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Article

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Structural determinants of customer loyalty among long-term insurance consumers in Namibia

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ABSTRACT

Customer satisfaction, retention, and loyalty are essential for a positive return on sales in the insurance industry. This study examines the key determinants of customer loyalty among long-term insurance consumers in Namibia. The mediating role of customer satisfaction was also examined in the relationship between the specified exogenous variables and customer loyalty. A quantitative approach was adopted using a cross-sectional survey to establish the structural determinants of loyalty among long-term insurance consumers in Namibia. An explanatory research design was incorporated to explain the mediating role of customer satisfaction in the relationship between customer awareness and customer loyalty, customer protection and customer loyalty, as well as service quality and customer loyalty in Namibia. The target population (18,205) of this study comprised consumers of long-term insurance products in Windhoek, Namibia. A structured questionnaire was administered to 406 respondents using a convenience sampling technique. The formulated hypotheses were assessed using variance-based structural equation modeling. The results show that customer satisfaction exerts a direct effect on customer loyalty, while customer protection and service quality exert an indirect influence on customer loyalty in the insurance industry. Therefore, efforts should be geared towards customer awareness of long-term insurance products to enhance the uptake of such products for customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in the insurance industry.

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1. Introduction

Markets worldwide are more service oriented these days since the service industry plays a significant role in many economies. Competition has however also been intense in the global service industry thus making successful companies more reliant on a sound understanding of their customers' needs (Hosseini & Saravi-Moghadam, 2017). Service providers do not consistently succeed in ensuring customer satisfaction; however, when customers are satisfied, service providers are more likely to achieve customer loyalty (Barshan et al., 2017). The service providers therefore aim to ensure that the customers remain loyal since customer retention is more cost effective than acquiring new customers. Service providers who provide quality service are therefore guaranteed to have satisfied customers who will remain loyal to them (Demir et al., 2015).

According to Kamati (2017), despite the longstanding presence of long-term insurance companies in Namibia, consumers remain inadequately protected and lack sufficient awareness of their rights and options. The markets therefore tend to exploit the ignorance of consumers since fewer consumers are aware of the products and benefits of these products and they are also not aware of their rights, sometimes unable to make informed decisions. The intangible characteristics of services pose

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significant challenges for consumers, as they can only realize the benefits of these products after an event takes place. Consequently, individuals seeking long-term insurance policies require enhanced protection, as well as greater access to information and understanding regarding the products they intend to acquire, given the inherent nature of these intangible insurance offerings (Ardic et al., 2011). Malady (2016) claims that consumer protection regulation is critical in ensuring financial inclusion because it ensures that companies are more honest and open about the products, they are offering which then assists the consumers in making the right purchasing decisions. Consumers with limited skills, knowledge, and awareness could suffer consequences such as financial mistakes, which could result in a loss of income (Malady, 2016). Therefore, it is imperative for organizations to convey information about their products as a component of their promotional strategies (Kotler & Armstrong, 2017). Establishing consumer awareness is crucial for any organization, as it ensures that potential customers are informed about the available products and that the benefits of these products are clearly communicated. This clarity enables consumers to make informed and intelligent purchasing decisions.

Unfair trade practices are common in the Namibian economy and most consumers have limited knowledge about valuable information such as to which offices they are to consult when they have been wronged, thus resulting in them being exploited by service providers (Amunkete, 2013). Moreover, there is a lack of a well-structured consumer protection framework in Namibia which results in various institutions providing mechanisms to avert prejudice to consumer rights (Schlettwein, 2013). The Namibia Financial Institutions Supervisory Authority (NAMFISA) is one of the institutions that explicitly undertakes consumer awareness programs about long-term insurance companies. Despite such interventions, there are still service providers in the long-term insurance sector who are exploiting their consumers (Gibson et al., 2011). Some of the insurance companies even offer poor and unsatisfactory services to their consumers in Namibia (Adeline, 2022). The interest of the long-term insurance providers is selling their products instead of keeping their customers satisfied (Wanjiru, 2013), thus the organizations are viewed as not being customer service oriented. Therefore, this led to endless complaints being submitted to NAMFISA (Kamati, 2017). This will have an adverse effect on the satisfaction of long-term insurance consumers in Namibia.

Customer satisfaction is regarded as a performance measure and it is an outcome of the supremacy of the customer experience, which covers the various aspects around the breach between customer expectations and the actual customer experience (Milner & Furnham, 2017). Customer satisfaction has a significant influence on customer loyalty, which increases profits (Madikwe, 2015). Consumer satisfaction is the ultimate key for service providers to ensure a firm's performance since it is the total assessment of the consumer experience and often leads to consumer loyalty (Gizaw & Pagidimarri, 2014; Nazari et al., 2012). Companies in the insurance industry are more sales oriented and do not engage in the marketing concept thus resulting in failure to ensure their customers are satisfied and remain loyal to the organization. Moreover, the intangible nature of insurance products adds a layer of complexity because these products cannot be seen, felt, touched, or tasted making it challenging for customers to make informed purchasing decisions (Alinvi & Babri, 2007).

The current study is essential in assisting long-term insurance companies in improving consumer awareness, consumer protection, and service quality to enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty in Namibia. Given the above, the study therefore aims to examine the structural determinants of customer loyalty among long-term insurance consumers in Namibia. The service providers within the long-term insurance industry will have a better understanding of how their consumers perceive their services, with the hope that strategies will be developed to guarantee customer satisfaction and loyalty.

The remaining sections of this scholarly work focus on background theory and a literature review on customer awareness, customer protection, service quality, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty. The subsequent section covers the methods, research procedure, participants, measurement scale adopted in the study, and data analysis procedures. In the results section, there is a discussion of the findings, pointing out the theoretical contribution and practical implications of the study. In the last section, we point out the limitations of the study and propose future research directions, as well as the conclusion.

2. Literature review and hypotheses development

2.1 Background theory

The theory adopted to understand and examine the structural determinants of customer loyalty in insurance companies is the Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory (EDT). The EDT posits that consumers' level of satisfaction is determined by the discrepancy between their expectations and their perceptions of the product's performance, with expectations serving as forecasts of future performance (Aigbavboa & Thwala, 2013). The theory holds that if the customer had high expectations about a product and the product performance as expected the customer is likely to have a higher satisfaction as compared to when the customer's expectation was low (Aigbavboa & Thwala, 2013). Organizations have been employing the EDT to have a better understanding of consumers repurchase intentions, their satisfaction and their reason for complaints (Bhattacharjee & Premkumar, 2004; Hsu et al., 2006; Patterson et al., 1997; Picazo-Vela, 2009).

Furthermore, the EDT stems from the field of consumer behavior, which posits that consumers hold varying expectations regarding the quality of service offered by providers. These expectations are shaped by several factors, including personal experiences with the service provider, advertisements related to the offered product, and word-of-mouth information about the provider's services. As a result, consumers assess the quality of services based on multiple standards, ultimately determining whether they are satisfied or dissatisfied with the service provided (Van Ryzin, 2013). Moreover, the outcome of the difference in expectations can be negative or positive which means that when the outcome is positive the performance has exceeded the customer's expectations and with a negative outcome the performance was less than the customer's expectations.

Based on the EDT there is usually a multi-stage process that the customers experience before they decide to repurchase the particular service (Schwarz, 2011). A certain expectation is formed by the consumer regarding the services before they are to utilize it but consumers who previously used the service are however likely to have a more realistic expectation of the performance of the product, unlike first-time users who are likely to have expectations based on the various communication platforms or on the word of mouth or even based on the various marketing initiatives of the service providers. In the final stage, consumers will use the service themselves which will then allow them to make the judgment whether their experience matches their initial expectations of the service they have received (Schwarz, 2011).

Before purchasing a product or a service the expectation or desire of the customers comes from the pre-purchase stage where the customer feels a need to experience a specific performance of the product, they are planning on purchasing and this can relate to the quality of the product or service. The perceived performance is however related to the after-purchase period that the customer experiences after perceiving a real performance of the particular service or product's quality. This sometimes results in disconfirmation of the expectation which could be positive or negative. Thus, when the customer's expectation is higher than the perceived expectation there will be a positive confirmation but when the customer perceived the performance to be worse than the customer's expectation the result will be a negative confirmation (Naeimeh & Bakri, 2012).

Furthermore, customer satisfaction is connected to the history of expectations, perceived quality, and perceived value by the customer, as well as the complaints from customers and customer loyalty in general (Churchill & Surprenant, 1982; Oliver, 1981). According to Garbarino and Johnson (1999), an increase in consumer confidence in service providers often increases customer satisfaction. Customers, however, become frustrated and aggrieved when they do not receive the experience they were promised, which thus results in dissatisfaction (Oliver, 1997). Zamazalová (2008) postulates that the key factors that have an impact on customer satisfaction and can be used in measuring customer satisfaction are factors such as the product itself, specifically the quality and availability of the product; price based on how convenient it is to make the payments; distribution and the image of the product.

According to Tarigan and Hatane (2019), customer satisfaction is a crucial component of financial performance. However, having dissatisfied customers can negatively impact this performance, as

dissatisfaction may lead to a decrease in sales and an increase in complaints from consumers. Government interference and competitors' responses may contribute to efforts aimed at closing the market gap by developing new substitute products. Kim (2007), however, emphasizes that if companies are active and take customer satisfaction seriously, there will be an increase in company growth. To ensure customer satisfaction, there are four methods used in measuring the level of customer satisfaction; the complaints system, lost customer analysis, customer satisfaction surveys, and ghost shopping (Kotler & Keller, 2009). In this study, service quality and customer satisfaction are the two constructs that are linked to EDT. It is important to note that customer perceptions of overall satisfaction typically arise from a comparison between their prior expectations of service performance and the actual performance delivered. Consequently, organizations should align service delivery with customer expectations to enhance satisfaction (Van Ryzin, 2013).

2.2 Customer awareness

Consumer awareness has to do with the level of information provided to people about what they are buying, which relates to the prices of the products as well as the benefits of the products (Sharma, 2013). Consumers must do proper research on the products they want to purchase so that they know what to expect when they purchase them. Consumers need to understand the significance of knowing the purchasing conditions, the use of the products, and all the key details that relate to the specific products so that they can make informed decisions (Kumar, 2016). Creating consumer awareness is important to protect the interests of consumers by educating them about their responsibilities and their rights (Syal & Goswami, 2012).

Phukon (2016) claims that consumers who lack awareness of key factors such as fair pricing, product quality, performance, warranty details, durability, after-sales services, discounts, and concessions are less likely to understand their rights and responsibilities as consumers. Makanyeza (2015) emphasizes that informed consumers who recognize their rights and responsibilities are better equipped to make informed purchasing decisions and confidently demand quality services, thereby reducing the risk of exploitation.

2.3 Customer protection

The regulations that are in place to help consumers exercise their rights concerning the purchase of products and services is termed as consumer protection (Ateke & Ogbuji, 2017; Süle, 2012). Accordingly, the primary aim of consumer protection is to ensure that consumers receive accurate and pertinent information, enabling them to make informed purchasing decisions. In all sectors, consumer protection is an important phenomenon. Consumers in insurance sectors are primarily protected against unfair practices, unwarranted risk in insurance contracts, misrepresentation of information or benefits related to the services offered, the contractual language used, advertisements, pricing of the services offered, the selling methods used by the service providers and against payments of claims (Tennyson, 2016). Clients must be protected when they are dealing with insurance advisors because, when they lack knowledge of insurance products, they are more likely to be vulnerable to exploitation (Mochesane, 2014). Consumers who are well informed tend to be more confident in raising inquiries and complaints regarding the services they have received. When the information provided to them is unclear, they are more likely to seek clarification. These consumers are proactive in exercising their rights. It is essential for consumers to become acquainted with the company's profile and familiarize themselves with relevant government policies to understand the protective measures or legislation in place to challenge service providers when the promised services are not delivered (Mugobo & Malunga, 2015). In this case, the Namibia Financial Institutions Supervisory Authority (NAMFISA) is the only regulator of insurance companies in Namibia (Barnard & Scott, 2015). Consumer rights are often restricted because service providers fail to include negative clauses in their agreement or do not adequately explain these clauses to consumers prior to their commitment to purchasing a product or service (Dawids, 2010).

2.4 Service quality

Service quality is a crucial determinant of customer satisfaction and loyalty. The service providers should commit themselves to improving their service quality so that they can remain competitive in the market and are able to have a competitive advantage over their competitors (Ujakpa et al., 2017). It is essential for service providers to enhance customer satisfaction by delivering high-quality services. This improvement will lead to increased customer retention, loyalty, and profitability (Singh et al., 2014). The perception of service quality can be enhanced by building customer trust or fulfilling promises made to customers and being responsive to their queries and needs (Major, 2017).

2.5 Customer satisfaction

The key performance indicator in organizations which measures whether the products or services offered meet or exceed customer expectation is customer satisfaction (Selvarani & Parveen, 2017). Hence, service providers must develop principles and strategies to ensure customer satisfaction. Borah (2012) asserts that customer satisfaction is the primary differentiating factor among competitors in today's economy. To promote and strengthen customer loyalty, organizations must prioritize customer satisfaction. Service providers should consistently work to establish enduring relationships with their customers, supported by high-quality service. This approach will lead to meeting and surpassing customer expectations and satisfaction. (Ganiyu, 2017). Companies should manage and constantly monitor or measure customer satisfaction (Ilieska, 2013). In practice, maintaining a high level of customer satisfaction is a challenging endeavor, as it involves considering various factors, such as providing high-quality products and cultivating strong relationships with customers. (Khadka & Maharjan, 2017).

Furthermore, when companies implement and maintain efficient two-way communication channels, organizations are more likely to improve customer product knowledge and, in the process, reduce any future regrets among customers and increase customer satisfaction (Ruefenacht, 2018). Companies making efforts to satisfy their customers are the ones that are succeeding in business, as satisfied customers also assist in gaining a high market position (Khadka & Maharjan, 2017). Satisfied customers tend to suggest a specific service provider to new customers (Khadka & Maharjan, 2017). It is therefore important for companies to conduct customer satisfaction surveys at regular intervals to prioritize factors influencing customer satisfaction and loyalty (Vazifehdust & Farokhian, 2013). A fundamental component of customer satisfaction is quality excellence, which is typically assessed by comparing the overall quality of the service delivered with the quality that was anticipated (Chadya et al., 2014).

2.5.1 Customer awareness and customer satisfaction

Customer satisfaction originates from assessing the anticipated performance against the real perceived performance and the price the consumer pays to obtain the product (Abedi & Jahed, 2020). Customers who are satisfied are less likely to switch service providers or brands (Harzaviona & Syah, 2020; Nikou & Malekalketab, 2020). When customers are satisfied with the service they receive, they are more inclined to share their positive experiences with friends, colleagues, and relatives. In most instances, customers who are satisfied with the services they receive tend to recommend the products or services to prospective customers (Dominici & Guzzo, 2010; Natuhwera, 2011). Conversely, if they encounter disappointing service, they are likely to express their dissatisfaction to a broader audience, which can lead to a loss of business for the organization (Felix, 2017). Alternatively, customers who are dissatisfied with the services they receive often choose not to voice their complaints; instead, they tend to seek services from competitors (Hasfar et al., 2020). Consumers with sufficient awareness of their rights are more likely to make informed purchasing decisions, which often results in customer satisfaction and subsequent loyalty (Makanyeza, 2015). The evaluation of consumer satisfaction and dissatisfaction is influenced not only by individual experiences but also by the customer's awareness of the company's overall standing (Pérez & Rodríguez del-Bosque, 2015). When consumers share information about their experiences with products or brands through statements, this is referred to as word-of-mouth, which is typically an effective

promotional method where the company is assessed by the consumer (Tucker, 2011). Consequently, service providers should consistently strive to satisfy their customers. Based on the literature, this study hypothesizes that:

H1: There is a significant relationship between Customer Awareness and Customer Satisfaction.

2.5.2 Customer protection and customer satisfaction

Unethical business practices about consumers are mostly associated with misleading information or deceptive advertising, contracts that have difficult clauses, and one-sided contracts, limiting the liability of the service provider (Reddy & Rampersad, 2012). Insufficient consumer education and lack of awareness regarding their rights render consumers vulnerable to exploitation by companies (Mugobo & Malunga, 2015). Consumer protection efforts should begin with educating consumers from an early age. This education should not only be a critical component of school curricula but should also be disseminated through television and radio programs to maximize its impact (Babaogul et al., 2010). The provision of high-quality services is essential for service providers. Hence, organizations should employ skilled employees who can efficiently manage claims, offer fair prices to customers, establish clear communication channels, implement effective advertising strategies, and utilize advanced technology to enhance service delivery. These practices will lead to increased customer satisfaction (Myola, 2014). Based on the existing literature, this study hypothesizes that:

H2: There is a significant relationship between customer protection and customer satisfaction.

2.5.3 Service quality and customer satisfaction

Service quality can be established when consumers judge a product's overall performance as excellent or superior to other competing products (Zeithaml, 1988). Customer perception of service quality can be measured by the quality of services offered (Irulappan & Bincy, 2012). For instance, variables such as reliability, empathy, tangibility, assurance, and responsiveness are utilized by organizations to assess service quality, and these factors have a positive impact on customer loyalty (Zheve et al., 2015). Rahayu (2018) argues that competition within industries has intensified, leading customers to demand higher service quality, which in turn compels companies to continuously improve and enhance their services. Consequently, service quality emerges as a key strategy in a competitive landscape (Berry et al., 1988), since there is a significant positive relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction (Zafar et al., 2012). Therefore, this study hypothesizes the following:

H3: There is a significant relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction.

2.6 Customer loyalty

Customer loyalty is demonstrated when customers consistently choose to purchase from the same service provider, even in the presence of alternative options (Ranabhat, 2018). Loyal customers serve as the primary source of new customers for service providers through positive word-of-mouth, and these loyal customers are also associated with increased profitability. Afsar et al. (2010) assert that most companies center their marketing strategies on promoting customer loyalty due to the intense competition they face. Moreover, companies commit to offering a diverse range of services and enhancing their customer service by leveraging their service standards and technology (Wilson et al., 2020).

The outcomes of customer loyalty extend beyond repeat purchases and positive publicity; they also significantly influence priority-based preferences and cross-buying intentions for the service provider (Rai & Medha, 2013). The primary goal of service providers is to cultivate and sustain loyal customers. To achieve this critical objective, they must offer customers special benefits and ensure timely communication of essential information (Du Plessis & Roberts-Lombard, 2013). According to Ranabhat (2018), while

customer satisfaction and loyalty are interconnected, not all customers remain loyal to the same service provider or brand. Heryanto (2011) contends that customers are more likely to remain loyal to a service provider when they are satisfied, which is influenced by their expectations and the performance of the product. Consequently, customers tend to feel satisfied when product performance exceeds their expectations, while dissatisfaction arises when performance falls short of those expectations.

2.6.1 Customer awareness and customer loyalty

Companies usually provide promotional strategies, which often assist in educating customers about products or services, and customers are expected to contact the service provider should they experience any unfair treatment by sales representatives or any negative issues once they have purchased the product or service (Mwakatumbula et al., 2015; Piratheepan & Pushpanathan, 2013). Customers who are well informed usually demand high-quality services (Rosmayani & Mardatillah, 2016). When the service is of superior quality to consumers, they are more likely to make another purchase decision when they had a pleasant experience with the specific service provider. Consumers tend to be more loyal to a service provider when they are aware of the brand through advertising and constant publicity (Valavi, 2014). The study therefore hypothesizes that:

H4: Customer awareness has a significant direct influence on customer loyalty.

2.6.2 Customer protection and customer loyalty

Customer loyalty is a profound psychological inclination that drives customers to consistently patronize a specific service provider, particularly those who are satisfied with the services received, and are likely to return repeatedly to the same provider (Ateke & Isaac, 2020). As competition intensifies, companies should ensure their sustainability by retaining customers, with brand awareness serving as a crucial tool for enhancing loyalty (Setiawan et al., 2023). The term 'consumer protection' refers to the array of regulatory and non-regulatory measures implemented to address various market failures that expose consumers to losses related to unfair business practices (Mugobo & Malunga, 2015). It is essential for consumers to receive accurate information about the products they are purchasing and to understand the terms and conditions of the transactions they engage in with sellers (Ateke & Isaac, 2020). Loyal customers typically purchase more, are willing to pay higher prices, and are likely to recommend the service provider's products to others. Thus, customer loyalty is vital for the marketing success of the service provider. Customers expect fair contracts, timely information about products, and favorable terms and conditions; these services will ultimately contribute to their loyalty (Wokoma & Toruyouyei, 2019). The study hypothesizes that:

H5: Customer protection has a significant influence on customer loyalty.

2.6.3 Service quality and customer loyalty

Customer loyalty is influenced by factors, such as service quality, corporate image, and customer satisfaction (Orozco & Cavazos, 2017). For example, loyal customers are beneficial to an organization since they add economic value when they continuously purchase services from the service provider. Iordanova, 2017) stated that customer loyalty governs business success because when customers are loyal to service providers, they are likely to increase their profits. Budianto (2019) further expounds that the significance of customer loyalty in any business is that it increases the service provider's sales. Tarus and Rabach (2013) affirm that it is expensive to acquire new customers compared to maintaining the existing ones because once customers are loyal to a certain service provider and satisfied, they are less likely to switch service providers. Obtaining new customers can be an expensive exercise as well, but maintaining existing customers may lead to amortization of acquisition costs (Nguyen et al., 2016). Service providers who have loyal customers are always able to enjoy a competitive advantage over other service providers (Makanyeza, 2015). Reliability, tangibility, and empathy are the three dimensions of service quality that

positively influence customer loyalty (Leninkumar, 2016). Drawing insights from the existing literature, this study proposes that:

H6: Service quality has a significant influence on customer loyalty.

2.6.4 Customer satisfaction and customer loyalty

The interaction between customers and sales representatives is crucial in the service industry, as it provides an opportunity to either satisfy or disappoint consumers. Customer expectations play a significant role in shaping outcomes and influencing perceptions of service quality, which are essential for determining customer satisfaction (Rosmayani & Mardatillah, 2016). According to Njoroge (2016), service quality and customer satisfaction are vital factors in predicting customer loyalty, which is essential for maintaining a sustainable competitive advantage. Ogbechi et al. (2018) argue that both customer satisfaction and loyalty are critical for service providers; therefore, it is important to develop and implement effective strategies to meet customer expectations. Vazifehdust and Farokhian (2013) suggest that factors influencing customer satisfaction include customer awareness, consumer protection, and service quality. Meanwhile, customer loyalty is affected by factors such as service quality, corporate image, and customer satisfaction (Orozco & Cavazos, 2017). This study hypothesizes the following:

H7: Customer satisfaction has a significant direct influence on customer loyalty.

2.7 Mediating role of customer satisfaction

2.7.1 Mediating role of customer satisfaction in the relationship between customer awareness and customer loyalty

Strategies such as awareness programs and advertising are usually designed in such a way to create assurance in customers' minds about the firm's honesty and motivation. The strategy established by the firms should not only communicate with existing and prospective customers, but it should also assist in fulfilling the promises made to customers (Yadav et al., 2018). Satisfactory purchasing experiences typically lead to sustained interest in a product or service and the intention to repurchase from the same service provider (Eid, 2015). However, most customers assess their satisfaction based on their pre-purchase expectations and post-purchase experiences (El-Adly & Eid, 2016; Ryu et al., 2012). This implies that customers are satisfied when their expectations regarding a product or service are met or exceeded (Leninkumar, 2017; Oliver & Linda, 1981). To promote customer loyalty, organizations must ensure that customers remain satisfied. Previous research by Khan et al. (2022) has shown that customer satisfaction serves as a precursor to customer loyalty. Therefore, customer satisfaction is crucial, as it enables companies to enhance their returns and gain a competitive advantage, given that satisfied customers are more likely to make repeat purchases. Based on the existing literature, this study hypothesizes that:

H8: Customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between customer awareness and customer loyalty.

2.7.2 Mediating influence of customer satisfaction on the relationship between customer protection and customer loyalty

It is beneficial for service providers to understand the factors influencing and determining customer loyalty, as these factors are important since they offer benefits such as reduced operational costs, reduced promotional costs, an increase in referrals, and revenue optimization (Abou-Shouk & Khalifa, 2017; Qoura & Khalifa, 2016). The government applies regulations to protect customers from various kinds of fraud or forgery that could be committed against them, which might have an impact on customer satisfaction. Sales agents oftentimes sell products to customers without giving them an explanation of both the benefits and disadvantages that come with purchasing a product or the various policy stipulations that are attached to purchasing that product. Service providers are, however, nowadays forced to develop an attitude of responsible trade, which therefore results in them ensuring that they develop strategies that

enhance the dignity of consumers through increased awareness, care, and ensuring the independence of consumers to protect themselves (Sondakh et al., 2017). Judging from the extant literature provided in this section, this study postulates that:

H9: Customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between customer protection and customer loyalty.

2.7.3 Mediating role of customer satisfaction in the relationship between service quality and customer loyalty

According to Ndubisi and Nwankwo (2019) services are measured based on beliefs about service delivery, which form the benchmark. Harr (2008) argues that assessing the level of customer satisfaction can be a challenge since customer expectations are formed based on each individual's experience, and the customer might in fact be satisfied in one aspect but equally dissatisfied in another, thus resulting in a customer forming a conflicting opinion about the product. Loyalty in terms of behavior can be defined as the present behavior towards the product of interest (Wolter et al., 2017). Empathy and reliability significantly affect customer satisfaction, but empathy, responsiveness, assurance, and tangibility are found to have a significant effect on customer loyalty. It was however found that customer satisfaction moderately also impact the relationship between empathy and customer loyalty (Kumar, 2017). The attitudes and behaviors of service providers significantly impact customer emotions, particularly in services that necessitate ongoing interaction between the customer and the provider (Leninkumar, 2017). Accordingly, there are significant positive relationships among various variables, including service quality and customer satisfaction, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty, as well as service quality and customer loyalty. The findings indicate that customer satisfaction serves as a mediator in the relationship between service quality and customer loyalty. Therefore, this study hypothesizes that:

H10: Customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between service quality and customer loyalty.

3. Methods

This study employed a positivist research philosophy, which supports the use of a quantitative approach and a cross-sectional survey design to investigate the effects of customer awareness, customer protection, service quality, and customer satisfaction on the loyalty of long-term insurance consumers in Namibia. An explanatory research design was integrated into the study to explain the mediating role of customer satisfaction in the relationships between customer awareness and customer loyalty, customer protection and customer loyalty, as well as service quality and customer loyalty in Namibia. To test the research hypotheses, a structured questionnaire was distributed to respondents in Namibia through a cross-sectional survey design, aiming to gather relevant information on the key determinants of customer loyalty—namely, customer awareness, customer protection, service quality, and customer satisfaction—within insurance companies in Namibia.

3.1. Research procedure and participants

The population of this study comprised consumers of long-term insurance products in Windhoek, Namibia. The target population of this study was long-term consumers of insurance products from the participating insurance companies operating in Windhoek, Namibia, with an estimated population of 18,205. The quantitative data was collected by the authors and two trained research assistants in Windhoek using self-administered questionnaires. The reason for collecting the required data in Windhoek is that the city is home to various demographics and is the capital city of Namibia (Mapani et al., 2023; Melber, 2022). Besides, the city of Windhoek is the economic hub of Namibia, where the headquarters of the participating insurance companies are situated. A convenience sampling method was adopted to administer 500 questionnaires to the survey respondents. The convenience sampling technique is useful in administering questionnaires to respondents who are interested in participating in a survey (Ofori

et al., 2023). The fieldwork lasted for about two months. Out of the 500 questionnaires administered in Windhoek, 407 completed questionnaires were returned at the end of the exercise. However, 406 questionnaires were found useful after data quality control, which represents an 81.2% response rate. The sample of 406 respondents was considered appropriate for structural equation modeling (Hair et al., 2017) and representative of a population of 18,205 (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970) long-term consumers of insurance products in Windhoek.

The demographic profile of respondents shows that 59.6% of the respondents were females, while the remaining 40.4% were males. In terms of age distribution among respondents, 21.6% were within the ages of 26–30 years, 25.3% belonged to the age group of 31–35 years, and 22.6% were between 36 and 40 years. Statistically, the majority of the long-term consumers of insurance products in Windhoek were between 26 and 40 years of age. The descriptive analysis shows that 30% of the respondents have been maintaining their insurance policies for over 5 years.

3.2. Measurement scale

The self-administered questionnaire used to gather the required quantitative data in this study comprises seven main sections. The first section contained screening items or questions to ensure that all respondents are over 18 years of age and have purchased long-term insurance products in Namibia. The second section covered items useful in gathering demographic information about the survey respondents. The third section of the questionnaire contained nine (9) items adapted from the original scale measuring consumer awareness developed by Abdolvand et al. (2016). For example, the scale is useful in eliciting the necessary information to determine whether a consumer receives enough information about the insurance product before making a purchasing decision. This research instrument was designed on a 5-point Likert rating scale (where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree). The fourth section comprised 12 items measuring consumer protection. The items used in measuring consumer protection were adapted from the original developed by Kamati (2017) understand the need to strengthen consumer protection in the financial sector. For example, the scale is instrumental in examining the extent to which long-term insurance companies in Namibia adhere to consumer protection guidelines using the 5-point Likert rating.

The fifth section contained 22 items measuring service quality adapted from the original scale developed by Parasuraman et al. (1985, 1990). The scale is useful in assessing perceived service quality on a five-sub-dimensional scale (tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy). The perceived service quality of long-term consumers of insurance products in Namibia was measured in this study using a 5-point Likert rating scale. The sixth section of the questionnaire comprised eight (8) items measuring the level of customer satisfaction among the holders of long-term insurance products in Namibia. The measurement of customer satisfaction was adapted from the original scale developed by NGuyen et al. (2018) to establish the key determinants of customer satisfaction and loyalty in a Vietnamese life insurance setting. In the context of Namibia, a 5-point Likert rating scale was used to measure whether consumers of long-term insurance products in Namibia feel satisfied after the insurance transactions with their insurance companies. The last (seventh) section of the questionnaire contained five (5) items measuring customer loyalty in Namibia. The measurement of customer loyalty was adapted from the original scale developed by Thiam (2013) to measure the loyalty intention of consumers of financial services rendered by financial institutions in Cyprus. Hence, in the context of insurance companies operating in Namibia, a 5-point Likert rating scale was utilized to measure the extent to which a consumer will remain with the insurer when satisfied with the services provided.

3.3. Ethical considerations

This study adhered to ethical considerations in social science research. Measures were implemented to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of both the respondents and the participating long-term insurance companies in Namibia. Before administering the questionnaires, an ethical clearance certificate (protocol reference number: HSS/0880/018:D) was obtained from the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The cover page of the research instrument

included a section for respondents to provide their informed written consent. This article was extracted from the lead author's doctoral thesis, which was submitted to the University of KwaZulu-Natal for the award of a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Marketing.

3.4. Data analysis

A descriptive statistic (a simple percentage) was used to analyze the demographic variables collected in this study. The descriptive analysis was conducted in SPSS version 29. The other descriptive statistics used for preliminary analysis include the central tendency and evaluation of normality using the skewness and kurtosis values. According to the data, most statements were agreed upon by the respondents. No item in the measurement scale is significantly kurtotic, as all the kurtosis values are less than 7 (Malhotra et al., 2017). The skewness values are below (1), even though the variables have a little rightward skew.

A variance-based structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to assess the research hypotheses and establish the direct and indirect relationships between the latent variables using path analysis. SEM can be referred to as a robust multivariate statistical analysis useful in assessing a research model containing multiple independent, moderating, mediating, and dependent variables (Hair et al., 2017; Kaisara et al., 2022; Sarstedt et al., 2014). The variance-based SEM was conducted using SmartPLS version 4. The quantitative data gathered from the respondents was saved in a CSV (comma-delimited) file format for initial data analysis. The CSV file was then imported into SmartPLS version 4 (Ringle et al., 2014) for inferential statistics such as psychometric properties of the research instrument and partial least squares SEM (Hair et al., 2017) for the path analysis depicted in Figure 1. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient, composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE), square root of AVE, and Fornell-Larcker criterion were used to evaluate the psychometric properties of the scales adapted in this study.

4. Results

The preliminary analysis conducted in this study to establish the psychometric properties of the research instrument includes exploratory factor analysis (EFA). EFA is a statistical technique useful in discovering the factor structure of a measurement scale and establishing the internal consistency of the scale (Rodrigues et al., 2023). The confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to assess the validity of the scale used in measuring the key latent variables investigated in this study. CFA is regarded as a multivariate statistical procedure used to verify the factor structure and establish the convergent and discriminant validity of key latent variables investigated in a quantitative study (Cheung et al., 2024). To establish convergent and discriminant validity, specific items (SQ1-4, SQ9, SQ19, and SQ19-22) were expunged from the service quality (SERQUAL) questionnaire. Four (4) items (CA1-2 and CA4-5) were removed from the scale used in measuring customer awareness due to poor factor loadings. More so, six (6) items (CP6-8 and CP10-12) were expunged from the scale used in measuring customer protection to reach an acceptable threshold (0.5) of average variance extracted for convergent validity. An item (CS6) was deleted from the scale measuring customer satisfaction due to poor factor loading. The third item (CL2) was deleted from the scale used in measuring customer loyalty due to a low Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The remaining four (4) items on the scale produced an acceptable Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.691 (Pallant, 2020). The factor loadings for the five (5) latent variables, along with the reliability and validity of the scales, are presented in Table 1.

As indicated in Table 1, the measurement scales used in this study are dependable considering Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.695 to 0.868. The convergent validity was assessed using the values of AVE reported in Table 1. The lowest AVE recorded is 0.501, and 0.634 is the highest AVE documented in this study. These results imply that all items used in measuring each of the constructs investigated in this study loaded well (Saunders et al., 2019), which is an indication that convergent validity was established in Table 1. The discriminant validity, on the other hand, is reported and established in Table 2 using Fornell-Larcker's criterion (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) and the HTMT ratio (Henseler et al., 2015).

As evident in Table 2, discriminant validity was assessed in this study using Fornell-Larcker's criterion (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) and the HTMT ratio (Henseler et al., 2015). The application of Fornell-Larcker's criterion suggests the need to compare the square roots of AVE values and the inter-construct correlations (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2017). The results reported in the upper part of Table 2 show that discriminant validity was established in this study since the square roots of AVE values were higher than the inter-construct correlation coefficients. The lower part of Table 2 showcases the use of the HTMT ratio to establish discriminant validity in the study. The results reported in the lower part of Table 2 reveal that HTMT ratio values ranged from 0.239 to 0.747, which were lower than the prescribed 0.85 threshold value (Henseler et al., 2015).

The assessment of common method bias in this study was conducted using the full collinearity assessment approach. This method involves examining the variance inflation factor (VIF) values of the research model's constructs (Kock, 2015). The inner model collinearity evaluation, as reported in Table 2, revealed that the VIF values between the exogenous latent variables and the endogenous latent variable were all less than the recommended threshold of 3.3 (Kock & Lynn, 2012). This finding suggests that there were no significant issues of multicollinearity among the constructs measuring the structural determinants of customer loyalty in Namibia's insurance industry. The foregoing established the discriminant validity of all constructs included in the structural model illustrated in Figure 1.

The path analysis and statistics (standardized path loadings) captured in Figure 1 reveal that customer awareness ($\beta=0.017$, $p>.05$, $n=406$), customer protection ($\beta=0.068$, $p>.05$, $n=406$), and service quality ($\beta=0.0149$, $p>.05$, $n=406$) exert no significant direct effects on customer loyalty. Moreover, customer awareness ($\beta=0.075$, $p>.05$, $n=406$) exerts no direct significant influence on customer satisfaction. While customer protection ($\beta=0.243$, $p<.001$, $n=406$) and perceived service quality ($\beta=0.681$, $p<.001$, $n=406$) exert a direct significant positive influence on customer satisfaction. Notably, these results show that customer protection and perceived service quality have significant positive effects on customer satisfaction. The analysis of effect size, as outlined by Cohen (2013), employing the F-square (F^2) values suggests that customer protection ($F^2 = 0.165$) exerts a medium effect, while perceived service quality ($F^2 = 1.237$) exerts a large effect on customer satisfaction. According to Cohen's guidelines, F^2 values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 represent small, medium, and large effect sizes, respectively (Cohen, 2013). The results indicate a strong positive relationship between perceived service quality and customer satisfaction among long-term insurance consumers in Namibia. This finding underscores the importance of delivering high-quality services to enhance customer satisfaction in the long-term insurance industry in Namibia.

Furthermore, customer satisfaction ($\beta=0.616$, $p<.001$, $n=406$) exerts a significant positive influence on customer loyalty. This implies that customer satisfaction has a significant direct effect on customer loyalty in Namibia. The analysis of effect size shows that customer satisfaction ($F^2 = 0.261$) exerts a medium effect on customer loyalty among long-term insurance consumers in Namibia. This study found that customer awareness, customer protection, and perceived service quality have no significant positive influence on customer loyalty. Rather, customer protection ($\beta=0.149$, $p<.001$, $n=406$) and perceived service quality

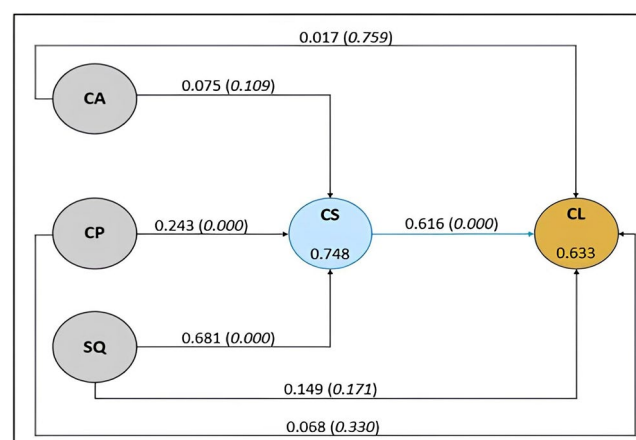


Figure 1. Structural determinants of customer loyalty.

Table 1. Reliability and convergent validity of the scales.

constructs	Scale items	Factor loadings	CA	CR	AVE
Service quality	When the service provider promises to do something by a certain time, they do so.	0.720	0.868	0.928	0.634
	When I have a problem, the service provider shows a sincere interest in solving it.	0.726			
	The service provider performs the service right the first time.	0.730			
	The service provider provides the services at the time they promise to do so.	0.728			
	Employees tell me exactly when services will be performed.	0.688			
	Employees give me prompt service.	0.743			
	Employees are always willing to help me.	0.760			
	Employees are never too busy to respond to my requests.	0.697			
	The behavior of employees instills confidence in me.	0.705			
	I feel safe during transactions with employees.	0.753			
	Employees are usually polite.	0.679			
	Employees give me individual attention.	0.689			
	I received enough information about the insurance product before making a purchasing decision.	0.665			
	I need constant communication from my insurer on the products.	0.676			
Customer awareness	Consumer education is important.	0.778	0.760	0.798	0.501
	When I am aware of the products and its benefits then my level of customer satisfaction increases.	0.699			
	I know the relevant authorities to lodge complaints regarding matters related to long-term insurance policies.	0.713			
	Long term insurance companies in Namibia adhere to consumer protection guidelines.	0.808			
Customer protection	I was educated by the Sales consultants of the long-term insurance companies on consumer protection.	0.717	0.752	0.845	0.523
	The long-term insurance companies create awareness on consumer rights.	0.727			
	I experience difficulties when I do transactions with long-term insurance providers.	0.643			
	I was satisfied with the sales consultant's service.	0.808			
	My insurer meets my needs.	0.835			
	I am satisfied with their prices.	0.710			
Customer satisfaction	I am satisfied with the friendliness of staff.	0.765	0.863	0.900	0.564
	Overall, I am satisfied with their services.	0.766			
	I will remain with my insurer when I am satisfied with the services they provide.	0.645			
	I feel satisfied after each insurance transaction with my insurance company.	0.709			
	I will purchase another product with my current insurer in the future.	0.817			
	I will recommend my current insurer to a friend.	0.855			
Customer loyalty	The company's service quality influences my loyalty.	0.620	0.695	0.808	0.521
	When I am satisfied with the insurer's service my loyalty is positively influenced.	0.548			

CA: Cronbach's alpha; CR: Composite reliability; AVE: Average variance extracted.

Table 2. Assessment of discriminant validity.

Discriminant validity of Fornell–Larcker's criterion					
Latent variable	CA	CL	CP	CS	SQ
Customer awareness (CA)	0.708^a				
Customer loyalty (CL)	0.292	0.722			
Customer protection (CP)	0.241	0.540	0.723		
Customer satisfaction (CS)	0.344	0.589	0.629	0.751	
Service quality (SQ)	0.310	0.706	0.541	0.736	0.796
^a Note: Diagonals in bold are the square roots of AVE.					
Discriminant validity evaluation by HTMT ratio					
Latent variable	CL	CA	CP	CS	SQ
Customer awareness (CA)	0.297				
Customer protection (CP)	0.596	0.239			
Customer satisfaction (CS)	0.747	0.343	0.633		
Service quality (SQ)	0.709	0.311	0.542	0.740	
CL: Customer loyalty					
Collinearity evaluation between the predictor constructs by inner VIF values					
Latent variable	CL	CA	CP	CS	SQ
Customer awareness (CA)		1.626		1.589	
Customer protection (CP)		2.377		2.124	
Customer satisfaction (CS)		2.573		–	
Service quality (SQ)		1.665		1.709	
CL: Customer loyalty.					

($\beta=0.420$, $p<.001$, $n=406$) have significant indirect effects on customer loyalty in Namibia. This means that customer awareness ($\beta=0.046$, $p>.05$, $n=406$) has no significant indirect effect on customer loyalty based on empirical evidence from the long-term consumers of insurance products in Namibia. Judging the results, one can deduce that customer awareness exerts no significant direct or indirect effects on customer loyalty. While customer protection and perceived service quality did not exert a significant direct influence on customer loyalty, these variables (customer protection and perceived service quality) exerted a significant indirect influence on customer loyalty through customer satisfaction.

Having considered the standardized beta loadings to establish the significant contributions of the three independent variables and the mediating variable on customer loyalty, The results show that customer protection and perceived service quality explained 74.8% of the variance in customer satisfaction ($R=0.748$, $F=2.748$, $p<.001$). More so, customer protection, perceived service quality, and customer satisfaction are the major determinants of customer loyalty ($R=0.633$, $F=1.437$, $p<.001$) in insurance companies. This implies that customer protection, perceived service quality, and customer satisfaction explained 63.3% of the variance in customer loyalty. Judging from the beta loadings reported in [Figure 1](#), customer satisfaction ($\beta=0.616$, $p<.001$, $n=406$) made the most significant contribution in the regression model, compared to other significant determinants of customer loyalty. The decisions reached based on the research hypotheses formulated in this study are reported in [Table 3](#).

The results reported in [Table 3](#) show that five out of the ten hypotheses formulated in this study were supported. This implies that customer protection exerts a direct influence on customer satisfaction (H2) in Namibia. Service quality has a significant influence on customer satisfaction (H3), based on empirical evidence in Namibia. The results show that there is a strong positive relationship between customer satisfaction and loyalty among long-term insurance customers (H7) in Namibia. In terms of the mediating role of customer satisfaction, the results show that customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between customer protection and customer loyalty (H9) in Namibia. Similarly, customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between service quality and customer loyalty (H10) in Namibia. The evaluation of the predictive power of the research model is presented in [Table 4](#).

The research model demonstrates strong predictive accuracy and power for the final endogenous variable (customer loyalty) with an R^2 of 0.633 and a Q^2 of 0.375. This indicates that the model possesses high predictive accuracy and explanatory power. Furthermore, a predictive evaluation process (Shmueli et al., 2016) was conducted to assess the model's predictive capability by examining each indicator of the final endogenous variable. Given that all indicators of the final endogenous variable exhibited a symmetrical distribution, the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) was utilized instead of

Table 3. Direct and indirect effects of key latent variables.

Hyp	Direct effect	M	SD	Coeff	T Stat	<i>p</i> Values	Decision
H1	CA -> CS	0.075	0.047	0.075	1.604	.109	Not supported
H2	CP -> CS	0.242	0.052	0.243	4.625	.000	Supported
H3	SQ -> CS	0.684	0.047	0.681	14.622	.000	Supported
H4	CA -> CL	0.018	0.057	0.017	0.307	.759	Not supported
H5	CP -> CL	0.068	0.070	0.068	0.973	.330	Not supported
H6	SQ -> CL	0.144	0.109	0.149	1.368	.171	Not supported
H7	CS -> CL	0.621	0.117	0.616	5.275	.000	Supported
Specific indirect effects		M	SD	Coeff	T Stat	<i>p</i> Values	Decision
H8	CA -> CS -> CL	0.046	0.030	0.046	1.525	.127	Not supported
H9	CP -> CS -> CL	0.150	0.043	0.149	3.475	.001	Supported
H10	SQ -> CS -> CL	0.426	0.089	0.420	4.699	.000	Supported

M: Mean; SD: Standard deviation

Table 4. Predictive power evaluation using the PLS predict algorithm.

Indicators	PLS		LM	RMSE _{PLS} <		Predictive power
	RMSE	Q ² predict	RMSE	RMSE _{LM}		
CL1	0.832	0.356	0.845	Yes	High	
CL2	0.861	0.275	0.868	Yes		
CL3	0.739	0.349	0.75	Yes		
CL4	0.775	0.34	0.788	Yes		

LM: prediction using a linear model; PLS: prediction using PLS-SEM; RMSE: root mean square error.

the Mean Absolute Error (MAE). The results indicate that the prediction error (RMSE) was lower for the custom model compared to the linear model (LM) benchmark reported in Table 4. Judging from the positive Q^2 values for all indicators, combined with the lower prediction errors, one can conclude that the custom model exhibits high predictive power. Therefore, the research model demonstrates strong predictive accuracy and power, as evidenced by the high R^2 and Q^2 values for the final endogenous variable. There are lower prediction errors and positive Q^2 values for each indicator compared to the LM benchmark when using the PLS predict procedure.

5. Discussion

Studies that have examined the determinants of customer loyalty in the insurance industry have been conducted in developed countries. Hence, there is a paucity of research on specific factors influencing customer loyalty in Namibia, especially in the long-term insurance industry. Therefore, this study was conducted to fill this research gap by examining the key determinants (customer awareness, customer protection, service quality, and customer satisfaction) of customer loyalty in the insurance industry. This research is essential in addressing the issues of consumer awareness, consumer protection, service quality, customer satisfaction, and loyalty in the long-term insurance industry. The results of this cross-sectional survey of 406 long-term insurance customers in Namibia have implications for theory, practice, and future customer loyalty research in developing countries.

The study found that consumer protection and service quality have a significant positive influence on customer satisfaction in Namibia's insurance industry. The results suggest that perceived customer protection and service quality are essential in enhancing levels of customer satisfaction in the insurance industry. These findings establish the role of customer satisfaction in enhancing customer loyalty in the insurance industry. Customer protection and service quality, on the other hand, exert significant indirect effects on customer loyalty in the insurance industry. Though previous studies show that a significant relationship exists between customer awareness and customer satisfaction (Makanyeza, 2015; Pérez & Rodríguez del-Bosque, 2015), the findings from this study differ. The empirical findings from the insurance industry in Namibia revealed that there is no significant positive relationship between customer awareness and customer satisfaction. This could be attributed to the fact that customer awareness of a specific insurance product without an actual purchase may not result in customer satisfaction (Nebo & Okolo, 2016).

5.1. Theoretical contribution

Service quality and customer satisfaction are the two constructs in this study that relate to the EDT. This theory posits that customers overall satisfaction is typically derived from a comparison between their prior expectations of service performance and their perceived experience of that performance. When a service does not meet expectations, the customer experiences dissatisfaction; conversely, if it does meet or exceed expectations, the customer feels satisfied. Therefore, service providers must ensure that their offerings align with customer expectations (Elkhani & Bakri, 2012). Customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction are influenced by an individual's ability to learn from past experiences, leading them to assess their satisfaction based on those experiences. The benefits customers derive from using a service are evaluated in terms of their satisfaction with the purchase, which can subsequently shape their beliefs and attitudes toward the service provider (Isac & Rusu, 2014). Moreso, when customers receive satisfactory information prior to making a purchase, it can positively affect their overall satisfaction. If their expectations align with perceived performance, customers will be satisfied; if not, they will be dissatisfied (Spreng et al., 1996).

This study contributes to EDT by establishing the relationship between service quality and satisfaction (Aigbavboa & Thwala, 2013) among long-term insurance consumers in Namibia. This study expanded the EDT with empirical evidence showcasing the moderating role of customer satisfaction in the interplay between service quality and customer loyalty. This means that customer satisfaction fully mediates the relationship between perceived service quality and customer loyalty in the insurance industry. The reason is that service quality exerts no direct significant influence on customer loyalty in the insurance industry, based on the empirical evidence reported in this study. Rather than using customer satisfaction as an endogenous variable in the EDT model, this study proposes that the model can be expanded by incorporating customer loyalty as the overall endogenous variable.

5.2. Practical implications

The findings, which originated from the study of structural determinants of customer loyalty among long-term insurance consumers in Namibia, can be considered valuable since they provide credible recommendations to the management of insurance companies as well as the consumers of long-term insurance in Namibia. The results of this research suggest that customer awareness does not have a significant relationship with either customer satisfaction or customer loyalty. Similarly, customer protection has no significant influence on customer loyalty, while service quality on the other hand has no significant effect on customer loyalty among long-term insurance consumers in Namibia. Given the limited knowledge among consumers, it is crucial for insurance company management to provide comprehensive training to sales personnel on product knowledge, professionalism, and ethical behavior. This training is essential for effectively educating customers about their rights. Such training could be conducted at least twice annually as a refresher course. Furthermore, online discussion forums could be created on platforms such as WhatsApp and other social media to facilitate discussions among sales personnel regarding new products and any updated consumer guidelines or regulations that have been implemented.

Consumers are at times not aware of their rights as consumers nor are they aware of some of the disadvantages attached to the products or stipulations in the contract, therefore efforts to educate the consumers about the product offerings and their consumer rights could be reinforced. Insurance companies should explore the use of various social media platforms to educate their consumers. Continuous educational strategies should be implemented to raise awareness and/or remind consumers of the products they have purchased, inform them about new offerings in the market, and reinforce their rights as consumers. It is essential to utilize appropriate communication channels to ensure that customers receive the necessary information to make informed decisions.

Insurance companies should enforce compliance of established guidelines and policies aimed at ensuring consumer protection among sales personnel. Consequently, it is essential to conduct regular training sessions for sales staff. To enhance their services, insurance companies should provide comprehensive induction training that covers both product knowledge and essential soft skills, such as professionalism and effective communication. The sales representatives in the insurance companies should be motivated through financial and non-financial incentives, such as recognition trips for top performers and salary increases for outstanding

achievements. Furthermore, employees are likely to promote trust with consumers through transparent interactions, relationship building, and fulfilling commitments, such as providing timely feedback. Therefore, companies should develop strategies that support employees in cultivating trust with their customers.

5.3. Limitations and future research

Consumer protection is a significant concept within the Namibian context, particularly with the enactment of the Consumer Protection Act. Future research should examine the impact of this Act on customer protection, service quality, customer satisfaction, and loyalty in other sector of the economy. Since service quality and customer satisfaction were identified as key determinants in the current study, future research could incorporate other factors that influence customer loyalty, such as value, trust, corporate image, and commitment to establish their predictive influence on customer loyalty. Future research could also explore potential suppressors, including moderators and contingent factors, which may obscure or affect the relationships among these variables.

6. Conclusion

The main aim of this study was to examine the critical factors determining customer loyalty among long-term insurance consumers in Namibia. This study examined four key determinants of customer loyalty in the insurance industry. These determinants are customer awareness of insurance products, customer protection, perceived service quality, and customer satisfaction. This study found that customer satisfaction exerts a direct effect on customer loyalty, while customer protection and service quality exert an indirect and significant influence on customer loyalty in the insurance industry.

Conversely, customer awareness of insurance products exerts no significant direct effect on customer satisfaction and customer loyalty in the insurance industry. In practice, concerted effort should be geared towards customer awareness of long-term insurance products to enhance uptake of such products, culminating in customer satisfaction and loyalty in the insurance industry.

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Ethical approval

Informed written consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Author contributions

B.T. conceptualized and designed the research; participated in the acquisition; designed the questionnaire, participated in the data collection. S.O.A. analysis and interpretation of results; guided the conceptualization of the research, supervised. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Disclosure statement

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Data availability statement

The datasets utilized and analysed in this study can be obtained from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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