5 CL6	1.86 1.78 1.78 1.85 1.81 1.92	1.834	0.966

Source: Author’s compilation from the survey results (2023)

Table 10 demonstrates that the participants' responses to service quality (SQ) are well above one on a five-point Likert scale. This indicates that the majority of participants consider service quality to be a crucial aspect of their relationship with life insurers. The high scores for SQ2 and SQ5, specifically 'the terms and clauses of the insurance contract are clear and easy to understand'

(2.15) and 'the life insurer provides quick customer service and gives attention to each customer' (1.98), further substantiating the significance of service quality in this context.

The assessment of complaint handling (CH) in Table 10 reveals that participants have rated their satisfaction with this aspect of their relationship with their life insurer exceptionally high, with an average score of 2.00 and 1.98, respectively, for CH2 and CH1. These scores clearly indicate that most participants considered complaint handling a critical factor in their relationship with their insurers.

The results presented in Table 10 pertaining to customer satisfaction (CS) indicate that responses exceed a rating of one on a five-point Likert scale, suggesting that a majority of participants place great significance on customer satisfaction as a crucial factor in their relationship with their life insurer. Specifically, the responses to CS4 and CS2 statements, which state that 'my life insurer always meets my expectations' (1.98) and 'overall, I feel satisfied after each insurance transaction with my life insurer' (1.84), further emphasising the importance of customer satisfaction in this context.

Table 10 indicates that participants place a high degree of importance on customer trust (CT), as evidenced by their responses being significantly higher than one on a five-point Likert scale. This suggests that most participants view customer trust as a critical component of their relationship with life insurers. The results particularly indicate high levels of agreement with the statements "the life insurer fulfils its promises" (CT3, 1.83) and "I am willing to rely on the service of my life insurer" (CT1, 1.75).

Responses to customer loyalty, as indicated in Table 10, are exceptional, with an average score of over one on a five-point Likert scale. This suggests that the majority of participants highly valued customer loyalty in their relationship with life insurers. Notably, the responses to CL6 and CL1 statements, which state 'I consider my life insurer my first choice among other life insurers' (1.92) and 'I will recommend my life insurer to my friends and family members' (1.86), are particularly strong.

4.3 Reliability assessment

Evaluating the dependability of a measurement instrument is crucial to ensure that the data are handled correctly and that the measurement item assesses the same construct, thereby enabling the study to be replicated in a different environment (Rogers and Revesz, 2020). To assess the reliability of the instrument, indicator loadings were utilized to evaluate the reliability of the indicators and internal consistency was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient and composite reliability (CR) measures.

4.3.1. Indicator reliability

Examining the degree to which each indicator's variance is accounted for by its underlying construct is essential for assessing its reliability, as indicated by Hair et al. (2021). To determine the reliability of an indicator, the indicator loading, which represents the bivariate correlation between the indicator and its constructs, is squared (Hair et al. 2021). Indicator loadings greater than 0.708 are preferred because they indicate that the construct accounts for more than 50% of the variance in the indicator, as stated by Ringle et al. (2018). Ab Hamid et al. (2017) suggested that values above 0.70 should be considered desirable, while those below 0.40 should be removed. As Table 11 shows, the reflectively measured constructs (SQ, CH, CS, CT, and CL) displayed indicator loadings ranging from 0.704 to 0.932, indicating a satisfactory level of indicator reliability. However, SQ6 and CL5 exhibited the lowest indicator-explained variances with values of 0.704 and 0.707, respectively.

4.3.2. Cronbach Alpha Test

According to Taber (2018), Cronbach's alpha test is commonly used by authors to confirm the validity of tests and scales constructed or adapted for a study. Cronbach's alpha is the most widely employed method for assessing the internal consistency reliability of the interrelationships between the observed item variables (Ab Hamid et al., 2017). Cronbach's alpha consists of several items that make up a scale designed to measure a single construct and is always calculated based on the items related to one construct (Cronk, 2019; Sarstedt and Mooi, 2019). Sarstedt and Mooi

(2019) explained that Cronbach's alpha ranges from 0 to 1, with a generally agreed lower limit of 0.70; values closer to 1 indicate stronger internal consistency reliability. As shown in Table 11, Cronbach's alpha values for the research construct ranged from 0.879 to 0.958, demonstrating a higher internal consistency of the measurement scale.

Table 11. Measurement accuracy and descriptive statistics

Research constructs		**Scale item**		**Cronbach's alpha value**		**C.R.**	**AVE**	**Factor Loadings**
		Mean	SD	Item-to-total	α Value			
SQ	SQ1 SQ2 SQ3 SQ4 SQ5 SQ6	1.841	0.817	0.644 0.647 0.775 0.677 0.759 0.635	0.879	0.89	0.57	0.720 0.744 0.840 0.708 0.814 0.704
CH	CH1 CH2 CH3 CH4	1.943	0.891	0.832 0.850 0.796 0.852	0.928	0.92	0.70	0.848 0.849 0.849 0.917
CS	CS1 CS2 CS3 CS4 CS5	1.823	0.93 4	0.862 0.874 0.907 0.860 0.908	0.958	0.96	0.83	0.905 0.889 0.922 0.896 0.932
CT	CT1 CT2 CT3	1.732	0.899	0.825 0.883 0.771	0.913	0.95	0.83	0.921 0.914 0.868
CL	CL1 CL2 CL4 CL5 CL6	1.833	0.966	0.778 0.762 0.820 0.758 0.764 0.834	0.926	0.91	0.64	0.847 0.866 0.794 0.707 0.736 0.843

Source: Author's compilation from the survey results (2023)

4.3.3. Composite reliability

According to Hair et al. (2020), Cronbach's alpha is an unweighted measure that is considered less accurate. Therefore, it is recommended to report composite reliability (CR) as it is a weighted measure (Hair et al. 2020). CR is a commonly used measure of internal consistency based on the interrelatedness of observed item variables (Ab Hamid et al., 2017). CR, pioneered by Jorsekog (1971), is a primary measure used in PLS-SEM and computed using the factor loadings for every item retained in the model after the CFA process (Baistaman et al., 2020; Hair et al., 2021). Hair et al. (2020) suggested a value above 0.70 as a benchmark for assessing the internal consistency of a construct.

CR is calculated using the following formula:

$$(CR): CR\eta = (\Sigma\lambda yi)\ 2/\ [(\Sigma\lambda yi)\ 2 + (\Sigma\varepsilon i)]$$

The formula can be labelled as follows: Composite Reliability = (square of the summation of the factor loadings)/ {(square of the summation of the factor loadings) + (summation of error variances)}.

As can be seen in Table 11, CR values range from 0.89 to 0.96, which are above the 0.70 threshold, thus showing internal consistency (Hair et al., 2020).

4.4 Validity assessment

The literature emphasises the significance of evaluating a measurement scale's validity to ensure that it continues to measure what it intends to measure. Convergent and discriminant validity measures were used to assess the validity of the research.

4.4.1. Convergent validity

Convergent validity refers to the extent to which a construct accounts for variance in its constituent items (Hair et al., 2019). To demonstrate convergent validity, Ab Hamid et al. (2017) emphasised the importance of considering the factor loadings of the indicators CR and AVE. According to

Botwood, Chinomona, and Govender (2019), convergent validity is achieved when items are loaded on their predetermined (a priori) constructs and their loadings exceed 0.5. As shown in Table 11, all loadings ranged from 0.704 to 0.932, indicating that more than 50% of the variance in the indicator was shared with its respective construct, thereby establishing acceptable convergent validity.

To evaluate convergent validity more comprehensively, Ab Hamid et al. (2019) and Baistaman et al. (2020) conducted AVE calculations, which should demonstrate a value exceeding 0.50, signifying the extent of the variance explained by the latent variable. AVE is obtained by averaging the reliability of the construct indicators (Hair et al., 2020). Convergent validity was established by achieving an AVE value greater than 0.50, thereby confirming that a substantial portion of the variance in the indicators could be attributed to the latent construct, which was calculated using the following formula:

$$V\eta=\Sigma\lambda yi2/ (\Sigma\lambda yi2+\Sigma\varepsilon i)$$

The formula is as follows: AVE = {(summation of the squared factor loadings)/ {(summation of the squared factor loadings) + (summation of the error variance).

As can be observed in Table 11 below, AVE values for each variable ranged from 0.57 to 0.83, which are above the 0.50 threshold, thus indicating convergent validity.

4.4.2. Discriminant validity

Table 12. HTMT Analysis

	SQ	CH	CS	CL	CT
SQ					
CH	0.853				
CS	0.906	0.843			
CL	0.763	0.736	**0.859**		
CT	0.863	0.808	0.939	0.873	

Source: Author’s compilation from the survey results (2023)

Discriminant validity refers to the extent to which a construct is fundamentally different from another (Ab Hamid et al., 2017). Hair et al. (2020) explained that discriminant validity enables researchers to gauge the singularity of a construct, which is evidenced by the shared variance within a construct (AVE) surpassing the shared variance between constructs. Ab Hamid et al. (2017) suggest three measures that a researcher can use to evaluate discriminant validity, including cross-loading of indicators, the Fornell-Lacker criterion, and the Heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlation. In the previous chapter, Hensler et al. (2015) proposed HTMT analyses using a Monte Carlo simulation study and found that it could achieve higher specificity and sensitivity rates compared to cross-loadings and the Fornell-Lacker criterion (Ab Hamid et al., 2017). Hair et al. (2020) recommended HTMT cutoff scores of between 0.85 and 0.90 to assess discriminant validity. As can be observed in Table 12, the HTMT ratio scores range from 0.736 to 0.939, with two slightly above the 0.90 threshold, namely, CS and CT at 0.906 and 0.939, respectively, thereby raising minor discriminant validity concerns. According to Franke and Sarstedt (2019), the reason the study can have scores above 0.90 is that under most simulation conditions, each construct's indicators correlate more highly with their underlying construct than with the other construct.

4.5 Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

Dash and Paul (2019) proposed that following the assessment of the reliability and validity of variables, it is essential to evaluate the model's fit by considering all three types of model fit indices: absolute, incremental, and parsimonious. In this study, CFA was conducted to assess the model fit between the data and the research model. The results can be seen in Table 13, which shows that all the model fit indices meet the thresholds recommended by Husain (2019) and Dash and Paul (2019).

Table 13. CFA Model fit indices

Model fit indices	Thresholds	CFA results	Acceptable/ Unacceptable
CMIN/DF	<3	2.513	Acceptable
GFI	>O.9	0.9	Acceptable
NFI	>0.9	0.926	Acceptable
RFI	>0.9	0.912	Acceptable
IFI	>0.9	0.954	Acceptable
TLI	>0.9	0.945	Acceptable
CFI	>0.9	0.54	Acceptable
RMSEA	<0.08	0.71	Acceptable
PNFI	>0.50	0.781	Acceptable
PCFI	>0.50	0.805	Acceptable

Source: Author’s compilation from the survey results (2023)

Figure 29 presents the CFA model calculated using AMOS.

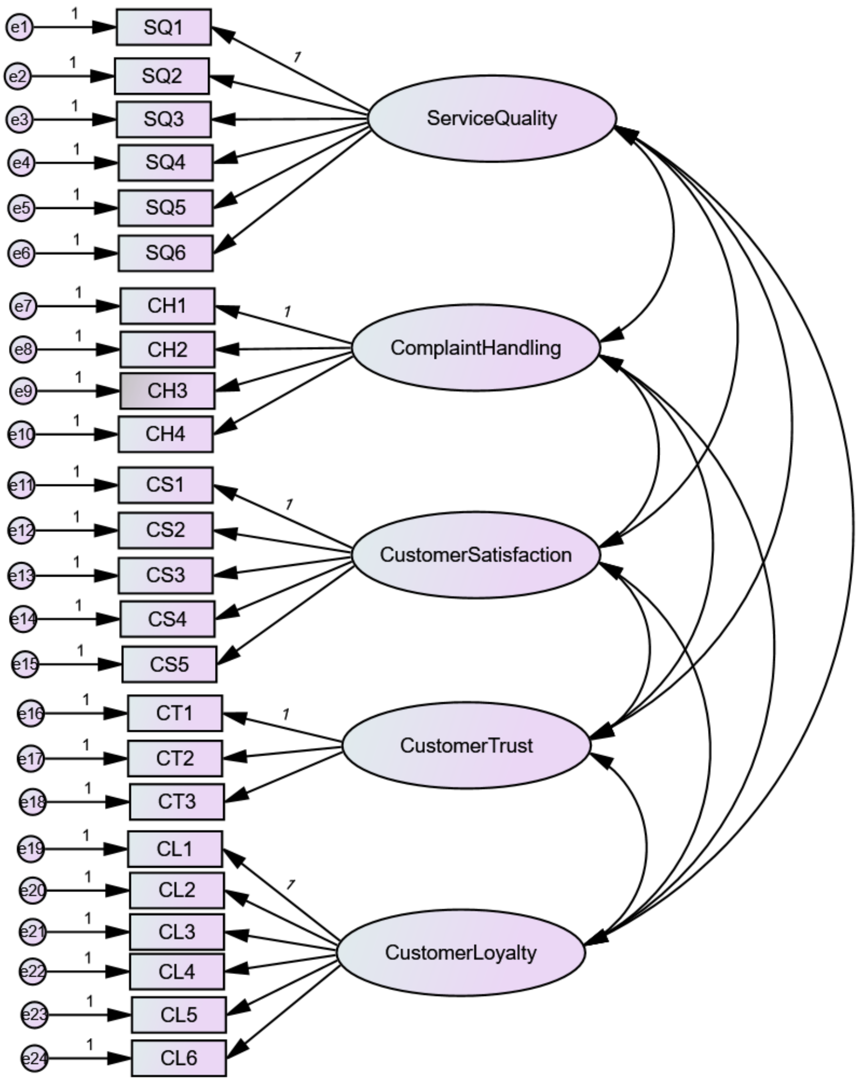

Figure 29. Confirmatory factor analysis model

Source: Author's compilation from the survey results (2023)

4.6 Structural model

In the preceding section, attention was directed towards the assessment of measurement models, and this section focuses on the evaluation of the structural model, which elucidates the relationships between constructs. As Hair et al. (2021) assert, the evaluation of the structural model begins with the examination of collinearity among predictor constructs relative to endogenous constructs. This study encompasses three endogenous constructs: CS, CT, and CL. As shown in Table 14, all VIF values fell below the threshold of five, as suggested by Hair et al. (2021). Given that these values are below the proposed threshold, the subsequent step involves scrutinising the relevance and significance of the structural paths.

Table 14. VIF values for structural model

CS	CT	CL
2.487	2.487	3.093

Source: Author's compilation from the survey results (2023)

The next stage in assessing the structural model involves evaluating the relevance and importance of structural paths (Hair et al., 2021). Table 15 displays the outcomes of the bootstrapping of the structural paths. By examining the path coefficient estimates, it is evident that SQ had a strong and positive impact on CS (0.547) and CT (0.498). However, SQ also had a negative effect on CL (-0.024). A similar pattern was observed for CH, which had a lower impact on CS (0.373) and CT (0.360) than on SQ. However, CH had a much lower impact on CL, as indicated by a path coefficient of 0.066. CS had a strong positive impact on CL, with a significant path coefficient of 0.436. In addition, CT had a lower impact on CL, similar to the impact of CH on CS and CT, with a path coefficient of 0.396.

Hair et al. (2019) recommend using bootstrapping to create an interaction term and test for nonlinear effects. To determine the statistical significance of the weights, researchers typically look at t-values that should be greater than 1.960, given a 5% significance level (Hair et al. 2021). As shown in Table 15, several relationships are statistically significant, with the SQ→ CS relationship having the highest t-value of 10.193. However, this excludes the exogenous driver construct relationships SQ → CL, t = 0.351 and CH → CL, t = 1.041, which are not statistically significant because their t-values fall below 1.960.

Table 15. Path coefficient estimates, significance, and confidence interval

	Path estimates	SM	SD	T Statistics	P Values	BI (2.5%, 97.5%)
SQ -> CS	0.547	0.551	0.054	10.193	0.000	0.390, 0.538
SQ -> CL	-0.024	-0.026	0.069	0.351	0.725	-0.119, 0.146
SQ -> CT	0.498	0.500	0.067	7.388	0.000	0.271, 0.271
CH -> CS	0.373	0.369	0.054	6.920	0.000	0.221, 0.221
CH -> CL	0.066	0.067	0.064	1.041	0.298	-0.130, 0.070
CH -> CT	0.360	0.359	0.065	5.508	0.000	0.171, 0.171
CS -> CL	0.436	0.435	0.094	4.647	0.000	0.124, 0.124
CT -> CL	0.396	0.399	0.096	4.122	0.000	0.100, 0.100

Source: Author's compilation from the survey results (2023)

Evaluating the overall effect is crucial for determining the influence of exogenous driver constructs on the outcome construct CL. By employing bootstrapping, it can be observed in the table below (Table 16) that out of the two driver constructs, SQ exerts the most significant overall effect on CL (0.412), followed by CH, with an effect of 0.372.

Table 16. Total effect estimates, significance, and confidence intervals

	Original Sample (O)	SM	SD	T Statistics	P Values	2.5%	97.5%
SQ -> CS	0.547	0.548	0.055	9.992	0.000	0.435	0.654
SQ -> CL	0.412	0.414	0.067	6.108	0.000	0.267	0.541
SQ -> CT	0.498	0.496	0.063	7.958	0.000	0.376	0.617
CH -> CS	0.373	0.373	0.054	6.860	0.000	0.270	0.483
CH -> CT	0.360	0.363	0.064	5.613	0.000	0.224	0.481
CH -> CL	0.372	0.372	0.068	5.460	0.000	0.239	0.508
CS -> CL	0.436	0.438	0.087	4.987	0.000	0.236	0.599
CT -> CL	0.396	0.395	0.092	4.298	0.000	0.231	0.589

Source: Author's compilation from the survey results (2023)

In the third step of the structural model assessment, the explanatory power of the model was analysed by evaluating the coefficient of determination (R2) for the endogenous constructs and the effect size (f2) for the predictor constructs. As depicted in Figure 30 of the structural model, the R2 values for the endogenous constructs were 0.753 for CS, 0.653 for CT, and 0.707 for CL, indicating moderate to strong explanatory power. As shown in Table 17, the f-square values, which indicate the change in R2 when an exogenous variable was removed from the model, revealed that SQ had a large effect size of 0.490 on CS and a medium effect size of 0.289 on CT. However, SQ had no effect on the CL, with an effect size of 0.001. CH had a large effect size of 0.228 on CS, a medium effect size of 0.151 on CT, and a small effect size of 0.005 on CL.

Table 17. F-square effect sizes

	CS	CT	CL
SQ	0.490	0.289	0.001
CH	0.228	0.151	0.005

Source: Author’s compilation from the survey results (2023)

According to Hair et al. (2019), when interpreting PLSpredict, it is important to focus on the model's key endogenous constructs. This is accomplished by evaluating the Root Mean Square Error (RMSE) or Mean Absolute Error (MAE) values produced by PLSpredict against the benchmark provided by the Latent Mean (LM) rather than scrutinising the prediction errors for all endogenous construct indicators. The LM benchmark recommended by PLSpredict is a linear regression model that generates predictions for manifest variables by running a linear regression of each of the dependent constructs' indicators of exogenous latent variables (Hair et al. 2019).

Hair et al. (2019) suggested the following guidelines for comparing the RMSE or MAE values with LM benchmark values:

- PLS-SEM analysis is deemed inadequate if it yields higher prediction errors, measured in terms of MSE or MAE, for all indicators compared to the LM benchmark.
- If a majority of the dependent construct indicators yield prediction errors that exceed those of the LM benchmark, this suggests that the model possesses limited predictive ability.

- If a minority of the indicators in the PLS-SEM analysis have higher prediction errors than the LM benchmark, it suggests that the overall predictive power of the model is medium.
- If PLS-SEM analysis indicates that none of the indicators have RMSE or MAE values that surpass those of the LM benchmark, then the model's predictive power can be considered high.

As can be seen in Table 18, most of the indicators in the PLS out-of-sample metrics have lower RMSE or MAE values than the LM out-of-sample metrics, indicating that the model has medium predictive power, except for CS1, CT1, CT3, and CL2, which all have values above the LM benchmark.

Table 18. Prediction metrics for outcome construct items

PLS out-of-sample Metrics			**LM out-of-sample metrics**		
Construct items	RMSE	MAE	Construct items	RMSE	MAE
CS1	0.575	0.411	CS1	0.577	0.408
CS2	0.599	0.428	CS2	0.606	0.430
CS3	0.620	0.439	CS3	0.620	0.443
CS4	0.644	0.467	CS4	0.653	0.468
CS5	0.599	0.433	CS5	0.613	0.439
CT1	0.701	0.492	CT1	0.706	0.476
CT2	0.642	0.452	CT2	0.659	0.455
CT3	0.621	0.462	CT3	0.628	0.444
CL1	0.828	0.584	CL1	0.847	0.589
CL2	0.734	0.502	CL2	0.718	0.487
CL3	0.896	0.624	CL3	0.925	0.660
CL4	0.968	0.699	CL4	0.990	0.735
CL5	0.985	0.679	CL5	1.012	0.714
CL6	0.914	0.659	CL6	0.896	0.633

Source: Author’s compilation from the survey results (2023)

4.7 Structural model results

The results of the PLS estimation for the structural model, including the path coefficient values and item loadings for the research constructs, are shown in Figure 30 and Table 19. According to Mofokeng and Chinomona (2019), standardised path coefficients should be at least 0.200, preferably greater than 0.300. The majority of the path coefficients in Figure 30 and Table 19 meet this criterion, except for H2 and H5, which have path coefficients of -0.024 and 0.066, respectively. The results from Table 19 reveal that the majority of the hypotheses have been supported by the t-statistics. Additionally, the R2 values for the endogenous constructs CS (0.754), CT (0.66), and CL (0.707) indicate that the model accounted for more than 50% of the variance. However, H2 and H5 had t-statistics of 0.336 and 1.059, respectively. Overall, the results suggest that the research model was a good fit.

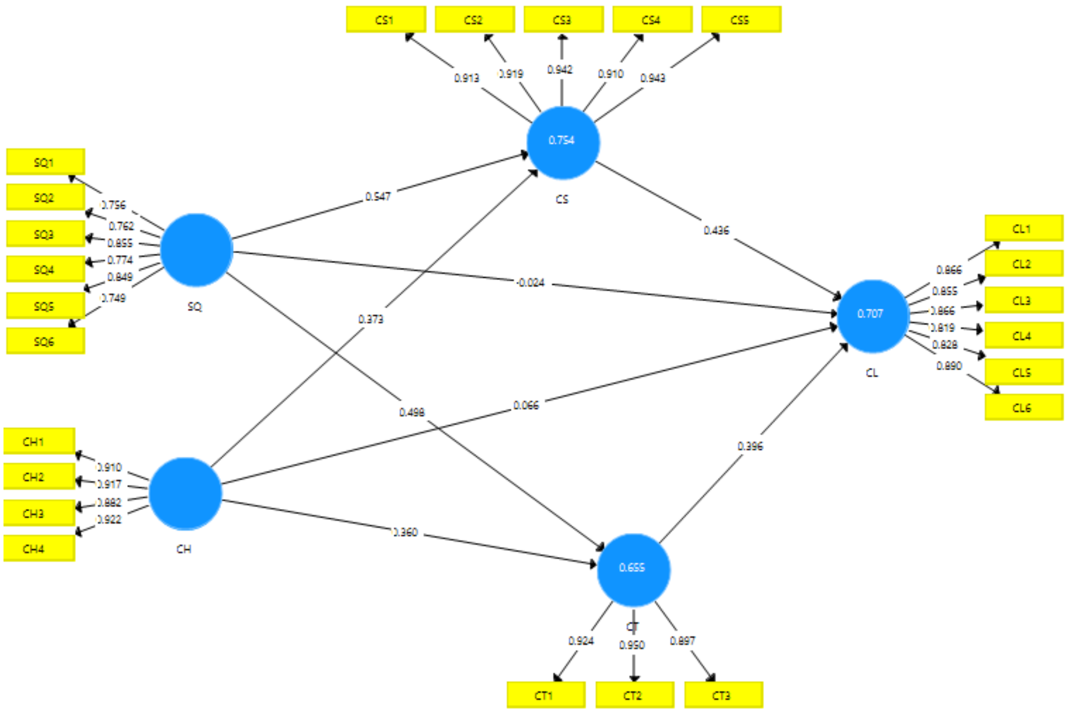

Figure 30. Structural modelling and factor loadings

Source: Author's compilation from the survey results (2023)

Table 19 presents the results of the structural equation model analysis.

Table 19. Results of structural equation model analysis

Path	Hypothesis	Beta coefficient	T-statistics	P-values	Results
SQ -> CS	H1	0.547	9.763	0.000	Supported and significant
SQ -> CL	H2	-0.024	0.336	0.737	Unsupported and insignificant
SQ -> CT	H3	0.498	7.500	0.000	Supported and significant
CH -> CS	H4	0.373	6.702	0.000	Supported and significant
CH -> CL	H5	0.066	1.059	0.290	Unsupported and insignificant
CH -> CT	H6	0.360	5.506	0.000	Supported and significant
CS -> CL	H7	0.436	4.829	0.000	Supported and significant
CT -> CL	H8	0.396	4.136	0.000	Supported and significant

Source: Author's compilation from the survey results (2023)

As demonstrated in Table 19, six of the eight hypotheses proposed were found to be supported and statistically significant: H1 with a peak t-value of 9.763, H3 with a t-value of 7.500, H4 with a t-value of 6.702, H6 with a t-value of 5.506, H7 with a t-value of 4.829, and H8 with a t-value of 4.136. Unfortunately, H2 and H5 were not supported and failed to reach statistical significance, with t-values of 0.336 and 1.059, respectively, which fall below the recommended threshold of 1.96 (Hair et al., 2021).

4.8 Mediation analysis

A mediation analysis was conducted to investigate the mediating effects of customer satisfaction (CS) and customer trust (CT) on the relationship between service quality (SQ), complaint handling (CH), and customer loyalty (CL) using the bootstrapping method recommended by Hair et al. (2021) in SmartPLS. The concept of mediation is characterised by a reduction in the direct path coefficient between the independent and dependent variables when an indirect path involving a mediator is included in the model, as proposed by Osman et al. (2016). The outcomes in Table 20 indicate that the total effects of the independent variables on the dependent variables without the mediator are significant (H2: $\beta = 0.412$, $p<0.001$; H5: $\beta = 0.372$, $p<0.001$). However, with the inclusion of the mediating variables CS and CT, the impact of SQ on CL became negative and insignificant ($\beta = -$

0.024, p = 0.728), and the impact of CH on CL became positive but insignificant (β = 0.066, p = 0.289).

This study found that the indirect effect of SQ on CL through CS was significant and supported (β = 0.239, p<0.001), indicating that CS partially mediates the relationship between SQ and CL. As shown in Table 21, the total effect was 58.0%, indicating partial mediation. Additionally, the indirect effect of CH on CL through CT was significant and supported (β = 0.143, p<0.001), indicating a partial mediation. The VAF value of 0.384 in Table 21 indicates that the mediating role of customer trust is 38.4%, indicating partial mediation.

Table 20. Mediation Analysis

Variables	Total effect	Sig	Direct effect	Sig		Indirect effect	Sig	Results
SQ -> CL	0.412	0	-0.024	0.728	SQ -> CS -> CL	0.239	0	Supported
CH -> CL	0.372	0	0.066	0.289	SQ -> CT -> CL	0.197	0	
					CH -> CS -> CL	0.163	0	
					CH -> CT -> CL	0.143	0.002	Supported

Source: Author's compilation from the survey results (2023)

Table 21. Calculation of the VAF value

	Direct effect		Indirect effect	VAF -> Indirect effect/ Total effect
SQ -> CL	0.412	SQ -> CS -> CL	0.239	0.580
CH -> CL	0.372	SQ -> CT -> CL	0.197	
		CH -> CS -> CL	0.163	
		CH -> CT -> CL	0.143	0.384

Source: Author's compilation from the survey results (2023)

4.9 Summary

Chapter four of the study presented the outcomes of the survey questionnaire administered to 303 participants. The demographic profiles of the respondents were analysed using descriptive statistics in IBM SPSS 27, and the results are discussed. The reliability and validity of the measurement and structural models were assessed, and the results were presented. Hypotheses testing revealed that H1, H3, H4, H6, H7, and H8 were supported and statistically significant, whereas H2 and H5 were unsupported and insignificant. Mediation analysis showed that customer satisfaction and customer trust, through service quality and complaint handling, respectively, partially mediated customer loyalty. The VAF values for the mediation effects were 0.580 and 0.384 for customer satisfaction and complaint handling, respectively. The subsequent section analyses the demographic results and the hypotheses tested.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

The following section presents the demographic results and the eight hypotheses that were examined: the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction, service quality and customer loyalty, service quality and customer trust, complaint handling and customer satisfaction, complaint handling and customer loyalty, complaint handling and customer trust, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty, customer trust and customer loyalty, and the mediating effect of customer satisfaction and customer trust on customer loyalty. Additionally, the results presented in Chapter Four are unpacked, and the literature reviewed in Chapter Two is integrated and discussed in the South African context.

5.2 Demographic results discussion

The study's eligibility criteria required participants to identify whether they held life insurance policies with any South African insurance provider. Three hundred and three participants were selected to represent the demographic makeup of the life insurance market in South Africa, and their demographic profiles were analysed to understand the composition of the market. Table 22, which presents secondary data obtained from StatsSA (2022), was utilised to compare the demographic profiles of the respondents with those of the South African population.

Table 22. Mid-year population estimates by population group and sex, 2022

Population group	Male		Female		Total	
	Number	% distribution of males	Number	% distribution of females	Number	% distribution of total
Black African	23 985 479	81,0	25 085 330	81,0	49 070 809	81,0
Coloured	2 601 932	8,8	2 737 987	8,8	5 339 919	8,8
Indian/Asian	794 882	2,7	760 114	2,5	1 554 996	2,6
White	2 242 589	7,6	2 396 679	7,7	4 639 268	7,7
Total	**29 624 882**	**100,0**	**30 980 110**	**100,0**	**60 604 992**	**100,0**

Source: www.statsa.gov.za (2022)

In this study, the majority of the participants were female (56.1%), followed by males (43.6%). This demographic distribution aligns with the South African population, which includes 51.12% females and 48.88% males, as shown in Table 22. This finding suggests that there are slightly more females purchasing life insurance policies than males. Participants in the 35–44-year age group comprised 42.6% of the sample, followed by those in the 24–34-year age group (32.7%). The remaining age groups comprised less than 5% of the responses, with the 18–24-year age group accounting for 3.6%. This is likely due to the fact that individuals in this age group have only recently begun working and have not yet recognized the necessity of acquiring life insurance policies. The older age groups, that is, the 55–64-year-old and 65-plus-year-old age groups, accounted for 3% and 0.7%, respectively. These lower numbers could be attributed to life expectancy ratios, which StatsSA (2022) estimated at 60.0 years for males and 65.6 years for females. According to StatsSA (2022), the ratio for males and females decreased slightly in 2021, with males living on average 59.3 years and females living on average 64.6 years, a trend attributed to the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The proportion of participants with postgraduate degrees was 48.2%, while those with undergraduate degrees constituted 20.1% of the sample. Participants with diplomas and high school certificates accounted for 18.8% and 12.9% of the sample, respectively. Le Roux and Lewis (2019) highlighted the issue of poor education and low literacy rates in South Africa as a concern for life insurers, as many customers lack an adequate understanding of their legal obligations when entering into a contract. The majority of respondents (87.8%) were employed, a factor that is crucial given that they need to have a stable income to make premium payments on time and avoid policy lapses due to nonpayment. Among the participants, 6.9% were self-employed, whereas students and unemployed individuals accounted for 4% and 1.3%, respectively.

According to the survey, a significant proportion of the respondents (48.8%) belonged to Discovery Life, which corresponds to the new business margins of the top five largest life insurers in 2018 and 2019, as depicted in Table 23. The remaining respondents were distributed to other life insurance companies, accounting for 13.5% of the total. Specifically, Old Mutual and Liberty had 11.6% and 10.6% of the respondents, respectively, while Sanlam accounted for 5.9% and Momentum accounted for 4.6%.

Table 23. Value of new business margin

Life Insurer	2019	2018
Discovery	5.0%	5.4%
Sanlam	3.0%	2.7%
Old Mutual	2.6%	3.2%
Liberty	1.0%	0.9%
Momentum Metropolitan	1.0%	0.7%

Source: Fourie (2020)

5.3 Discussion of hypotheses results

This study aimed to investigate the elements that drive customer loyalty within the South African life insurance sector. The hypotheses proposed in Chapter Two and the literature reviewed were incorporated into the analysis and interpretation of the results obtained from the study.

5.3.1. Service quality and customer satisfaction

H1: Service quality positively influences customer satisfaction in South Africa's life insurance industry.

The H1 test results reveal a direct and statistically significant relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction. According to the data presented in Figure 30 and Table 19, the hypothesis regarding the relationship between SQ and CS is validated, and the results indicate that this relationship is positive, robust, and statistically significant. The path coefficient for this relationship was 0.547 with a significance level of $p<0.001$. This finding indicates that service quality has a positive and direct effect on customer satisfaction in the South African life insurance industry. The standardised regression weight, represented by $\beta = 0.547$, suggests that customer satisfaction is expected to increase by 54.7% when life insurers improve their service quality by one unit. This finding implies that delivering high-quality services is a key factor that influences customer satisfaction in the South African life insurance industry. It is important to note that this relationship (SQ → CS) also had the highest path coefficient (0.547) among all relationships observed.

The research results align with prior investigations conducted by Makanyeza and Chikazhe (2017) and Almohaimmeed (2017), who demonstrated a positive correlation between service quality and customer satisfaction in the banking and restaurant industries, respectively. Additionally, Su et al. (2016) and Osman et al. (2016) discovered that service quality significantly influences customer satisfaction in the tourism and Malaysian banking sectors. A study by Latif et al. (2023) revealed that service quality has a positive impact on customer satisfaction in the Malaysian life insurance industry. Kiumarsi et al. (2020) also found that service quality directly affected customer satisfaction in the Malaysian postal service industry. Iddrisu et al. (2015) and Sivesan (2019) emphasised the importance of delivering quality services to meet customer expectations and increase customer loyalty, leading to customer retention.

Overall, the literature review and results indicate that service quality is a crucial determinant of customer satisfaction among South African life insurance customers. This emphasises the importance of delivering high-quality services to differentiate from competitors and increase customer satisfaction.

5.3.2. Service quality and customer loyalty

H2: Service quality positively influences customer loyalty in South Africa's life insurance industry.

The results of the H2 testing demonstrated a lack of a positive relationship between service quality and customer loyalty. Figure 30 and Table 19 depict the absence of a proposed relationship between these variables, with a negative path coefficient of -0.024 and a p-value of 0.732. This suggests that service quality has a minimal impact on loyalty among life insurance customers in South Africa. These results contradict Su et al. 's (2016) study in the Chinese tourism sector, which showed that service and relationship quality were antecedents of customer loyalty behaviours such as repeat purchases, positive word-of-mouth, and willingness to pay more. Additionally, the study by Makanyeza and Chikazhe (2017) found a significant relationship between service quality and customer loyalty in the Zimbabwean banking sector. Nguyen-Phuoc et al. (2020) also established a direct connection between service quality and customer loyalty in their study on ride-hailing taxi services in Vietnam. However, the study by Rimawan et al. (2017) on the packaging industry in Indonesia, which supports the relationship between service quality and customer loyalty, aligns with this study's results.

The results suggest no evident connection between service quality and customer loyalty in the South African life insurance sector. This suggests that, although service quality is highly valued and expected, it does not influence customer loyalty and, consequently, cannot contribute to customer retention in the South African life insurance industry. The reviewed literature and results of this study do not support the notion that service quality leads to customer loyalty and retention in the South African life insurance sector.

5.3.3. Service quality and customer trust

H3: Service quality positively influences customer trust in South Africa's life insurance industry.

The results of H3 revealed a positive correlation between service quality and customer trust. As shown in Figure 30 and Table 19, H3 (SQ → CT) was supported by the hypothesis and demonstrated a positive, moderate, and significant relationship at $p<0.001$, with a path coefficient of 0.498. This finding implies that service quality has a direct and positive effect on customer trust in the South African life insurance industry. The regression weight of $\beta = 0.498$ suggests that a one-unit increase in service quality is expected to lead to a 49.8% increase in customer trust, indicating that high-quality services are a critical factor in building customer trust.

These results align with previous research conducted by Hariguna and Berlilana (2017), who investigated the antecedents of customer trust and customer intentions to purchase e-commerce on Social Media in Indonesia. This study found that the quality of service provided by e-commerce providers through social media had a positive impact on customer trust. Additionally, Osman et al. (2016), in their study of the Malaysian banking industry, also found a positive and significant relationship between service quality and customer trust. Similarly, Cuong and Khoi (2019) examined the relationships between service quality, trust, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty in Vietnamese convenience stores and found that service quality had a significant effect on customer trust. Furthermore, Setiawan et al. (2020), in their study of the Indonesian airline industry, also found a significant and positive impact of service quality on customer trust.

Based on the results of this study and the reviewed literature, it can be concluded that the relationship between service quality and customer trust is evident. This suggests that, among South African life insurance customers, service quality is perceived as a crucial factor in building trust in life insurers.

5.3.4. Complaint handling and customer satisfaction

H4: Complaint handling positively influences customer satisfaction in South Africa's life insurance industry.

The results of the study conducted to test Hypothesis 4 revealed a positive association between complaint handling and customer satisfaction. This conclusion is supported by the data presented in Figure 30 and Table 19, which demonstrates that the proposed relationship between complaint handling and customer satisfaction (CH → CS) is positive, significant, and moderate, with a path coefficient of 0.373 and a p-value of <0.001. The standardised regression weight of $\beta = 0.373$ suggests that an improvement of one unit in the complaint-handling process by a life insurer is likely to lead to a 37.3% increase in customer satisfaction. The results of this study align with the conclusions of Cambra-Fierro et al. (2016), who demonstrated that effective complaint resolution can result in greater customer satisfaction and brand loyalty. Other studies that have investigated the relationship between complaint handling and customer satisfaction include those by Iqbal et al. (2017), Obasi et al. (2020), Petzer et al. (2017), and Ahmed et al. (2020), all of which have found a positive and significant relationship between the two variables. Additionally, Ogbeide et al.'s (2017) study of the role of employee empowerment in the hospitality industry highlights the importance of effective complaint-handling processes in enhancing customer satisfaction.

Based on the outcomes of this research and the reviewed literature, it can be inferred that there is a clear association between complaint handling and customer satisfaction. This suggests that, in the South African life insurance sector, efficient and well-managed complaint handling procedures have a favourable impact on customer satisfaction.

5.3.5. Complaint handling and customer loyalty

H5: Complaint handling positively influences customer loyalty in South Africa's life insurance industry.

The results of the study tested Hypothesis 5, which revealed an insignificant relationship between complaint handling and customer loyalty. As depicted in Figure 30 and Table 19, the relationship between complaint handling and customer loyalty (H5: CH → CL) was found to be unsupported, positive, weak, and insignificant at p=0.289, with a path coefficient of 0.066. According to these findings, the influence of complaint-handling processes on customer loyalty is negligible in the South African life insurance industry. The results of this study do not support the notion that effective complaint handling leads to customer loyalty and retention.

The results of this study contrast with those of Siddiqi et al. (2018) in Bangladesh's banking industry, who reported that complaint handling significantly impacts customer loyalty. The results of this study differ from those of Mahmoud et al. (2018a), who reported a direct and significant connection between conflict handling and customer retention in Ghana's mobile telecommunications sector. Furthermore, the results challenge the study by Barusman and Virgawenda (2019) on the Indonesian insurance industry, which found that service recovery has a positive and significant effect on customer loyalty. The results of this study are consistent with those of Salim et al. (2018) in the Indonesian public banking sector, who examined complaint handling, customer satisfaction, and loyalty and discovered that complaint handling failed to have an impact on customer loyalty. Furthermore, a study conducted by Petzer et al. (2017) in the South African retail banking sector revealed that interactional and distributive justice had no immediate impact on behavioural intentions. Both studies support the results of this study, which report that complaint handling has no impact on customer loyalty.

Based on a comprehensive examination of relevant sources and the results of this study, it can be deduced that there appears to be no discernible relationship between complaint resolution and customer loyalty in the South African life insurance sector. This suggests that although complaint-resolution processes are crucial for addressing customer dissatisfaction and rectifying issues, they are unlikely to significantly affect customer loyalty and may not prove effective in maintaining customer retention in the South African life insurance industry.

5.3.6. Complaint handling and customer trust

H6: Complaint handling positively influences customer trust in South Africa's life insurance industry.

The results of Testing H6 indicated a positive correlation between complaint handling and customer trust. As illustrated in Figure 30 and Table 19, the proposed connection between the two variables was verified and demonstrated to be positive, moderate, and statistically significant at $p<0.001$, with a path coefficient of 0.360. This indicates that complaint-handling exerts a favourable and substantial influence on customer trust in the South African life insurance sector. The regression weight represented by $\beta = 0.360$ implies that a life insurer that enhances its complaint-handling process by one unit can expect a 36% increase in customer trust.

These results align with previous research conducted by Mahmoud et al. (2018a) in the mobile telecommunication industry in Ghana, which found that complaint handling and trust had an indirect significant effect on customer retention. Similarly, Chaparro-Pelaez et al. (2015) found satisfaction with service recovery and trust to be both positive and significant. Paparoidamis et al. (2019), in the B2B industry, also discovered a positive link between supplier complaint handling and customer trust. Matikiti et al. (2019), in their study of the airline industry, found that service recovery satisfaction influences overall satisfaction, trust, and commitment. Additionally, Bakar et al. (2020), in their study of the service industry, found that an effective complaint-handling process has a positive impact on customer trust.

According to the literature review and the outcomes of this study, it can be deduced that there is a relationship between complaint handling and customer trust in the South African life insurance sector. This implies that efficient complaint-handling processes in the South African life insurance industry are likely to have a favourable impact on customer trust and, subsequently, result in increased customer retention.

5.3.7. Customer satisfaction and customer loyalty

H7: Customer satisfaction positively influences customer loyalty in South Africa's life insurance industry.

As shown in Figure 30 and Table 19, the results reveal that Hypothesis H7 (CS → CL) is validated and characterised by a positive, moderate, and statistically significant relationship at $p<0.001$, with a path coefficient of 0.436. This suggests that in the South African life insurance markets, customer satisfaction has a positive impact on customer loyalty, which in turn contributes to customer retention. The regression weight of $\beta = 0.436$, represented by the standardized value, indicates that a life insurer's improvement in its customer satisfaction ratio by one unit may lead to a 43.6% increase in customer loyalty.

These results align with those of El-Adly (2019), who found that customer satisfaction had a direct positive influence on customer loyalty in the hotel industry. Similar results were also obtained by S. Dam and T. Dam (2021) in the Vietnamese supermarket industry, where customer satisfaction was found to have a positive and significant effect on brand loyalty, which supports the results of this study. Devi and Yasa (2021) also report that customer satisfaction has a positive effect on customer loyalty, which further strengthens the results of this study.

Based on the literature reviewed and the results of this study, it can be concluded that the relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in the South African life insurance industry is evident. This finding suggests that customer satisfaction is a critical antecedent of customer loyalty and, ultimately, customer retention among South African life insurance customers.

5.3.8. Customer trust and customer loyalty

H8: Customer trust positively influences customer loyalty in South Africa's life insurance industry.

As depicted in Figure 30 and Table 19, the hypothesis pertaining to the H8 relationship (CT → CL) was validated, demonstrating a positive and moderate effect of customer trust on customer trust with a path coefficient of 0.396 and a significance level of $p<0.001$. This finding indicates that customer trust significantly affects trust in the South African life insurance industry. A standardised regression weight of $\beta = 0.396$ implies that enhancing customer trust ratios can lead to a 39.6% increase in customer loyalty. Therefore, life insurers in South Africa need to implement strategies that promote and encourage customer trust to maintain loyalty.

These results align with previous research conducted by Mahmoud et al. (2018b) in the Ghanaian telecommunications industry, who found that customer trust affects customer loyalty. Similarly, Cuong and Khoi (2019) discovered a positive influence of customer trust on customer loyalty in the Vietnamese convenience store sector, thus supporting the results of this study. Siddiqi et al. (2018) found that trust significantly influences customer loyalty in a study on customer relationship management in Bangladesh's banking industry. Sitorus and Yustisia (2018) discovered that customer trust positively impacts customer loyalty in the Indonesian banking sector. Finally, Mohd-Any et al. (2019) found that customer trust affects customer loyalty in the Malaysian airline sector.

Drawing from the existing body of literature and the outcomes of this research, it can be inferred that a correlation exists between customer trust and loyalty within the South African life insurance sector. This implies that trust in customers plays a role in fostering loyalty, and is likely to contribute to increased retention among life insurance consumers in South Africa.

5.3.9. The mediating role of customer satisfaction on customer loyalty

The results presented in Figure 30 and Table 20 show that customer satisfaction plays a complementary mediating role in the relationship between service quality and customer loyalty (SQ → CS → CL), which is significant and supported by the indirect effect, represented by $\beta = 0.239$ and $p<0.001$. Notably, the study also revealed that customer satisfaction mediated the effect of complaint handling on customer loyalty, and this mediating effect was found to be significant, as indicated by the indirect effect path coefficient of 0.163 and $p<0.001$, as presented in Table 20.

This study aligns with the results of Kaura et al. (2015), who highlighted the role of customer satisfaction as a mediator between service quality and customer loyalty in the Indian retail banking sector. Similarly, Makanyeza and Chikazhe (2017) found that customer satisfaction played a mediating role in the relationship between perceived service quality and customer loyalty in the Zimbabwean banking sector. Tandon et al. (2017) also revealed that customer satisfaction completely mediates the connection between website service quality and repurchase intention. In a study conducted by Lie et al. (2019) on the application-based transportation industry in Indonesia, customer satisfaction was found to mediate the relationship between service quality and consumer loyalty. Lesmana et al. (2021) also found that customer satisfaction fully mediates the relationship between service quality and customer loyalty in Jakarta’s tourist industry. Devi and Yasa (2021) determined that customer satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between service quality and brand loyalty in Bali's airline industry.

Drawing from the literature review and outcomes of this study, it can be inferred that the mediating influence of customer satisfaction on customer loyalty through service quality in the South African life insurance sector is discernible. This implies that satisfaction with service quality serves as a crucial and sufficient determinant for customers to remain committed to their life insurance providers in the South African context.

5.3.10. The mediating role of customer trust in customer loyalty

The results of the study demonstrate that customer trust functions as a complementary mediator in the relationship between complaint-handling and customer loyalty (CH → CT → CL), as indicated by the significant indirect effect represented by $\beta = 0.143$ and $p<0.001$ (as shown in Figure 30 and Table 20). The results indicate that customer trust has a significant indirect impact on customer loyalty by moderating the influence of service quality, as evidenced by the path coefficient of 0.197 and p-value of <0.001 in Table 20.

These outcomes align with previous research conducted by Mohd-Any et al. (2019), Amoako et al. (2021) and Shumba and Saruchera (2023), who all found that customer trust plays a role in mediating the relationship between service recovery and customer loyalty and between service recovery performance and customer loyalty. This suggests that customer trust is a crucial factor that influences customer loyalty in the service industry context.

Based on the results of the current study and the reviewed literature, it can be inferred that customer trust mediates customer loyalty through complaint handling in the South African life insurance industry. This implies that customers' trust in the life insurer's ability to handle complaints effectively is a necessary and sufficient condition for them to remain loyal to the life insurer in the South African life insurance industry.

5.4 Summary

This section presents the results of the study's demographic profiles and hypothesis testing. The results were analysed in relation to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two, with a focus on whether they supported or contradicted the results of the study. This research demonstrated that the connections between service quality and customer satisfaction, service quality and customer trust, complaint handling and customer satisfaction, complaint handling and customer trust, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty, and customer trust and customer loyalty were considerable, which is consistent with previous studies. Although the study yielded some interesting findings, it also revealed that the connections between service quality and customer loyalty and between complaint handling and customer loyalty were not substantial, which is contrary to previous studies. Additionally, the study found that the mediating effect of customer satisfaction on customer loyalty through service quality and the mediating effect of customer trust on customer loyalty through complaint handling was significant, in line with previous research. The study also revealed novel results of a mediating effect of customer trust on customer loyalty through service quality and a mediating effect of customer satisfaction on customer loyalty through complaint handling, which were found to be significant. The next section concludes the paper, discusses the managerial and theoretical implications, contributions, and limitations of the study, and provides recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

6.1 Introduction

This study aims to investigate the connections between the factors that contribute to customer loyalty in the South African life insurance industry using expectancy-confirmation theory as a theoretical framework. The theoretical framework outlined in Chapter Two, as depicted in Figure 3, posited a series of hypothesised relationships, with the exception of two that were not supported. In light of the results and hypotheses presented in Chapters Four and Five, the concluding chapter of this study presents the overall conclusions and recommendations while also highlighting the important implications for management and theory. Finally, the limitations of this study and suggestions for future research were addressed.

6.2 Conclusion of the study

As stated in Chapter One, this study sought to examine the antecedents of customer loyalty in the South African life insurance industry by investigating the relationship between service quality, complaint handling, and the mediating roles of customer satisfaction and customer trust in influencing customer loyalty. The study tested eight hypotheses, including the mediating effects of customer satisfaction and customer trust on customer loyalty. However, two of these hypotheses were not supported and found to be insignificant. The research results indicated that customer loyalty was positively and significantly affected by factors such as effective complaint handling, high levels of customer satisfaction, and strong customer trust. Furthermore, while service quality has a positive influence on customer satisfaction, it was found to have a negative and insignificant impact on customer loyalty.

Similarly, complaint handling had a positive and significant influence on customer satisfaction, but its influence on customer loyalty was insignificant. Furthermore, this study demonstrated that customer satisfaction and trust had a mediating influence on customer loyalty. In light of these results, South African life insurers must develop and implement effective marketing strategies that address the factors that influence customer loyalty to reduce lapse rates and retain customers. The following section presents practical recommendations for applying the results of this study to the marketing discourse.

6.3 Recommendations

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, customer defection in the life insurance market was identified as a significant challenge, as indicated in the problem statement. This study aimed to examine the role of service quality, complaint handling, and customer satisfaction in predicting customer loyalty in the South African life insurance sector. This study enhances the literature on customer loyalty in the life insurance sector by examining the mediating role of customer trust. Additionally, it addresses the gap in the literature by concentrating on the less-explored mediating roles of customer satisfaction and trust. The results of this study offer essential information to marketing managers and practitioners in the South African life insurance industry, empowering them to create effective customer retention strategies and reduce lapse rates.

6.3.1. Service quality and customer satisfaction

To meet their customers' expectations, life insurance companies in South Africa must ensure that the services they provide are precise and reliable. This can be achieved by providing access to information about their products and services, ensuring that the terms and conditions of the insurance contract are transparent and easy to comprehend, offering prompt customer service, and attending to each customer's unique needs. By doing so, overall customer satisfaction can be achieved, as customers will be satisfied with their interactions with their life insurer, feel content with their relationship with their life insurer, and fulfil their expectations. Clearly, South African life insurers can improve customer satisfaction by delivering high-quality service.

6.3.2. Service quality and customer loyalty

Notwithstanding the widely accepted notion that service quality has a favourable influence on customer loyalty (Su et al., 2016; Makayenza & Chikazhe, 2017; Nguyen-Phuoc et al., 2020; Fattah et al., 2021), recent studies have shown that this relationship may not be as straightforward as previously thought. This finding suggests that improving service quality alone may not guarantee customer endorsement, which can be attributed to the credence and complexity of life insurance products. Therefore, life insurers should focus on enhancing extrinsic cues, such as strengthening their brand image and developing simpler products with easy-to-understand terms and contracts.

6.3.3. Service quality and customer trust

Quality of service is of paramount importance for life insurance products, as these products are intangible, inseparable, and complex. Consequently, customers rely on the quality of service they receive to develop confidence in their life insurer's ability to meet their expectations. It is reasonable to assume that when a life insurer provides high-quality service, customers will have the confidence to depend on the insurer to fulfil its promises. As Panigrahi et al. (2018) noted, customers often establish long-term relationships with insurance providers to mitigate future risks and uncertainties. Therefore, it is essential to create an environment of trust between customers and life insurers in order to foster long-lasting relationships.

6.3.4. Complaint handling and customer satisfaction

Customers in South African life insurance have come to expect that life insurers are capable of addressing their complaints when they are resolved elegantly, when they are carefully listened to, and when employees of the life insurer are highly adept at responding to complaints and resolving them professionally and promptly. As such, South African life insurers need to enhance their complaint-handling processes to increase customer satisfaction continually.

6.3.5. Complaint handling and customer loyalty

In contrast, the correlation between complaint handling and customer loyalty appeared to be less robust. The results were contrary to the hypothesis, which posited that addressing customer complaints would impact both behavioural and attitudinal loyalty. This may indicate a lack of significant effort on the part of life insurers to manage customer complaints effectively, as suggested by Park and Ahn (2022). Fajriah and Kurnianda (2019) posited that the success of life insurance providers depended on their ability to handle claims and effectively and promptly manage customer complaints.

6.3.6. Complaint handling and customer trust

The study revealed a significant and positive correlation between complaint handling and customer trust. The results indicate that South African life insurers should utilise their complaint-handling processes to reduce perceived risk among customers, thereby increasing their willingness to rely on life insurance services and their confidence in the delivery of promised outcomes. This study indicates that improving complaint-handling processes by one unit can result in a 36% increase in customer trust. Therefore, it is essential for the South African life insurance sector to effectively implement customer complaint processes in order to cultivate customer trust.

6.3.7. Customer satisfaction and customer loyalty

The study indicates that improving customer satisfaction in the South African life insurance industry could result in a substantial enhancement in customer loyalty, projected at 43.6%. To attain this, life insurers should concentrate on providing satisfactory services, ensuring that every insurance transaction is successful, and cultivating a positive relationship with their customers. These results emphasise the importance of customer satisfaction in fostering loyalty among South African life insurance customers.

6.3.8. Customer trust and customer loyalty

It is widely held that South African life insurance policyholders typically develop a sense of trust in their insurer if they can depend on the insurer's services, have faith in the insurer's capabilities, and meet the promises made to their customers. It is noteworthy that increasing customer trust by one unit can lead to a 39.6% improvement in customer loyalty, which highlights the significance that South African life insurance customers attach to maintaining their loyalty to their life insurers.

6.3.9. The role of customer satisfaction in mediating service quality on customer loyalty

The study demonstrated that service quality by itself was not sufficient to significantly influence customer loyalty in the South African life insurance sector. This implies that South African life insurance providers need to implement strategies that focus on enhancing customer satisfaction, which could result in greater loyalty.

6.3.10. The role of customer trust in mediating complaint handling on customer loyalty

According to the results of this research, customer trust functions as a mediator in the connection between complaint handling and customer loyalty. This suggests that South African life insurance companies with efficient complaint-handling procedures are adept at addressing the concerns of discontented customers, thereby transforming them into contented customers and ultimately fostering loyalty.

6.4 Study results implications

The study's results have significant implications for marketing managers, scholars, and future researchers. By establishing managerial and theoretical implications, this study aims to make a beneficial contribution to the field. The implications derived from this study's results are aimed at guiding future marketing practices and informing future research directions.

6.4.1 Managerial implications

Marketing managers in the South African life insurance industry can use the gap model of service quality to identify gaps that significantly impact their service delivery strategies. By doing so, they can take necessary steps to close these gaps and improve the overall quality of their services. For instance, by implementing comprehensive research programs, marketing managers can gain a deeper understanding of customer needs and preferences regarding life insurance. In addition, they can standardise service delivery processes and provide clear, translated policy rules and guidelines for employees. Moreover, they can equip employees with the necessary support and human resource management systems to deliver promised services effectively. Finally, by refraining from making exaggerated promises, marketing managers can enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of their communication systems.

Effective management of customer complaints has been shown to have a significant impact on customer loyalty in the South African life insurance industry. Therefore, it is crucial for marketing managers to understand the specific issues customers raise and their importance when evaluating the complaint-handling process. This includes evaluating the appropriateness and fairness of the complaint's outcome, the overall interaction during the process (including its friendliness and helpfulness), and the promptness of the resolution. Additionally, trust in the insurer plays a vital role in customer loyalty, as the complex and credence nature of life insurance products often leads customers to rely on the information provided by financial advisors and brokers. To foster customer trust, marketing managers must possess the necessary abilities, skills, and knowledge to carry out their tasks effectively, prioritise the interests of customers over their own, and demonstrate problem-solving skills in delivering promised services.

Managers can assess both transaction-specific and cumulative satisfaction to assess overall satisfaction with the service and the experience gained over time. Additionally, they can utilise research programs such as the SERVQUAL model or the expectancy disconfirmation model to conduct post-purchase evaluations and use the feedback received to enhance service delivery and improve customer satisfaction strategies.

This study sheds light on the key factors that have a considerable influence on customer loyalty within the South African life insurance sector, which can be useful and informative for managers in South Africa, as well as other developing countries and the rest of the world, and managers in other service and insurance industries can use the results of this study to gain valuable insights into their customer retention strategies.

6.4.2 Theoretical implications

Research on customer loyalty in marketing is vast; however, studies in the South African life insurance industry are scarce. While research has been conducted on the factors contributing to loyalty in other regions, understanding is lacking in the South African context. This study aims to fill these gaps and add to the literature as the South African life insurance industry is a developing market with the highest insurance penetration rate on the African continent.

The study's theoretical foundation is grounded in expectancy confirmation theory by extending its applicability to other sectors. The results of this study contribute to the existing expectancy confirmation theory in South Africa, which is classified as a developing country. Although the theory has been applied in various contexts, its application to the life insurance sector, which has the highest penetration rate in Africa, has not been fully explored. This study sheds light on post-acceptance and post-consumption evaluation factors that help explain customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction and perceptions of South African life insurance customers towards life insurers. The study found that service quality had the strongest direct effect on customer satisfaction and loyalty, while customer satisfaction had the strongest mediating effect on the relationship between service quality and loyalty. Therefore, this study addresses a theoretical gap that has been under-researched and makes a valuable academic contribution to the literature. Scholars and researchers can use the results of this study to support their research results.

6.5 Limitations and future research

This study concentrated solely on individual life insurance policies, thus excluding other forms of non-life insurance, such as health, automobile, and household insurance, as well as group life insurance. This study's focus on employed participants assumed that they had sufficient disposable income to pay monthly premiums and to avoid policy lapses. However, the study identified only a small percentage of respondents who were either students (4%) or unemployed (1.4%). This limited sample size may provide valuable insights into how individuals without sources of income respond to premium increases and prevent policies from lapsing. Another limitation of this study was the use of English. While the questions were designed to be simple and appropriate, there was no guarantee that participants, particularly those whose first language was not English, fully comprehended the questions and expressed their thoughts and feelings. Le Roux and Lewis (2019) had previously noted the poor education and low literacy rates in South Africa, which may have also posed challenges in using the English language for this research.

Due to time constraints, this investigation utilised a cross-sectional design from June 2021 to August 2021 and employed a quantitative research approach. The researcher acknowledges that a qualitative study would have been more advantageous in providing deeper insights into customers' beliefs and emotions towards their preferred life insurer. Qualitative research may have offered additional support for the results of the quantitative study as it could have provided a more in-depth understanding of the subject matter. Data were collected through convenience sampling using a self-administered survey questionnaire on Qualtrics online software, which posed limitations to the study, as the researcher could not guarantee the honesty of the participants' responses and could not verify if they indeed had life cover. The study also had limitations regarding the variables investigated, which included only four variables that examined the antecedents of loyalty with two mediators: customer satisfaction and trust. This excludes other mediator variables that could offer insights into their roles in influencing loyalty. Additionally, the study did not include moderator variables to gain insight into the influence of loyalty.

Several avenues for future research in this field were identified in this study. As this study focused on individual life insurance policies, future studies should consider investigating other sectors, such as non-life insurance (including car and household insurance) and group life insurance, and the results should be interpreted accordingly. Moreover, a comparative study between the life and non-life insurance sectors could be conducted. Individuals need to have employment, a source of income, and sufficient disposable income to honour their monthly premiums. South Africa is currently grappling with high levels of unemployment and interest rates, which could have significant implications for the lapse rates in the country's life insurance industry and other non-life insurance sectors. Future research could examine the potential effects of these macroeconomic factors on policyholder behaviour and overall industry performance.

This study focuses on four key factors contributing to customer loyalty: service quality, complaint handling, customer satisfaction, and trust. Future research may extend this scope by examining additional antecedents such as customer engagement, customer knowledge, perceived value, and brand image in the South African context. Agyei et al. (2020) discovered that customer engagement significantly strengthened customer loyalty and acted as a mediator in the relationship between trust dimensions and customer loyalty in the Ghanaian life insurance industry. Future research could delve deeper into the age range of 35-44 years, who displayed the highest level of engagement, and explore their convictions and driving forces that promote their long-term commitment to their chosen life insurance provider. Moreover, future research could explore the influence of other mediator and moderator variables, such as commitment and employee expertise, on customer loyalty in the South African life insurance industry.

6.6 Summary

This research aimed to investigate the factors contributing to customer loyalty within the South African life insurance industry, while also incorporating expectancy-confirmation theory as a theoretical framework. A theoretical framework was proposed and confirmed by the results, with the exception of two specific relationships. The main results and suggestions were then examined, along with their practical and theoretical implications. In conclusion, the limitations of this study and potential areas for future research were considered.

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APPENDIX A: TIME PLAN FOR COMPLETION OF A RESEARCH REPORT

TABLE 2: TIME PLAN FOR COMPLETION OF A RESEARCH REPORT

	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date		Date
Panel preparation and draft proposal	June 2020- Sept 2020							
Panel/ Supervisor Allocation and Ethics Clearance		Oct 2020						
Detailed literature review			Jan 2021- Mar 2001					
Data Collection				Mar- May 2021				

Data Analysis					May-Aug 2021			
Research Report Writing						Aug-Nov 2021		
Research editing							Dec 2021	
Research Submission								Feb 2022

APPENDIX B: CONSISTENCY MATRIX

Research Problem: The study sought to examine the relationship between service quality, complaint handling, and customer loyalty and the mediating role of customer satisfaction, trust in customer loyalty in the South African life insurance					
Sub-problems.	**Literature Review**	**Hypotheses**	**Source of data**	**Type of data**	**Analysis**
To examine the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction in South African life insurance To examine the relationship between service quality and	Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry (1988), Pheng and Rui (2016), Almohaumeed (2017) Triatmanto et al. (2016), Karunaratna and Kumar (2018), Su et al. (2016),	H1: Service quality has a positive impact on customer satisfaction. H2: Service quality has a positive impact on customer loyalty.	A self-administered questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale.	Quantitative data (interval scoring)	Structural equation modeling (CFA and Path Modeling)

customer loyalty in South African life insurance	Makayenza and Chikazhe (2017), Kumar and Almoula (2020), Sitorus and Yustisia (2018)			Quantitative data (interval scoring)	Structural equation modeling (CFA and Path Modeling)
To examine the relationship between service quality and customer trust in South African life insurance	Osman (2018), Jeaheng, Al-Anis and Han (2020), Rimawan, Mustofa and Mulyanto (2017), Hariguna and Berlilana (2017), Cuong and Khoi (2019)	H3: Service quality has a positive impact on customer trust.	A self-administered questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale.		
		H4: Complaint handling has a positive impact on customer satisfaction.			
To examine the relationship between complaint handling and customer satisfaction	Ogbeide et al. (2017); Cambra-Fierro et al. (2016); Iqbal et al. (2020); Petzer et al.	H5: Complaint handling has no direct		Quantitative data (interval scoring)	Structural equation modeling (CFA and Path Modeling)

in South African life insurance To examine the relationship between customer trust and customer loyalty in South African life insurance To examine the mediating role of customer trust between complaint handling and customer	(2017), Salim et al. (2018), Ahmed et al. (2020) Nataraj and Rajendrand (2018), Srivastana and Rai (2018), Leninkumar (2017), Iqbal et al. (2017), Ahmed et al. (2020), Salim et al. (2018) Mahmoud, Hinson and Adika (2018), Cambra-Fierro et al. (2016), Chaparro-Pelaez et al.	impact on customer loyalty. H6: Complaint handling has a positive impact on customer trust. H7: Customer satisfaction mediates the effect of perceived	A self-administered questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale.	Quantitative data (interval scoring)	Structural equation modeling (CFA and Path Modeling)

loyalty in the South African life insurance To examine the mediating role of customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in South African life insurance To examine the mediating role of customer trust on customer loyalty in South African life insurance	(2015), Paparoidamis (2019) Kaura, Prasad and Sharma (2015), Tandon, Kiran and San (2017), Leninkumar (2017), Slack and Singh (2020) Leninkumar (2017), Mahmoud et al. (2018a) , Cuong and Khoi (2019), Sitorus and Yustisia (2018), Mohd-Any et al. (2019)	service on customer loyalty. H8: Customer trust mediates the effect of complaint handling on customer loyalty.	A self-administered questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale		

APPENDIX C: DATA COLLECTION COVER LETTER

Data Collection Cover Letter

Dear Sir/ Madam

My name is Basil Mkhize, and I am a student at Wits Business School, studying towards a Master of Management Degree in the field of Strategic Marketing.

I invite you to participate in completing an anonymous survey as part of my research topic titled **"Antecedents of customer loyalty in the South African Life Insurance Industry."**

The survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Some questions require you to provide your demographic information. However, this information can only be used in this study. All data gathered from this survey will be treated anonymously, and no specific personal data will be disclosed, as all information will be disclosed as aggregate figures.

For any additional information, you can contact my Academic Supervisor, Dr. Siphiwe Dlamini, at siphiwe.dlamini1@wits.ac.za or me at 434292@students.wits.ac.za

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Basil Mkhize

APPENDIX D: CONSENT FORM

Dear Participant

You are invited to partake in an academic research study conducted by Basil Mkhize, a Master of Management Student in Strategic Marketing from Wits Business School.

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between service quality, complaint handling, and customer loyalty and the mediating role of customer satisfaction and trust in customer loyalty in the South African life insurance industry.

Please note the following:

This is an **anonymous study,** as your name or contact details will not appear in the responses provided. The answers you provide will be treated as strictly **confidential,** as you cannot be identified in person based on the answers you provide.

- Your participation in this study is particularly important. However, you may choose not to partake, and you may stop at any time without any negative consequences.
- Please answer the questions in the attached document as completely and honestly as possible.
- The results of this study will be used for academic purposes only and may be published in an academic journal.

Please indicate your acceptance of or refusal to complete the survey.

- I agree to continue this study.
- No, I do not agree to continue this study.

APPENDIX E: SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Antecedents of customer loyalty in the South African life insurance industry.

Please answer the following questions according to the guidelines. This questionnaire is strictly for research purposes.

Section A: General information

This section is divided into seven categories and asks about background information. Please indicate your answer by marking (x) in the appropriate box.

A1. Gender

Male	1
Female	2
Prefer not to say	3

A2. Age Category

18-24	1
25-34	2
35- 44	3
45-54	4
55-64	5
65+	6

A3. Educational level

Primary School	1
High school	2
Diploma	3
Degree	4
Post-Graduate Degree	5

A4. Current Employment Status

Student	1
Employed	2
Self-employed	3
Unemployed	4
Retired	5

A5. Do you have an individual's life cover?

Yes	1
No	2
I prefer not to say	3

A6. If you answered 'yes' to Question 5, please indicate your current life insurance company.

Discovery	1
Liberty	2
Momentum	3
Old Mutual	4
Sanlam	5
Other	6

A7. Are you currently residing in Johannesburg, South Africa?

Yes	1
No	2

Survey Questionnaire

This section is divided into five parts. Please show the extent to which the following statements relate to your feelings about the life insurance you have chosen. Please indicate your choice by ticking (X) in the appropriate box.

Section B. Service Quality

Service Quality indicates the ability of the life cover insurer to perform a service as promised, accurately, and reliably. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement by ticking the corresponding option on a five-point Likert scale.

	Service Quality Statement	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
SQ1	The insurance company provides access to information on products or services offered	1	2	3	4	5
SQ2	The terms and the clauses of the insurance contract are clear and easy to understand	1	2	3	4	5
SQ3	The insurance company performs the service as promised	1	2	3	4	5
SQ4	The insurance company always provides documentation correctly	1	2	3	4	5

SQ5	The insurance company provides customer service quickly and gives attention to each customer's needs	1	2	3	4	5
SQ6	The insurance company always provides various insurance policies to customers	1	2	3	4	5

Section C. Complaint handling

Complaint handling is a process that aims to provide a solution to a problem. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement by ticking the corresponding option on a five-point Likert scale.

	Complaint Handling Statement	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
CH1	The life insurer can resolve complaints in a refined manner	1	2	3	4	5
CH2	The life insurer listens well and understands my grievances	1	2	3	4	5

CH3	The employees of the life insurer are highly skilled in responding to my complaints	1	2	3	4	5
CH4	In general, the life insurer is capable enough to resolve complaints in a professional and timely manner	1	2	3	4	5

Section D. Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction refers to the overall evaluation of customers' expectations from the insurance provider. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement by ticking the corresponding option on a five-point Likert scale.

	Customer satisfaction Statement	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
CS1	Overall, I feel satisfied with the insurance services provided	1	2	3	4	5
CS2	Overall, I feel satisfied after each insurance transaction with my insurance company	1	2	3	4	5

CS3	Overall, I feel satisfied with the relationship I have with my insurance company	1	2	3	4	5
CS4	My insurance company always meets my expectations	1	2	3	4	5
CS5	In short, I feel satisfied with my insurance company	1	2	3	4	5

Section E. Customer Trust

Customer trust refers to the customer's confidence and belief that the service provider will be able to perform a valued action and maintain their promises. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement by ticking the corresponding option on a five-point Likert scale.

	Customer Trust Statement	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
CT1	I am willing to rely on the service of my insurance company	1	2		4	5

CT2	I have confidence in my insurance company	1	2	3	4	5
CT3	The life insurer fulfils its promises	1	2	3	4	5

Section F. Customer Loyalty

Customer loyalty refers to the frequent use of life insurers' services and endorsement of the company to other customers. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement by ticking the corresponding option on a five-point Likert scale.

	Customer loyalty statements	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
CL1	I will recommend my insurance company to my friends, family members, and others	1	2	3	4	5
CL2	I will speak well about my insurance company with others	1	2	3	4	5

CL3	Although there are other insurance companies, I will continue using my actual insurance company	1	2	3	4	5
CL4	I will continue using my life insurer even when other life insurers offer promotions.	1	2	3	4	5
CL5	Maintaining a long-term relationship with my insurance company is particularly important to me	1	2	3	4	5
CL6	I consider my insurance company the first choice among other insurance companies	1	2	3	4	5
CL7	I consider myself to be loyal to my insurance company	1	2	3	4	5

The end

APPENDIX F: REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT WITS UNIVERSITY

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

Wits Business School
Sculpting global leaders

FORM A - Request to Conduct Research at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

This form must be completed by a registered Master by Research/Ph.D. students and staff at Wits wishing to conduct research by using Wits student/staff data. Please email the form to **Chantal.Wilson@wits.ac.za**

First Name **Surname:**

Basil	**Mkhize**

Staff/Student number:

434292

Degree currently registered for **School:**

Master of Management in Strategic Marketing	**Wits Business School**
Research title: Antecedents of customer loyalty in the South African life insurance industry	

Has ethics clearance been obtained from the University Ethics Committee/School Ethics Committee?

NO	

(If yes, please include a copy of the ethics clearance and protocol number below)

Protocol number:

Pending

If ethics clearance has not been obtained, please note that you will not be able to conduct your research until the required permission has been granted.

Has your Head of Department/Supervisor granted permission for the research to be conducted?

YES	

(If yes, please include a copy of the letter of approval)

What is the expected duration of your research?

Two years

To whom will the research be conducted? (Please tick the appropriate box):

Students	**X**
Staff	
Both staff and students	
Others (please specify)	

If the research will be conducted on student data, please specify the year of study /Faculty or degree data will be required for:

First-Year Students	
Second Year Students	

Third Year Students	
Final Year Students	
Postgraduate Students	**X**
Faculty	**All faculties**
Degree	**All Postgrad Degrees**

How will the research be conducted?

E-Mail	**Qualtrics- linked to being e-mailed to students**
Interviews (please attach a copy of the interview questions)	
Other data collection (please specify lists or statistics)	Survey questionnaire
Focus Groups	

Student signature: **Date 20 April 2021**

APPENDIX G: ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

Graduate School of Business Administration
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

Wits Business School

Wits Business School Ethics Committee
Constituted under the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical)

Ethics Clearance Certificate

Ethics protocol number: WBS/SM434292/968

This certificate is only valid with a legitimate ethics protocol number and signed by the Researcher (below).

This certificate is only valid if accompanied by formal permission from the relevant stakeholder(s).

Project title	Antecedents of customer loyalty in the South African life insurance industry
Investigator / Researcher	Mr Basil Nhlanhla Mkhize
Nature of Project	MM (Strategic Marketing)
Decision of the Committee	Approved, provided stakeholders and participants are guaranteed confidentialty.
Issue Date of Certificate	2021-05-18
Expiry date	Date of submission of the project report
Chairperson	Prof Anthony Stacey ☎ +27 11 717 3587 +27 82 880 4531 anthony.stacey@wits.ac.za

AC Stacey

Declaration by Researcher

One copy must be signed by the Researcher and returned to the Chairperson of the Wits Business School Ethics Committee.

I fully understand the conditions under which I am authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee.

MkhizeB
Signature

25 May 2021
Date:

APPENDIX H: LANGUAGE EDITING CONFIRMATION

EDITING CONFIRMATION

To whom it may concern:

This memo serves to confirm that the manuscript/research project detailed below has been language-edited and/or proof-read.

Regards,

-SM001-

SM/FS *(Cert. Lang. Ed.)*
Language Editors

****

Manuscript Title:

ANTECEDENTS OF CUSTOMER LOYALTY IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN LIFE INSURANCE INDUSTRY

Author:

BASIL MKHIZE

Issued on:

04/02/2024

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The editors/proofreaders make(s) no claim as to the accuracy of the manuscript contents nor the objectives of the author. While all possible efforts have been made to ensure the text as edited is readable and grammatically correct, the author(s) have the option to accept or reject suggestions and trackable changes made to the document before submission.

sarchcot@gmail.com

APPENDIX I: TURNITIN REPORT