



Title:

A comparative analysis of a brand's promise compared to the actual service experience, has on Brand Equity using Keller's Brand Equity Model: Telkom

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Declaration

I hereby declare that the Research Report submitted for the BCom Honours in Strategic Brand Management degree to The Independent Institute of Education is my own work and has not previously been submitted to another University or Higher Education Institution for degree purposes.

Abstract

This study will conduct a comparative thematic analysis amongst Telkom customer service hubs in Johannesburg and the brand promise made on the official Telkom website to determine if customer service experiences impact Telkom's brand equity through the use of Keller's Brand Equity Model. Work has been done on the importance of customer service to a brand, such as assumptions that there is a direct link between brand satisfaction and customer loyalty (Martisiute, Vilutyte & Grundey, 2010). Theorists including Torres Moraga et al (2008) agree with the belief that the brand will impact customer satisfaction. Martisiute et al (2010) state that customer satisfaction leads to loyal customers. The study follows an interpretivist paradigm within a qualitative approach. Two data collection methods are used field research using in-depth interviews and unobtrusive research using Qualitative content analysis. The methods used to analyse the data are thematic content analysis and qualitative content analysis. Findings indicate that Telkom's brand promise according to their website is "to connect people to a better life". Most consumers interviewed did not understand what a brand promise was and had not found out for themselves about Telkom's brand promise. There is a discrepancy between the brand promise and the service offered by Telkom. Maltitz (2016) states that South African consumers are hooked onto particular brands for no good reason even when there are better products, which will not even be considered. The consequence of these consumers is that they ignore the failures of the brand, giving the brand power and unconditional consumers even when they cannot or do not deliver on their promise (Glance, 2014).

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Chapter 1

1.1 Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to compare a brand's promise to the actual service experienced, on Telkom's Brand Equity.

This study will conduct a comparative thematic analysis amongst Telkom customer service hubs in Johannesburg and the brand promise made on the official Telkom website to determine if the customer experience aligns with the brand's service promise through the use of Keller's Brand Equity Model.

Telkom is known as one of South Africa's communications service providers. Telkom was formed in October 1991. Telkom was an enterprise owned by the state until the 14th of May 1997 where 30% of the equity was sold to a strategic equity partner. Today Telkom is known as a parastatal as it is part owned by the government of South Africa (*Telkom SA SOC Limited*, 2017).

1.2 Background

In the last decade, the telecommunications industry has seen huge growth especially in the mobile cellular industry. With consumers becoming more informed and brand conscious they are demanding more from corporate organisations, especially when it comes to living up to their brand promise (Moloko, 2014). With the growth of the industry comes more and stronger competition trying to compete for the biggest share in their markets. With offerings in the telecommunications industry being so similar it is important to build strong brands that will resonate with consumers. Telkom is known as one of South Africa's longest standing communications service providers. Telkom offers telecommunication products for mobile, homes and businesses, from cellphone contracts to broadband connectivity packages, Telkom is a major player in the industry. Telkom was formed in October 1991 and was an enterprise owned by the state until May 1997. Thirty percent of Telkom's equity was sold to a strategic equity partner. Today

Telkom is known as a parastatal as it is part owned by the government of South Africa (*Telkom SA SOC Limited*, 2017). Although Telkom is a parastatal it still runs as a business and provides products and services to consumers of South Africa. Telkom has a name and identity in order for customers to recognise it. This is the brand, and brands need to build strong brand equity in order to maintain loyal customers (Heskett et al., 2008).

1.3 Rationale

Work has been done on the importance of customer service to a brand, such as assumptions that there is a direct link between brand satisfaction and customer loyalty (Martisiute, Vilutyte & Grundey, 2010). Theorists including Torres-Moraga et al (2008) agree with the belief that the brand will impact customer satisfaction. Martisiute et al (2010) state that customer satisfaction leads to loyal customers. They go on to state that a loyal customer is very important for a brand as it is easier to maintain loyal customers than it is to find new ones, and loyal customers will more often than not have positive feedback on the brand, leading to positive word-of-mouth being spread (Martisiute, Vilutyte & Grundey, 2010).

Further research has found that the brand is the link between marketing activities and consumers' emotional and functional experience with the company (Sweeney & Chew, 2002). According to Keller et al (2012) "a brand is a set of mental associations, held by the consumer, which add to the perceived value of a product or service". Reynolds defines customer satisfaction as customers who have a likelihood of recommending that others try their source of satisfaction (Reynolds & Beatty, 1999).

Another study shows that customer satisfaction has a significantly higher positive effect on loyalty in comparison with brand loyalty, while others may argue that brand image has a higher positive effect on customer loyalty and satisfaction (Mothibi, 2015). Keller et al (2012) states that customers' relationships with brands are the foundation to building strong brands and brand resonance, known as strong brand equity. Brand equity will always reside in the minds of consumers from

previous experience with the brand. With these relevant ideas and theories in mind this study will further explore the effects of positive or negative customer service experienced from Telkom on its brand equity compared to the brand promise on Telkom's official website.

1.4 Problem Statement

This study will conduct a comparative thematic analysis amongst Telkom customer service hubs in Johannesburg and the brand promise made on the official Telkom website to determine if customer service experiences impact Telkom's brand equity through the use of Keller's Brand Equity Model.

1.5 Research Questions

- What is Telkom's intended brand promise according to Telkom's official website?
- What is the perceived brand promise of Telkom amongst Telkom customer service users in Johannesburg?
- Is there a discrepancy between the brand promise and the brand offering using Keller's Brand Equity Model?

1.6 Research Objectives

- To analyse the intended brand promise of Telkom according to their official website.
- To determine the perceived brand promise of Telkom amongst Telkom customer service hub users in Johannesburg
- To evaluate whether there is a discrepancy between Telkom's brand promise according to the official website and offering at the Telkom customer service hubs, using Keller's Brand Equity Model

1.7 Key Theories and Literature identified

The key theory used in this study will be Keller's Brand Equity Model (Kotler & Keller, 2012). Keller's Brand Equity Model is also known as Customer-Based Brand Equity or the CBBE Model. Keller's idea behind the model is that in order for brands to become strong and form a relationship with consumers, it is important to shape how consumers feel and think about the product. It's about building the right kind of experiences around the brand in order to give consumers specific and positive feelings, thoughts, beliefs, perceptions and opinions. According to Keller et al (2012), strong Brand Equity will lead to consumers buying more, recommending the brand to others as well as becoming more loyal, meaning consumers would be less likely to switch to a competitor brand.

Brand Equity is about establishing a firm meaning of the brand in customers' minds by linking the brand to tangible and intangible associations (Keller, Apéria & Georgson, 2012). In Marketing Management by Kotler & Keller (2012), the Customer Based Brand Equity Model requires four steps in order to build a pyramid of 6 brand responses. These 6 responses are the building "building blocks" to Brand Equity.

The first of the 6 "building blocks" is Brand Salience. This block is about how easily customers will think of the brand under various circumstances or situations. The next level of the pyramid consists of Brand Performance and Brand Imagery. Performance refers to how well the product or the service actually satisfies a customer's needs. Imagery refers to the way in which the brand meets a consumer's social or psychological needs. Brand Judgments and Feelings make up the next level of the Brand Equity Pyramid. Brand Judgments focus on the consumer's personal evaluations while Brand Feelings cover a consumer's emotional reaction towards a brand. These five steps lead to the final level of the pyramid, which is Brand Resonance. This is the ultimate goal for a brand when creating brand equity. Resonance is the bond between the brand and the customer and the level of activity it creates (Kotler & Keller, 2012).

1.8 Research Design approach

The research will take on an exploratory case study design. This design is intended to help the researcher understand the nature of the problem as it provides a better and in depth understanding of the problem. Exploratory research allows for the researcher to be flexible and adapt to change while laying effective groundwork for the study (Dudovskiy, 2016). A cross sectional approach will then be used to capture information based on specific data gathered at a specific time. A cross sectional approach allows the researcher to prove or disprove assumptions made about a topic. This approach can be used for various industries and does not require a lot of time to complete. The cross-sectional approach also allows the researcher to compare different variables at the same time (*Study.com*, 2017).

1.9 Selected Paradigm

The proposed study will be following an interpretivist paradigm within a qualitative approach. The research will use the qualitative paradigm, based on interpretivism, which strives to comprehend how individuals in everyday construct meaning of their world and the importance these individuals place on customer service. The researcher has selected an interpretivist because this paradigm allows the researcher to interact closely with participants to gain insight and a clear understanding into what customer service means to different people

1.10 Methodology

Field research will be used which will include interviews. These interviews will have standardised open-ended questions based on the 6 key points within Keller's Brand Equity Model. These steps will be used to gauge the level of brand salience towards Telkom's service, brand performance and imagery, brand judgments and feelings as well as brand resonance towards Telkom (Kotler & Keller, 2012). The research will also include unobtrusive qualitative content analysis of Telkom's official website. Once interviews have been conducted, the researcher in order to

coordinate and analyse the data will transcribe them. Screenshots will be taken of the Telkom website that provides insight into the brand's promise.

Thematic content analysis will be used to understand recurring themes about how customer service at the Telkom customer service hubs affects the brand equity of Telkom (Vaismoradi, Turunen & Bondas, 2013). Qualitative analysis will be used to analyse the content on Telkom's official website to understand the brand promise.

1.11 Limitations and delimitations of the study

Thematic content analysis will be used to understand recurring themes about how customer service at the Telkom customer service hubs affects the brand equity of Telkom (Vaismoradi, Turunen & Bondas, 2013). Qualitative analysis will be used to analyse the content on Telkom's official website to understand the brand promise.

1.12 Conceptualisation

Thematic content analysis will be used to understand recurring themes about how customer service at the Telkom customer service hubs affects the brand equity of Telkom (Vaismoradi, Turunen & Bondas, 2013). Qualitative analysis will be used to analyse the content on Telkom's official website to understand the brand promise.

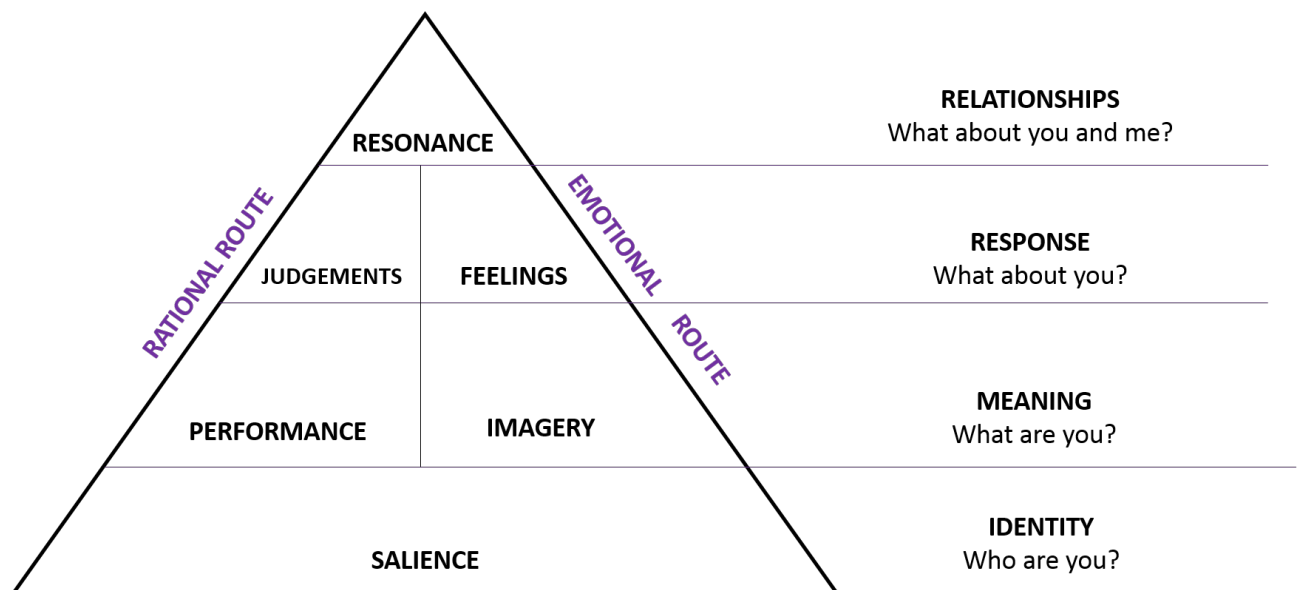
Chapter 2

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of previous research that has been done on brands promise, brand equity, parastatals and customer service. This chapter introduces the theoretical framework that is the focus of the study. The purpose of this literature review is to look at previous studies and work done on the different concepts. The literature review is done in order to understand what research still needs to be done around these specific concepts.

2.2 Theoretical Foundation

The key theory used in this study is Keller's Brand Equity Model (Kotler & Keller, 2012a). Keller's Brand Equity Model is also known as Customer-Based Brand Equity or the CBBE Model. Keller's idea behind the model is that in order for brands to become strong and form a relationship with consumers, it is important to shape how consumers feel and think about the product or service. It's about building the right kind of experiences around the brand in order to give consumers specific and positive feelings, thoughts, beliefs, perceptions and opinions. According to Keller (2001) as cited by Fetscher and Heinrich (2014), strong brand equity will lead to consumers buying more, recommending the brand to others as well as becoming more loyal, meaning consumers would be less likely to switch to a competitor brand. Brand equity is about establishing a firm meaning of the brand in customer's minds by linking the brand to tangible and intangible associations. In Marketing Management (Kotler & Keller, 2012b) the Customer Based Brand Equity Model requires four steps in order to build a pyramid of six brand responses. These six responses are the "building blocks" to brand equity.



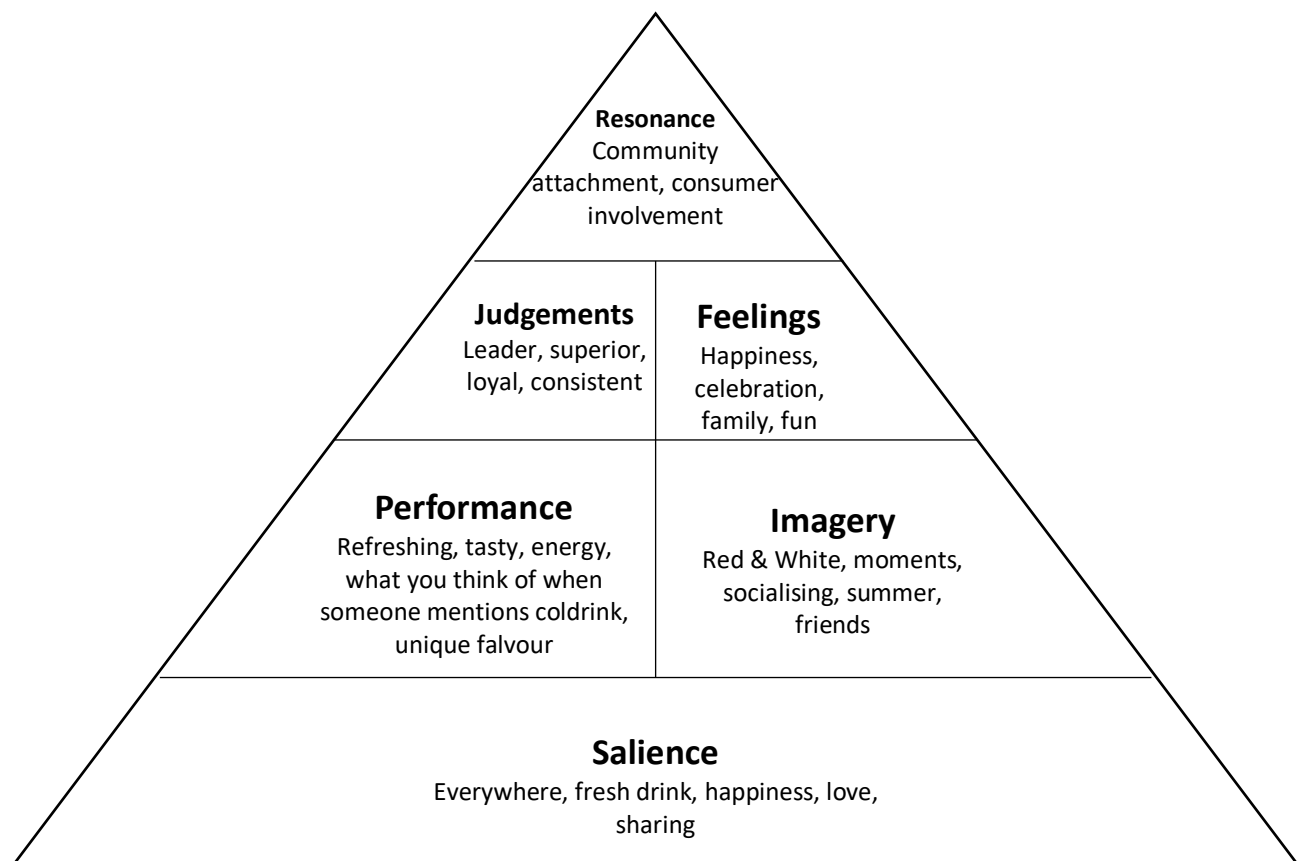
Redrawn Model of Keller's Brand Equity (*Keller's Brand Equity Model*, 2013)

The first of the six “building blocks” is brand salience. This block is about how easily consumers will think of the brand under various circumstances or situations. The next level of the pyramid consists of brand performance and brand imagery. Performance refers to how well the product or service satisfies customers’ needs or desires. Imagery refers to the way in which the brand meets consumers’ social or psychological needs. Brand judgments and feelings make up the next level of the Brand Equity Pyramid. Brand judgments focus on the consumers’ personal evaluations while brand feelings cover consumers’ emotional reactions towards a brand. These five steps lead to the final level of the pyramid, which is brand resonance. This is the ultimate goal for a brand when creating brand equity. Resonance is the bond between the brand and the customer and the level of activity it creates (Kotler & Keller, 2012a).

According to Strategic Brand Management authors Keller et al (2012) the customer-based brand equity model approaches brand equity from the customer perspective. Keller (2012) explains that by understanding the consumers’ wants and needs the organisation will be able to satisfy these customers and create loyal and returning customers. Keller (2012) explains that another important aspect of the CBBE model is that brand power lies in what customers have seen, learned, heard and felt about the brand resulting in their overall experience with the brand. Brand customer relationships form the foundation of building strong brand

resonance. Telecommunication companies today are losing out because they have not focused on their customers.

Below is an example of Keller's Customer-Based Brand Equity Model that was used to identify the brand equity of Coca-Cola. This example gives an idea of how the different building blocks of Keller's model come together to understand customers' ideas and relationships with brands. The same will be done in this study to understand customer based brand equity of Telkom and if it is affected by the brand's promise made on the website compared to the brand's customer service experience.



An adaption of Keller's Brand Equity Model on Coca-Cola (Castellanos et al, 2013)

2.3 Literature Review

This paper provides a systematic review of the literature based on key concepts such as brand equity and customer service with a focus on parastatals.

2.3.1 Brand Promise

To understand brand promise, it is important to understand the concept of brand. Keller et al (2012) defines brands as a set of associations that the consumer holds towards the brand. These associations create perceived value of a product or service. De Chernatony (2001) agrees with Keller (2012) and notes that perceived value created by consumers is valuable to both consumers and organisations while adding functional and emotional benefits to the lives of consumers. This is important for Telkom to understand as a brand in order to provide both functional and emotional benefits to consumers, while at the same time contributing to the bottom line. The more perceived value Telkom can create for consumers the more valuable consumers will become to Telkom. In order for Telkom to be perceived as valuable in the minds of consumers, there are a number of steps that need to be taken in to account and recognised in order for Telkom to become a brand that creates value.

Aaker (1996) as cited by Srivastava (2015) states that an important step in building brand equity is identifying the brand's identity. This brand identity allows consumers to form perceptions about the brand based on four key elements with 12 dimensions. For the purpose of this study it is only important to look at the four key elements of brand identity, which include brand as a product, brand as an organisation, brand as a person and brand as symbol. According to Kotler and Pfoertsch (2006), a brand's personality is what creates a valuable and meaningful connection with consumers. As a brand, Telkom needs to understand the personality of their brand in order to connect with consumers and create meaningful relationships.

A brand also allows consumers to simplify decisions and reduce risk while shopping. This is because credible brand names signal to consumers a familiar

level of quality to satisfy their needs or wants. These brands can be easily recognised therefore allowing consumers to purchase the products or services again. These brands create mental structures that assist consumers in organising knowledge about certain products or services (Kotler & Keller, 2012a). Telkom positions itself in the mind of consumers as a communication brand that will fulfill the need of connectivity. The blue Telkom logo allows consumers to identify the brand and differentiate it from its competitors such as Vodacom and MTN who use the colours red and yellow respectively to identify their brands.

According to Frederiksen (2016) a brand promise is an extension of a brand's positioning. It is the benefit that the product or service can be provided to consumers and is communicated by the brand itself. Telkom's brand promise according to the official website is "we connect you to a better life" (*Telkom SA SOC Limited*, 2017). It is extremely important for Telkom to be mindful of the brand promise they have made as it is something they should always be achieving in order to meet customers' expectations, in order to keep them satisfied and coming back for more. Brand promises are about motivating customers. This is done in the following three steps: The brand promise must be credible and authentic, it must convey a compelling benefit to customers and most importantly it must be kept every time. The brand's promise ultimately will give the organisation leverage over the brand's experience and allows the organisation to set customers' expectations (Frederiksen, 2016). By consistently delivering on the brand promise the brand will start to gain trust from consumers. According to Gurviez (1998) cited by Nguetsop et al (2016) brand trust is customers' expectations that brand is committed to have predictable actions in line with their expectations. Brand trust creates a lasting and stable relationship between brand and customers. This all goes back to the fact that consumers need to be able to trust that the brand will consistently fulfill their promise in each and every interaction in order to meet customers' expectations.

2.3.2 Brand Equity

Aaker (1996) as cited by Srivastava (2015) defines Brand Equity as a set of brand assets and liabilities that are linked to a brand's name and symbol. He argues that brand loyalty stems from Brand Equity because it enhances a consumer's ability to process and interpret information. It improves a consumer's confidence when purchasing a certain brand and can affect the quality of the consumer's experience based on their perceptions of the brand.

Kotler and Keller (2012) see Brand Equity in a similar light to Aaker (2016). They define Brand Equity as a valuable intangible asset belonging to the brand. A brand with strong Brand Equity commands intense customer loyalty and creates a stronger emotional connection between the consumer and the brand. Telkom needs to focus on creating strong Brand Equity in order to create loyal customers. The way Telkom can create strong brand equity is through the service it provides as well as the brand promises it makes. If consumers believe that the service provided satisfied their needs and lived up to their expectations of Telkom created by the brand itself, they are likely to create favourable associations towards the brand and therefore choose Telkom again or tell others about the positive experience. It is therefore important that Telkom makes sure that their consumers have the right type of experience with their service providers in order to build strong Brand Equity.

Although the ultimate goal is brand resonance and customer loyalty, brands need to be aware of the blind brand loyalists, the people who are loyal to a brand without really understanding what a brand stands for or even why they are loyal to that brand. This loyalty can come from the history of the brand, the associations that people have created or just the fact that it's the most convenient brand. According to Raphael (2016), by following a brand blindly people are taking away the benefits of an open market and the effects of competition. Maltitz (2016) states that South African consumers are hooked onto particular brands for no good reason even when there are better products, which will not even be considered. An article written by Glance (2014) calls these blind loyalists as being a part of 'an in-group.'

The biggest consequence of being part of this 'in-group' is that these consumers the ignore the failures of the brand (Glance, 2014).

There are some arguments made that do not consider Brand Equity to be an important factor in today's businesses. Graham (2009) cited by Pollington (2012) states that by investing money in marketing the company in order to increase Brand Equity is not always guaranteed to increase brand equity and brand share. Pollington (2012) goes on to state that valuations of Brand Equity as an asset are usually inconsistent. This is because of the many models used to value a brand as an intangible financial asset. He therefore suggests that the quality and excellence of the product should be the focus of business investment instead of focusing on Brand Equity.

Although there is a debate over the importance of Brand Equity, for the purpose of this study the researcher has chosen to look at Brand Equity as a value-adding asset of a brand and something that Telkom should strive to build.

2.3.3 Parastatals

IGI Global defines a parastatal as a company or corporation that is partially state-owned. Besides for Telkom other parastatals in South Africa include, South African Airways, Transnet and the SABC to name a few (Reddick, 2009).

According to Mail & Guardian (2011) there is a debate about the effectiveness and competency of the private sector compared to state owned enterprises. The debate goes onto state that parastatals play an important role in developing the economy and infrastructure, driving transformation for both suppliers and customers while managing state assets. These arguments suggest that a state-owned enterprise could add more value and has the country's best interests at heart instead of privatised multi-nationals taking control of industrial capabilities. By having parastatals in place, the argument is that there will always be intent in creating business that will support South Africa's economic development. This being said it is pertinent that parastatals operate like any other brand or company in order to fulfill consumers' needs while at the same time developing the economy. Singleton (2017) writes that "the brand is the company and conversely the company is the

brand.” Although Telkom is a parastatal and is part owned by the government, it needs to act as a brand in order to create meaningful relationships with consumers in order to satisfy their needs and create loyal returning customers.

Although there are arguments for parastatals and the benefits they can bring to an economy, Ratshefola (2015) cited by Omarjee (2015) states that the South African government is considered lethargic in its approach to technology on a policy to advance the connectivity of the citizens. South Africa is considered to have the capabilities and capacity to embrace these technologies, but the government with its poor management seems to be standing in the way of developing the countries connectivity. This has a major impact on Telkom as a brand whose main activities involve “connecting people to a better life.” By not fully embracing the newest technology capabilities is Telkom living up to its brand promise?

2.3.4 Customer Service

Mothibi (2015) writes that customer loyalty is important to a brand as it provides a steady source of revenue through consumers repeat purchases and the fact that they become more susceptible to upselling and trying other products or services that the brand offers. Zaibaf et al (2012) as cited by Mothibi (2015) finds that functional and effective quality of the service or product provided will have a noticeable and positive influence on consumers perceived quality and ultimately on Brand Equity. Customer satisfaction is seen to have higher positive effect on consumers’ loyalty compared to the brand’s image. This is important for Telkom to recognise because the more they can offer top customer service the more likely consumers are going to become loyal.

Sweeney and Chew (2002) describe services as intangible and are associated with higher risks compared to products. Due to this associated risk, consumers usually choose service providers they can form relationships with and that will provide an enjoyable and satisfying user experience. Sweeney and Chew (2002) go on to state that consumers’ relationships with a service brand are usually formed with the actual service provider such as staff. This is an important consideration for Telkom, especially with people are customer facing. Telkom needs to ensure that the right people are hired and trained to understand Telkom’s promise and the

importance of providing excellent service and building meaningful relationships with all consumers.

Zeithami et al (2011) speaks about a brand's explicit service promises. There are personal and non-personal promises made to consumers about the service provided. Personal promises come from employees and service providers of the brand, while non-personal promises are made on the brand's website or in the marketing material. These explicit promises become an issue for the brand when they do not align with the actual experience. Usually companies tend to over promise and under deliver. When this happens to a brand such as Telkom, consumers start to lose trust in that brand, become dissatisfied and begin to look for alternative brands, usually the competitors. This will cause Telkom's Brand Equity to decrease as the feelings, judgments and associations start to decrease, creating a consumer who will not be loyal to the brand.

2.4 Conclusion

The findings in this chapter show the work done on brand promise, brand equity, parastatals and customer service. The chapter also gives insight into the different arguments within these concepts. The literature review also provides direction for the methodology methods and provides the researcher insight into the type of primary data that needs to be collected within the research methodology. These methodologies are described in further detail in the next chapter.

Chapter 3

3.1 Introduction

This chapter gives an outline of the methodology that was used to collect and analyse data for this study. This chapter provides an explanation of concepts used in qualitative research. The researcher describes a number of methods chosen for this study including the research paradigm, methodology approach, population, sampling, data collection methods for both field research and unobtrusive research, as well as data analysis methods for both field and unobtrusive methods. This chapter will also focus on the trustworthiness of this study as well as ethical considerations relevant to the researcher and research.

3.2 Research Paradigm

The proposed study will be following an interpretivist paradigm within a qualitative approach. An interpretivist paradigm was chosen as the paradigm as it attempts to help the researcher understand certain phenomena of human behavior and how individuals in everyday life, construct meaning of their world and if that meaning will influence brand equity (du Plooy-Cilliers et al, 2014).

The researcher has selected an interpretivist paradigm in order to understand the world from the perspective of the individual's experience. The study will be utilizing ontological assumptions of interpretivism. These assumptions are of the belief that reality is a social construct and is dependent on the meanings people from different cultures or circumstances, and ascribe to their personal sense of reality (du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). The study's ontological assumptions are that parastatals act as brands in order to operate and fulfill the needs and wants of consumers, while contributing and developing South Africa's economy.

The epistemological position of interpretivism according to du Plooy-Cilliers (2014) is that people are guided by their common sense in their daily lives. Facts are embedded in a meaning system and depend on people's interpretation and context of information. The epistemological assumption for this study is that customer service has an

influence over brand equity. The ultimate goal of brand equity is brand resonance, which relates to brand loyalty.

The metatheoretical assumption of interpretivism is aimed at revealing the meanings of people that have been studied in order to help understand the people directly involved in the phenomenon. It is not always necessary for others to agree with the claims of the researcher. Interpretivism theory usually tells a story. The theories are therefore used to help the researcher understand the experiences and realities of others (du Plooy-Cilliers et al, 2014). The metatheoretical assumption for this study is that brand resonance from Keller's Brand Equity Model is directly influenced by a customer's experience and satisfaction of Telkom's customer service.

According to du Plooy-Cilliers et al (2014) the methodological assumption of interpretivism are that methods should be used that are sensitive to the subject and that will help the researcher gain an in-depth understanding. Within interpretivism methodology the researcher needs to consider their feelings and personal point of views as part of their process of studying other people. The methodological assumption for this study is that the researcher will become the primary research tool and will have to use semi-structured in-depth interviews to learn about how customer service affects their brand loyalty after understanding the brand promise made.

3.3 Methodological Approach

The research will take on an exploratory case study design. Case study research is used to cover a variety of subjects and are associated with evaluating processes (Yin and Yazan, 2015). A case study approach gives the researcher a systematic way of collecting data, looking at events and analysing and reporting on results (*Study.com*, 2017). The design is intended to help the researcher to be flexible and adapt to change while laying effective ground work for the study (Dudovskiy, 2016b).

Advantages of exploratory research is that it helps the researcher to begin to understand how and why certain things happen and provides insights from people's experiences describing a market problem (*universalteacher.com*, 2016). Sources that

can be utilised in an exploratory design include formal structured interviews, informal discussions and case studies. As with all research designs there will be advantages and disadvantages. The disadvantages of an exploratory design are that answers will not be definitive as all findings will be interpretations. Individuals studied with exploratory design will not always be typical of the larger population.

A cross sectional approach will then be used to capture information based on specific data gathered at a specific time. A cross sectional approach allows the researcher to prove or disprove assumptions made about a topic. This approach can be used for various industries and does not require a lot of time to complete. The cross sectional approach also allows the researcher to compare different variables at the same time (*Study.com*, 2017).

3.4 Population

The population is the “total group of people” from whom information is required. The population are the people that will allow the researcher to answer the research questions and objectives. The people within the population should share a minimum of one characteristic relating to the research question. An important aspect for the total population is that the people within the population share a minimum of one characteristic relating to the research (Pascoe, 2014). The population for the field research for this study is all Telkom customers. The population for unobtrusive research for this study is the entire Telkom website which includes all pages.

The target population is the group of people that the researcher wishes to understand. It is made up of all the people that fall into the population parameters. These parameters include the shared characteristics in a population, the size and nature of the population and the unique characteristics of the population (Pascoe, 2014). The target population for field research includes Telkom customers who have visited the Telkom website, have access to the Telkom customer service hubs and live in Sandton. The target population for the unobtrusive research for this study includes the homepage, the about us page, the company information page and the vision and mission page on the Telkom website. These pages were chosen for analysis as they

are the pages that provide information into Telkom's brand promise and service offerings.

According to Pascoe (2014), accessible population refers to the population within the target population that the researcher is actually able to reach, as the target population can be widespread and very large. The accessible population is therefore a part of the target population that the researcher has access to. The accessible population for field research will include people using the Telkom customer service hubs in Sandton City, as this hub has the most foot traffic. The accessible population for unobtrusive research will include analysis of the homepage, about us page, company profile – values, and vision and mission pages on the Telkom website that work, for the duration of one week to analyse the content to establish what is Telkom's brand promise.

3.5 Sampling

This study will consist a non-probable sampling method to gain qualitative insights. Non-probable sampling method will be used because it will be difficult for the researcher to gain access to the entire population. This will not affect the research because the emphasis of qualitative research is to include enough participants so that the data can reach saturation point instead of focusing on the number of participants (Pascoe, 2014).

The non-probable sampling method for this study will include accidental sampling methods. Accidental sampling method includes participants that are in the right place and the right time. (Pascoe, 2014). For this study, the researcher will approach individuals who have been in the Telkom customer service hub in Sandton City and will ask these individuals to answer some research questions.

A Purposive sampling method will be used for unobtrusive research based on specific characteristics that would allow the researcher to select a sample (Pascoe, 2014). For this study, certain pages on the Telkom website will be chosen that can provide the most insight into the brand's promise These pages include the homepage, the about us page, the company values page and the vision and mission page. The advantage

of this will ensure that the sample will assist the researcher, as the sample will still fit the population parameters.

3.6 Data Collection Methods

3.6.1 Field Approach: In-depth Interviews

Qualitative data collection methods are used to gain in-depth and rich data about human experiences. The aim of qualitative research is to describe and understand the phenomenon studied (Strydom & Bezuidenhout, 2014). Two types of data collection tools will be used to gain first-hand knowledge of Telkom's customers experience with the customer service hubs. The first is type of data collection tool is field research, which involves interacting with people, observing them in their natural environment and developing an understanding of people's perspectives of their environment and experiences (Strydom & Bezuidenhout, 2014). Main approaches of fieldwork include grounded theory, ethnography, case studies and participatory action research.

The main data collection methods for field research are focus groups or in-depth interviews. These methods allow for in-depth exploration in a natural context and gives a voice to ordinary people. The methods focus on a particular and subjective experienced reality. The role of the researcher will take on full participation during field research as in-depth interviews will take place in the form of conversations using open ended questions.

An advantage of open-ended questions according to Strydom and Bezuidenhout (2014) is that the researcher is able to ask participants to explain certain points and provide more detail. It is also beneficial as the researcher is able to observe non-verbal cues from participants.

There are three types of in-depth interviews. These include informal conversational interviews where the researcher does not have pre-determined specific questions. Another form on in depth interview is the general interview. This also follows a conversational approach covering themes from pre-determined questions. For the

purpose of this study the researcher will use the third type of in depth interview, which is a standardised open-ended interview. The reason for the choice of interview is to allow the researcher to compare notes about different views and opinions, and can analyse the information more easily (Strydom & Bezuidenhout, 2014). The research questions will be informed by Keller's Brand Equity Model and guided by the research questions.

3.6.2 Unobtrusive Approach: Qualitative Content Analysis

The second tool that will be used is unobtrusive qualitative content analysis. Babbie (2011) as cited by Strydom and Bezuidenhout (2014) defines qualitative content analysis as a method that requires interpretation of content through a process of identifying patterns or themes. Telkom's official website will be analysed to understand what the brand promises its customers. Certain pages of the website have been chosen according to the target population and will be analysed according to Keller's Brand Equity Framework. These pages include the homepage, the about us page, the company values page and the vision and mission page of the Telkom website.

The content will be analysed according to the six steps within the Brand Equity Model. These steps involve looking at the messages and brand promises Telkom portrays on its website in relation to salience, performance, imagery, judgments, feelings and resonance (Kotler & Keller, 2012a). The first of the six "building blocks" is brand salience. This block is about how easily consumers will think of the brand under various circumstances or situations. The next level of the pyramid consists of brand performance and brand imagery. Performance refers to how well the product or service actually satisfies customers' needs or desires. Imagery refers to the way in which the brand meets consumers' social or psychological needs. Brand judgments and feelings make up the next level of the Brand Equity Pyramid. Brand judgments focus on the consumers' personal evaluations while brand feelings cover consumers' emotional reactions towards a brand. These five steps lead to the final level of the pyramid, which is brand resonance. This is the ultimate goal for a brand when creating brand equity. Resonance is the bond between the brand and the customer and the level of activity it creates (Kotler & Keller, 2012a).

The website will be evaluated over a one week period starting from the 17th June 2017 and ending on the 24th of June 2017. Screenshots will be taken of the different pages and content that is analysed. The pages include the homepage, about us page, company values page and the vision and mission page. (Please see screenshots in annexure).

3.7 Data Analysis Method

3.7.1 Field Approach: In-depth Interview

Thematic content analysis will be used to understand recurring themes about how customer service at the Telkom customer service hubs affects the brand equity of Telkom (Vaismoradi, Turunen & Bondas, 2013). According to Miles and Huberman (1994) as cited by Punch and Oancea (2014) qualitative thematic content analysis should follow three important steps.

Step one is data reduction, this happens while the researcher segments, edits and summarises the collected data. Data reduction takes place again through memos and coding and any activities associated with finding themes or patterns. The objective of this step is to reduce data without losing or stripping away context of important information.

The next step involves data display. This step involves organizing, compressing and assembling information. It is important to display the information gathered by using graphs, networks, charts or diagrams that allows for the data to be organized and then summarised in order to be further analysed.

The final step is considered drawing and verifying conclusions but this can take place at any point or step in the thematic content analysis process. Conclusions are then formed into propositions and will need to be verified (Punch & Oancea, 2014).

This method focuses on unique themes to identify meanings. In order to conduct thematic content analysis the researcher must organise all the data that has been collected, identify themes or categories, code data and understand the different

themes and how they support the research being conducted (Vaismoradi, Turunen & Bondas, 2013). While conducting in-depth interviews participants will be recorded and their answers will be transcribed. This will allow the researcher to analyse the text of the interviews and produce meaning of the interviews through interpretation. By reviewing the transcribed interviews after conducting the interviews the researcher will now be able to identify patterns and therefore understand the phenomenon studied.

3.7.2 Unobtrusive Approach: Qualitative Content Analysis

Qualitative content analysis will be used to analyse the content on Telkom's official website in order to understand the brand promise. Qualitative content analysis involves subjective interpretation and systematic analysis of social artifacts such as texts which are usually used to develop or test theories (Bezuidenhout & Cronje, 2014).

According to Bezuidenhout and Cronje (2014) there are certain steps involved in qualitative content analysis. These steps take place as follows:

1. The data needs to be prepared
2. Define the coding unit that will be analysed
3. Categories are developed with a coding scheme
4. Coding schemes must always be tested on a sample test
5. Once the test is completed the researcher must assess the coding accuracy
6. Conclusions can be interpreted from coded data
7. Researcher can then repeat the method and findings

The content on Telkom's official website will be analysed according to categories informed by Keller's Brand Equity Model in order to compare results of the interviews with content analysis. A deductive approach will be used because the researcher will be using a framework from Keller's Brand theory to identify the six steps grouped into specific themes described in Keller's Brand Equity model.

3.8 Reliability and validity/ trustworthiness

Trustworthiness will be used in place of validity and reliability for this study as qualitative research does not deal with measurability. The aim of qualitative research is to gain an in-depth understanding of certain phenomena. Through unique individual's experiences researchers are unable to generalise results but rather explain and interpret different realities. Trustworthiness is further divided into transferability, credibility, confirmability and dependability.

Transferability is about being able to apply findings to a similar situation while delivering similar results. Credibility speaks to how credible the data is that has been interpreted by the researcher. The longer the researcher spends with participants or the more tools used to collect and analyse data the more credible the findings become. The study will be utilising two types of data collection tools adding to the study's credibility, as in-depth interviews will be combined with unobtrusive content analysis.

Dependability refers to the consistency of the research process. In order to check dependability of the study, the research should be checked for mistakes or careless conceptualising, data collection, interpretation of findings as well as reported results. The more consistent the process has been by the researcher, the more dependable the study becomes (Williams, 2011). The researcher will follow a process of collecting and analysing data while consistently referring back to the framework of Keller's Brand Equity Model. The research will be checked for any mistakes or data collection errors and will be checked again by a third party.

Confirmability is all about the quality of the results of the study. The findings and literature by the researcher should be able to strengthen the confirmability by how well the literature supports the findings. The material supports the data and interpretations. The full research process will be described in order to assist others to be able to scrutinize the research design. Qualitative research is all about persuading the readers that the findings are credible (du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014).

3.9 Ethical Considerations

Ethics speak to a researcher's integrity but also goes beyond the individual. Ethics become a researcher's code of conduct. Some ethical considerations when conducting interviews:

- The researcher will need to seek informed consent from volunteers
- The researcher must ensure quality and integrity of the research
- Ensure voluntary participation and not participation under force or bribery
- The researcher must respect the opinions and confidentiality of all respondents
- Researcher must ensure to remain neutral and not biased on the topic of the interview
- No relatives or friends should part-take in the interviews
- All personal information of participants must be protected
- The researcher must not deceive participants about what the research is relating to
- The researcher must not falsify information or misuse findings acquired
- The researcher must not cause harm to participants physically or emotionally

3.10 Conclusion

In this chapter, the research methods and processes that are used for this study are clearly defined. Reasons for the methodology chosen were clearly justified. Field methods and unobtrusive methods have been chosen as the two data collection methods for qualitative research. The tools that were chosen to collect the data are justified in this chapter and include in-depth interviews and qualitative content analysis of the Telkom website. The process of the data analysis is described in detail. Thematic content and analysis and qualitative content analysis will be used to analyse the data collect and the findings and analysis can be found in the following chapter.

Chapter 4

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will show the findings and comparative analysis of the analysed data according to thematic content analysis and qualitative content analysis. All findings relate to the research questions stated in chapter one, and are analysed accordingly with the research objectives. The purpose of this study is to compare Telkom's brand promise to the actual service provided.

4.2 Findings for research question one:

What is Telkom's intended Brand Promise according to Telkom's official website?

4.2.1. Field Method: Thematic Content Analysis (In-depth Interviews)

Theme	Verbatim Quote
Speed and connectivity	"They Promise good speed and no interruption
Uninformed Consumers	"I don't know"

4.2.2 Unobtrusive Method: Qualitative content analysis (Website)

Theme	Content provided
Brand's Promise to consumers	"We orchestrate enabling experiences through seamless, intuitive solutions and responsive, reliable service"

4.2.3 Comparative analysis

Telkom's brand promise according to their website is "to connect people to a better life". Most consumers interviewed did not understand what a brand promise was and had not found out for themselves about Telkom's brand promise. One out of the five people interviewed were able to state Telkom's brand promise as providing "good speed and connectivity." According to the content on the website Telkom promise to put the customer first through intuitive, simple and responsive service while striving to

get it right first time. They also promise to seek new ways to connect to consumers and strive for zero defects, faults or downtime. According to the interviews this is not the case. According to the literature by Keller (2012), a brand's promise consumers are able to create perceived value towards the brand which is valuable to both consumer and organisations while adding functional and emotional benefits to the lives of consumers. According to Frederiksen (2016) a brand promise is an extension of a brand's positioning and is communicated by the brand itself. According to Gurviez (1998) cited by Nguetsop et al (2016) brand trust is customers' expectations that brand is committed to have predictable actions in line with their expectations

4.3 Findings for research question two:

What is the perceived brand promise of Telkom amongst Telkom customer service users in Johannesburg?

4.3.1 Field Method: Thematic Content Analysis (In-depth Interviews)

Theme	Verbatim Quotes
Deals	"It's all about the deals"
Speed and connectivity	"They promise good speed and no interruption"
Consumers prefer to deal with the brand in person	"I Just come to the store"

4.3.2 Unobtrusive Method: Qualitative Content Analysis (Website)

Theme	Content provided
Deals	The homepage which is the first page a consumer sees only focuses on the latest and best deals provided by Telkom
Disconnect	Imagery on the About us page and the look and feel does not relate to the homepage. Feeling of disconnect and confusion is created when moving from the homepage to the about us and company values page.

4.3.3 Comparative Analysis

Telkom's perceived brand promise is to deliver on their deals as well as speed and uninterrupted connectivity. The website states that Telkom's promise is to connect people to a better life.

Aaker (1996) as cited by Srivastava (2015) states that an important step in building brand equity is identifying the brand's identity, he goes on to argue that brand loyalty stems from Brand Equity because it enhances a consumer's ability to process and interpret information. It improves a consumer's confidence when purchasing a certain brand and can affect the quality of the consumer's experience based on their perceptions of the brand. Three out of the five people interviewed mentioned the deals has part of what they perceived Telkom's brand promise to be. There are two reasons for these perceptions.

Reason one is that when a consumer visits the Telkom website like many people interviewed have, the first thing they see are Telkom's deals and monthly specials. In order to find out more about what the company stands for and promises it's consumers, they have to find the link to the About us page which is hidden in the menu on the right or all the way at the bottom of the page. Telkom's brand does not place emphasis on their brand promise.

The second reason for these perceptions are that consumers are unaware of what a brand promise really means and what it should mean to them as consumers. According to Frederksen (2016) a brand promise is the benefit that the product or service can be provided to consumers and is communicated by the brand itself. Gurviez (1998) cited by Nguetsop et al (2016) states that brand trust is customers' expectations that brand is committed to have predictable actions in line with their expectations. Brand trust creates a lasting and stable relationship between brand and customers. This all goes back to the fact that consumers need to be able to trust that the brand will consistently fulfill their promise in each and every interaction in order to meet customers' expectations.

4.4 Findings for research question three:

Is there a discrepancy between the brand promise and the brand offering using Keller's Brand Equity Model?

4.4.1 Field Method: Thematic Content Analysis (In-depth Interviews)

Theme	Verbatim Quote
Slow Service	"I wish they would improve on their service, they are very slow"
Blind Loyalty	"Researcher: Do you know what Telkom's brand promises its consumers?" Female 1: Ya, they promise good speed and no interruption, which is not true because we had like a problem like two weeks ago, ya, the system, was down Researcher: would you recommend Telkom to a friend or family? Female 1: Ya"

4.4.2 Unobtrusive Method: Qualitative Content Analysis (Website)

Theme	Content Provided
Brand Promise	"We orchestrate enabling experiences through seamless, intuitive solutions and responsive, reliable service" "We Connect you to a better life" Telkom states on the website that they "have a responsibility to provide customers with fit for purpose solutions as processes"

Bad connectivity/performance	There is a broken link to the about us page. Unable to connect its own homepage to the about us page.
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4.4.3 Comparative analysis

Two out of the five interviewees did not know what Telkom's brand promise was. Three out of the five people had complaints about the service but were still willing to recommend Telkom to friends and family. There is a discrepancy between the brand promise and the service offered by Telkom. The website states that Telkom's promise is to connect people to a better life.

According to the content on the website Telkom promise to put the customer first through intuitive, simple and responsive service while striving to get it right first time. They also promise to seek new ways to connect to consumers and strive for zero defects, faults or downtime. According to the interviews this is not the case. Although they would recommend Telkom as a brand to their friends and family, they are not strong brand loyalists as they do not know what the brand stands for and what it means to them. Maltitz (2016) states that South African consumers are hooked onto particular brands for no good reason even when there are better products which will not even be considered. The consequence of these consumers is that they ignore the failures of the brand, giving the brand power and unconditional consumers even when they cannot or do not deliver on their promise (Glance, 2014).

There is a discrepancy between the brand promise and the brand offering. On the Telkom's website, the brand promises to connect people to a better life. A better life is not synonyms with waiting in cues, having connectivity failures and the need to constantly get issued solved. Brand Equity enhances a consumer's ability to process and interpret information. It improves a consumer's confidence when purchasing a certain brand and can affect the quality of the consumer's experience based on their perceptions of the brand.

4.5 Conclusion

The main insight drawn from the research is that consumers are not educated about the importance of understanding a brand's promise. Without understanding what a brand stands for and promises the consumer how will consumers be able to associate the brand with added value (Srivastava, 2015)? According to Frederiksen (2016) a brand promise is an extension of a brand's positioning. It is the benefit that the product or service can be provided to consumers and is communicated by the brand itself. Brand promises are about motivating customers, it must convey a compelling benefit to customers and most importantly it must be kept every time. The brand's promise ultimately will give the organisation leverage over the brand's experience and allows the organisation to set customers' expectations (Frederiksen, 2016). By consistently delivering on the brand promise the brand will start to gain trust from consumers. And for consumers, by understanding what a brand is promising they will be able to assign trust into that brand because they know that the brand can deliver.

Chapter 5

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher discusses the implication that the findings of this study. The researcher will discuss the short comings in the research design and methods as well as the data analysis. Recommendations are made to guide future studies based on the findings from this research.

5.2 Short comings and recommendations

A shortcoming of this study would be the data collection sampling used for the field method. Accidental sampling allowed for little variation in demographics, as the people who were interviewed were the people visiting the customer service hub in Sandton on that day.

The researcher focused on brand equity as the result of brand loyalty. A recommendation for future studies would be to conduct a study on the importance of brand equity within the South African market.

Based on the findings of the current study, Telkom's brand managers should make an effort to inform consumers of their brand promise. By doing this, consumers will know what to expect from the brand and understand the focus of the brand, which for Telkom is focused on getting their services right. It is also beneficial for the brand because every time they meet those expectations of the consumer, they are building strong brand loyalists who add value to the brand by being brand advocates for the right reason. This will make the brand become more trustworthy and will help convert new customers to the brand.

5.3 Conclusion

This study meets the research objectives of performing a comparative analysis between Telkom's brand promise and actual service experienced. The theoretical gaps that were identified within the study allows for expansion on the concept of

customer's service and the impact on brand equity. This study can now serve as reference for research to be done in the future. This study also provides recommendations and insight for brands within the telecommunication and customer service industries within the South African market.

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