



Factors Influencing Consumers' Attitudes towards Digital Communications within the South African Banking Industry

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the factors that influence consumers' attitudes towards digital communications within the South African banking industry by validating a six-factor model and determining the influence of entertainment, invasiveness, personalisation, informativeness and credibility of banks' digital communication on consumers' attitudes towards the digital communication of banks. The identified respondents for this study constituted 500 South African adults aged 18 years and older. This sample size was in line with the requirements for structural equation modelling (SEM), which was the primary method used to analyse the captured data. When collecting the data, the services of a market research company were employed. A computer-administered questionnaire, including a cover letter outlining the purpose of the study, as well as a section that requested demographic information was used. As per the findings of this study, the model presents acceptable reliability and adequate model fit. Consequently, the hypothesised model includes six factors, namely entertainment, informativeness, credibility, personalisation, invasiveness and attitudes. The model and recommendations in this study may assist banks in their efforts to continuously assess and improve how they create, manage and enhance their digital communications.

Keywords: Attitudes, Banking, Digital Communication, South Africa

JEL Classifications: M30, M31

1. INTRODUCTION

The essence of communication is to understand and be understood (InfoSlips, 2023). There has been a shift from the use of traditional communication channels, including telephone, fax and email, to digital communication channels, such as instant messaging, wikis, social networking sites and blogs (Shrestha et al., 2020:280). Many organisations have begun to employ the use of several digital communication channels, including organisational websites, mobile chat and blogs to connect and communicate with current and prospective customers, employees and other stakeholders. Consequently, digital communication may be deemed as an organisation's online communication efforts (Doyle, 2019; Sibanda, 2022). Ruel (2022) adds that digital communication includes a combination of both formal and informal communication, used for task management, back-

and-forth correspondence, internal requests, public messaging and advertising. The increased adoption and use of digital communication channels may be attributed to the premise that digital communication channels are a user-friendly and affordable alternative to traditional communication channels. Furthermore, consumers find digital communication to be pertinent, engaging, rapid, instructive and suitable. In addition, digital communication makes it easier to assess a brand, while consumers find the reviews provided via digital communication useful when making final purchase decisions (Sonawane et al., 2023:7).

According to Chukwuemeka (2022), South Africa is a developing country with a modern banking system, which is a necessity for the country to be able to engage in business related activities. Given the extensive banking networks and efficient financial channels within South Africa, the country can offer global banking services,

which has led to an increase in the number of regional, national and worldwide banks available in the country, with 30 registered banks in South Africa, including 18 domestic banks and 12 foreign banks with local branches (Cowling, 2024).

2. RESEARCH PROBLEM AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Owing to the rapid advancements in technology and the subsequent innovations that have followed, the way banks operate and the way in which consumers interact with their preferred banks has significantly changed (Els, 2019a). Within the banking industry, traditional communication channels have become more digital in nature, more commonly referred to as digital communication, which includes internet banking, mobile banking and e-payment systems (Shrestha et al., 2020:280). Consequently, the shift to digital communication within the banking industry has seen a change from heavy reliance on bank branches and call centres to emails, mobile apps and AI chatbots, more commonly known as digital banking (Infoslips, 2023). In addition, the banking industry makes use of a wide range of online tools, including mobile apps, data analysis programs, automated solutions to support customer service, digital payment systems, products for the centralisation of document processing and platforms that can be used to create interactive content (Severoni, 2023). Consequently, digital communication has begun to play a critical role in the banking industry. This has led to banks focusing more on their digital communication efforts, to ensure future success in the face of the next technological wave (Els, 2019a).

Communication has become a key factor in ensuring the smooth operation and growth of banking organisations (Severoni, 2023). Through proper communication, banks are able to create customer satisfaction and loyalty (Shrestha et al., 2020:280). As consumer preferences evolve it is becoming increasingly important for banks to ensure that they implement a well-planned digital communication strategy that not only communicates with consumers across all channels, but that the communication shared and the subsequent customer experience delivered is not only personalised, but relevant. In addition, banks need to ensure that the communication channels used offer all-digital, relevant, and secure communications to their customers, which will, in essence, drive both loyalty and profitability (Gregg, 2022). In essence, banks need to continuously assess and improve how they create, manage and enhance their digital communication (Beatty, 2019).

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1. Attitudes

Consumer attitudes are defined as the conglomeration of behavioural beliefs, emotions and intentions that a consumer has towards a product, service or behaviour (Collimore and Grimsley, 2023). Johnson et al. (2022) add that attitudes are the umbrella term given to the opinions of individuals towards something, such as a product or service. As such, attitudes may be used by organisations to personalise their marketing campaigns, in an effort to ensure and enhance customers satisfaction (Collimore and Grimsley, 2023).

According to Verplanken and Orbell (2022), attitudes play an integral role in shaping the perceptions and behaviours of individuals. Moreover, perception is vital in relation to communication as it influences what individuals do, say, interact and connect. It involves the conscious acceptance, selection, synthesis and interpretation of information within individuals' brains. As such, attitudes significantly influence the effectiveness of communication by shaping the way individuals interpret, perceive and convey messages (Watts and Lombardo, 2023).

3.2. Entertainment

According to Cahyani and Artanti (2020:85), entertainment plays a pivotal role in forming consumers' attitudes toward the advertising of products and services. Kobb (2023:1303) adds that the perceived entertainment of digital communication relates to content shared on digital platforms that is deemed entertaining, surprising and relaxing, which ultimately puts consumers in a good mood. As such, digital communication allows organisations, such as banks, to communicate with customers in an engaging and stimulating manner (Goetter, 2017).

One-way banks are providing entertaining digital communication is through the use of digital screens, which allows for more engagement with customers, reducing the chance of losing valuable customers, while simultaneously selling to existing ones (Spectrio, 2018). Righini (2019) suggests the use of gaming as a form of digital communication as it is more likely to be received in a favourable manner by customers. With the use of gaming, banks can reach out to their customers in a way that provides customers with small moments of entertainment, which constitutes a strategic means in which to transmit relevant content. Moreover, banks can launch digital communication campaigns that provide entertainment using funny articles or engaging videos (Maryville University, 2020). For banks that wish to employ the use of social media networks, such as Facebook, Instagram and the like, as a form of digital communication, it is imperative that the content they provide is both entertaining and encourages user involvement, which will ultimately influence customers' attitudes towards the digital communication (Yuan et al., 2021:10).

According to Gaber et al. (2019:10), consumers' perceptions regarding the entertainment of Instagram advertisements is strongly related to consumers' attitudes towards Instagram advertisements. In addition, Talih Akkaya et al. (2017:383) found that perceived entertainment of social media advertisements has a positive effect on customers' attitudes towards social media advertisements. Based on these findings and that social media networking sites, such as Facebook and Instagram constitute digital communication channels (Shrestha et al., 2020:280), the following hypothesis has been formulated for this study:

Ha₁: Perceived entertainment has a significant positive influence on consumers' attitudes towards the digital communication of banks.

3.3. Informativeness

According to Kobb (2023:1303), consumers perceive digital communication as informative when it provides information that is not only up to date, but relevant, interesting and of high

quality. Righini (2019) indicates that in digital communication “content is king” and banks need to find ways in which to provide consumers with banking related content that is both informative and interesting. Els (2019b) indicates that in the banking industry, safety and trustworthiness are what every customer expects from their preferred bank. This highlights the necessity for banks to provide digital communications across all platforms that not only inform customers about the latest forms of cybercrime but offer practical advice on how to protect themselves. This type of communication assists in making customers feel secure and assists in assuring customers that they have made the correct choice regarding safeguarding their money.

According to Valenti and Alderman (2021), the younger generations of customers, such as Generation Z, hold more value in communication that is honest, as opposed to communication that provides useful information. As such, banks can employ the use of digital screens to build trust by informing customers about the bank, brand and staff. These digital screens can be used to inform customers of the services that are available to meet their specific needs, while simultaneously providing a means to convey care and respect by addressing their concerns (Spectrio, 2018). In addition, banks can employ the use of social media networks as a means of sharing information regarding the products and services they offer, while simultaneously updating the products and services according to the feedback received from customers (Rezayat, 2017). Puckering (2023) adds that banks need to make a concerted effort to build consumer trust, which would include the implementation of policies that are transparent, disclosures that are adequate and resources that educate consumers if they wish to encourage consumers to transact digitally.

According to Cahyani and Artanti (2020:77), informativeness has a positive and significant influence on attitude towards advertising. Nguyen-Viet et al. (2022:265) propose that informativeness is an important factor in motivating consumers to express a positive attitude towards Facebook advertising. Furthermore, Lushaba and Kule (2023:234) found that informativeness has a significant influence on mobile phone users' attitudes towards SMS advertising. However, in the study conducted by Joshi and Jatniwala (2019:103) it was found that informativeness directly influences credibility and indirectly impacts attitudes towards mobile advertisements through its relationship with credibility. Similarly, Tosriwattananon (2020:43) validates the positive relationship between perceived informativeness and the credibility of in-app advertisements. As a result, the following hypothesis has been formulated for this study:

Ha₂: Perceived informativeness has a significant positive influence on the credibility of the digital communication of banks.

3.4. Credibility

Perceived credibility is the term used to describe an individual's belief towards the information they receive from a message (Febriane et al., 2023:324), which in this study constitutes the customers who patronise one or more South African banks. Girardin (2020) indicates that credibility barriers interfere with digital communications when customers are unable to trust the

message, the organisation who has sent the message, or both. In the banking industry, particularly digital banking, credibility is an integral component in building trust among customers, where communication and integrity are integral components in building credibility (Digital News Asia, 2023). Communication refers to an organisation's ability to effectively provide information in a manner that is both transparent and responsive, which in turn fosters trust and understanding among employees, stakeholders and the customers of an organisation (Kumar, 2023). Integrity constitutes the honesty of employees, fairness in rules, procedures and conditions and ensuring the equal and fair treatment of customers (van Esterik-Plasmeijer and van Raaij, 2017:99). As such, banks have been making progress in improving trust among their customers by putting their customers first, providing them with financial guidance and treating them fairly (Valenti and Alderman, 2021).

Social proof also plays an integral role in building credibility (Tripp, 2023). Customer testimonials and reviews are one of the most common forms of social proof, as customers actively search for reviews and ratings before making purchase decisions (McGuire, 2023). Consequently, organisations should endeavour to address negative reviews. This can serve as a way of building trust in the organisation, as potential customers will be able to view how organisations address negative reviews (Kumar, 2023). Els (2019b) proposes that to build trust, banks need to build relationships with their customers, which require the implementation and use of regular and consistent communication. Rezayat (2017) theorises that through the analysis of customers' comments and reviews on social media networks, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and the like, banks are able to develop a general perspective of customer perceptions towards a bank's product and service offerings.

According to Elsantil and Eid (2022:11), customers' perceived credibility of information on social media networking sites has an impact on their attitudes and intentions to adopt the information. In addition, Gaber et al. (2019:10) found that consumers' perceptions regarding the credibility of Instagram advertisements is strongly related to consumers' attitudes towards Instagram advertisements. Based on these findings and that social media networking sites, such as Facebook and Instagram constitute digital communication channels (Shrestha et al., 2020:280), this study proposes the following hypothesis:

Ha₃: Perceived credibility has a significant positive influence on consumers' attitudes towards the digital communication of banks.

3.5. Personalisation

Although banking has become increasingly online based and more mobile in nature, consumers are still in search of banking products and services that can be personalised to their individual needs, both now and in the future (Gregg, 2022). Mehta (2023) highlights that digital transformation has provided banks with the tools necessary to tailor their products and services according to their individual customer's needs. This has become possible through the use of data analysis and developing a deeper understanding of how customers behave, giving banks a better opportunity to develop personalised

product and service offerings to targeted customers. As such, banks that personalise their offerings, who guide customers through their finances and who provide essential tools for customer success are more likely to win and retain business in the long term, enhancing the chances for success (CSI, 2022).

Whether engaging in daily banking activities or being notified of investment opportunities, consumers are more inclined to prefer communication that is not only relevant, but personalised to their needs, with the least amount of friction possible throughout the exchange (Gregg, 2022). Therefore, banks should endeavour to personalise the interactions between chatbots and consumers, while designing user interfaces that are user-friendly and intuitive (InfoSlips, 2023). In addition, consumers want to engage with their chosen bank in a seamless manner, whether this be in a branch, at an ATM, via a mobile device or online, with the understanding that whatever happens on one channel will be transferred across all available channels (Gregg, 2023). Using video content, featuring the actual employees of banks from all levels, banks can also assist in humanising a bank's brand and make customers feel more personally connected (Print Mail Solutions, 2024). Righini (2019) postulates that social platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram, provide banks with a digital communication tool that can precisely target the intended customers with the intended content. As such, banks can distribute different messages to different customers which allows for more relevant and personalised content to be communicated.

According to Nguyen-Viet et al. (2022:265), personalisation is an important factor in motivating consumers to express a positive attitude towards Facebook advertising. In their study, Maseeh et al. (2021) found that personalisation is significantly associated with consumers' attitudes towards receiving mobile advertisements. Similarly, in the study conducted by Kroneman et al. (2023), it was reported that personalisation has a positive influence on consumers' attitudes towards AI based digital assistants. Therefore, the following hypothesis has been formulated for this study:

Ha₄: Perceived personalisation has a significant positive influence on consumers' attitudes towards the digital communication of banks.

3.6. Invasiveness

Hoey (2023) identifies invasiveness in the digital marketing space as the use of marketing efforts that are ultimately designed to disrupt an individual consumer's experience with a particular user interface, with the intention to grab the attention of the customer and call them to action. According to Napoletano and Foreman (2020), the digital communication received from banks can assist customers in keeping better control over their finances, alert customers of potential fraud and provide customers with subtle reminders on how to take action with their finances. Similarly, banking digital communication plays an integral role in securing a customer's online banking information, such as passwords, online banking and mobile banking.

Knopp (2022) proposes that while banks may fear that they are communicating too much with their customers, it is imperative

to note that customers' perceptions of the invasiveness of digital communications from their banks is very different as opposed to the communication received from other industries. In comparison to books, music and movies, it is a daunting task for banks to explain product or service benefits in a way that will encourage customers to adopt the products and services on offer. As such, banks need to pay special attention to the products and services they offer, the way in which they communicate the product or service offering and the customer's life situation, needs and possible life direction, while simultaneously finding the right time and place to share the desired digital communication (DataSentic, 2021).

To avoid customers perceiving the digital communication they receive from their banks as being invasive, banks need to ensure that they send communication to their customers in the preferred way customers wish to receive communication (Girardin, 2020). In addition, banks need to ensure that they know what is important to their customers and that they develop their communication on and around these factors. As such, banks need to ensure that they make use of the most appropriate digital communication platforms available and that it is appropriate for the purpose of the communication message (Fouse, 2021). When sending notifications banks should ensure that they are precise and specific as to what activity has been undertaken and when, while allowing customers to change the notification settings at any time to better suit their personal preferences (Napoletano and Foreman, 2020). Banks need to communicate with their customers until the customer informs them to stop. By using simple notifications, banks can keep their customers updated on all the activities and changes that are taking place within their accounts. However, banks should allow their customers the means to decide how often they would like to receive communication, which can be done by allowing customers to adjust their notification settings, such as the use of SMS or email alerts, or both (Knopp, 2022).

Miltgen et al. (2019:8) propose that perceived control over data use and the likes of notifications can influence perceived privacy invasiveness and the subsequent attitudes and behavioural responses of consumers towards advertising. This was also validated in the study conducted by Sukarnadi and Antonio (2024), who reported that content invasiveness has a negative influence on brand attitude, as well as the study conducted by Bawack et al. (2023), who reported that perceived invasiveness negatively impacts consumers' attitudes towards online shopping with social media live streams. As such, the following hypothesis has been formulated for this study:

Ha₅: Perceived invasiveness has a significant negative influence on consumers' attitudes towards the digital communication of banks.

4. METHODOLOGY

The respondents for this research study constituted 500 South African adults aged 18 years and older, as per the requirements for structural equation modelling (SEM), which served as the primary method to analyse the captured data. To gather the data from the respondents, the services of a market research company were employed. The research instrument used for this project

was a computer-administered questionnaire that included a cover letter to explain the purpose of the study, as well as a section that requested demographic information and another section that included statements that directly relate to the topic of the study. The questionnaire included one screening question to ascertain that all the participants included in the sample had a bank account. The constructs measured included perceived entertainment (five items, Ducoffe, 1996), informativeness (four items, Ducoffe, 1996), credibility (four items, Brackett and Carr, 2001; Li and Suh, 2015), personalisation (four items, Xu, 2006-2007) and invasiveness (five items, Ducoffe, 1996) of a bank's digital communication and the subsequent attitudes of consumers towards a bank's digital communication (four items, Boateng and Okoe, 2015; Pollay and Mittal, 1993). The participants' responses to the statements relating to the constructs that were investigated were measured on a six-point Likert scale that ranged between strongly disagree (1) and strongly agree (6). The IBM SPSS and AMOS, Version 28 programs were used for the data analysis to perform frequency analysis, descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, validity analysis, confirmatory factor analysis and path analysis.

5. PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 500 questionnaires were completed in full and met the sample requirement, namely that each respondent should have a bank account. As a result, all 500 questionnaires were included in the data analysis. Regarding the sample description as presented in Table 1, the age category that was most represented in the sample was respondents between the ages of 18 and 25 years (25.4%), followed by those that fall within the 26-30 years (18.6%) age category. In terms of mother tongue language, 39.6% of the respondents indicated speaking English, followed by those who speak IsiZulu (16.4%). From those respondents that selected the "other" category, one indicated Sepulana as the mother tongue language, while another indicated Shona. The province that was represented the most in the sample is the Gauteng province (53.4%), followed by the Western Cape province (14.6). Concerning the respondents' monthly income, the largest portion of the sample recorded a monthly income of between R5000 and R10000 (17.6%), followed by those that indicated an income of between R20001 and R30000 (16.4%).

The means and standard deviations were calculated for all the constructs to describe the data of the study. Furthermore, the Cronbach alpha values were calculated for each construct to ascertain internal consistency reliability. The descriptive statistics, in particular, the means and standard deviations and Cronbach's alphas, are reported in Table 2.

As presented in Table 2, the means scores of entertainment, informativeness, personalisation, credibility and attitude were above 3.5, which, given the six-point rating scale used, indicates that the responses fell within the agreement part of the scale. As such, the respondents perceived the digital communication of their banks as entertaining, informative and credible. In addition, they perceive their bank's digital communication to be personalised to them and have a positive attitude towards the digital communication of their banks. For the invasiveness construct, the mean score fell below 3.5, which means that the respondents disagreed with the statements and that they do not perceive the digital communication of their banks as intrusive or irritating. The Cronbach alpha values of all the constructs were above 0.8, which surpassed the accepted level of 0.7 (Pallant, 2020) and as such, provides evidence of internal consistency reliability.

Confirmatory factor analysis was performed on a six-factor measurement model that comprised the latent factors of entertainment, informativeness, personalisation, invasiveness, credibility and attitude toward the digital communication of banks. For model identification purposes, the initial loadings were fixed at 1.0, which returned 350 distinct sample moments, 90 distinct parameters, an over-identified model with 260° of freedom and a chi-square of 809.97 ($P \leq 0.001$). Although a significant chi-square value is an indication of poor model fit, the chi-square is susceptible to large sample sizes and therefore additional model fit indices were used namely the incremental fit index (IFI), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), the comparative fit index (CFI), standardised root mean residual (SRMR) and a root mean square of approximation (RMSEA). In addition, the measurement model was assessed for potential problematic estimates, namely negative error variances (Hair et al., 2014). Furthermore, composite reliability (CR) was computed and to assess convergent validity, the standardised loadings together with the average variance extracted (AVE) were calculated. Table 3 below presents the standard loadings, error variances, the CR and AVE values.

Table 1: Sample description

Age	%	Language	%	Province	%	Income	%
18-25	25.4	Afrikaans	7	Eastern Cape	5.2	Less than R 5000	13.2
26-30	18.6	English	39.6	Free State	2.4	R5 000-10 000	17.6
31-35	15.6	IsiNdebele	1.2	Gauteng	53.4	R10 001-R15 000	14.2
36-40	17.2	IsiXhosa	7.2	KwaZulu-Natal	13.8	R15 001-R20 000	15.4
41-45	10.2	IsiZulu	16.4	Limpopo	3.8	R 20 001-R 30 000	16.4
46-50	7	Sepedi	7.6	Mpumalanga	3.4	R 30 001-R 40 000	8.4
51-55	6	Sesotho	6	Northern Cape	8	More than R 40 000	10
		Setswana	6	North West	2.6	Prefer not to indicate	4.8
		SiSwati	2.4	Western Cape	14.6		
		Tshivenda	3.4				
		Xitsonga	2.6				
		Other	0.6				

As reported in Table 3, the standardised loadings and AVE values of all the factors exceeded 0.5 (Hair et al., 2014), which indicates convergent validity. In addition, no negative error variances were evident. The CR values ranged from 0.839 to 0.911, exceeding 0.7, providing evidence of composite reliability (Malhotra, 2020). With regards to the model fit indices, a IFI of 0.941, TLI of 0.931 and CFI of 0.940 was calculated in AMOS, which exceeds 0.9. In addition, a SRMS of 0.0486 and RMSEA of 0.065 were calculated, which fell below 0.08, and therefore indicates acceptable model fit (Malhotra, 2020).

To assess discriminant validity, the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio values were calculated between all the latent factors and are presented in Table 4.

As evident in Table 4, the HTMT values are <0.90 threshold and therefore suggest discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015).

Table 2: Descriptive statistics and internal consistency reliability

Latent factors	Means	Standard deviations	Cronbach's alphas
Entertainment	4.708	1.023	0.908
Informativeness	5.007	0.914	0.881
Personalisation	4.933	0.930	0.838
Invasiveness	2.956	1.449	0.895
Credibility	5.062	0.889	0.896
Attitude	5.129	0.865	0.909

Table 3: Measurement model statistics

Latent factors	Standardised loadings	Error variances	CR	AVE
Entertainment (F1)	0.809	0.655	0.910	0.669
	0.849	0.721		
	0.786	0.618		
	0.826	0.683		
Informativeness (F2)	0.816	0.665	0.881	0.649
	0.818	0.670		
	0.779	0.608		
	0.807	0.651		
Personalisation (F3)	0.816	0.665	0.839	0.567
	0.783	0.613		
	0.821	0.674		
	0.704	0.496		
Invasiveness (F4)	0.698	0.487	0.899	0.692
	0.681	0.464		
	0.871	0.758		
	0.878	0.770		
Credibility (F5)	0.881	0.776	0.899	0.690
	0.814	0.662		
	0.839	0.704		
	0.890	0.793		
Attitude (F6)	0.775	0.601	0.911	0.718
	0.899	0.808		
	0.863	0.745		
	0.810	0.655		
Correlations:	0.815	0.664		
	F1↔F2: 0.811	F1↔F3: 0.691	F1↔F4: 0.045	
	F1↔F5: 0.707	F1↔F6: 0.604	F2↔F3: 0.682	
	F2↔F4: -0.075	F2↔F5: 0.882	F2↔F6: 0.656	
	F3↔F4: -0.008	F3↔F5: 0.603	F3↔F6: 0.741	
F4↔F5: -0.088	F4↔F6: -0.108	F5↔F6: 0.633		
Model fit	IFI=0.941; TLI=0.931; CFI=0.940; SRMR=0.0486; RMSEA=0.065			

Based on the validated measurement model and in line with the hypotheses formulated, a structural model was specified that theorised that consumers' attitudes towards the digital communication of their banks are predicted by their perceptions regarding the entertainment, invasiveness, personalisation and credibility of their bank's digital communication, while, in turn, their perceived credibility is dependent on the informativeness of their bank's digital communication. The paths, along with the standardised and unstandardised beta coefficients, standard errors and P-values are presented in Table 5.

As indicated in Table 5, personalisation ($\beta=0.556, P=0.001 \leq 0.05$), and credibility ($\beta = 0.268, p = 0.001 \leq 0.05$) are predictors of consumers' attitudes towards the digital communication of their banks, while informativeness ($\beta = 0.882, p = 0.001 \leq 0.05$) is a predictor of consumers' perceived credibility of their bank's digital communication. As such, hypotheses Ho2, Ho3, Ho4 are rejected and hypotheses Ha2, Ha3, Ha4 are accepted. As for the invasiveness ($\beta = -0.083, P = 0.019 < 0.05$) of bank's digital communication, the path analysis revealed that it has a significant negative influence on consumers' attitudes towards the digital communication of banks, while the entrainment ($\beta = 0.034, P = 0.595 > 0.05$) of bank's digital communication has a non-significant influence on consumers' attitudes towards digital communication of banks. As such, hypotheses Ha1 and Ho5 are rejected and hypotheses Ho1 and Ha5 are accepted. Figure 1 displays the structural model and its standardised regression estimates and SMC coefficients.

Based on the squared multiple correlation (SMC) coefficients, the informativeness of banks' digital communication explains 78% of the variance in the perceived credibility of these communications, while the perceived personalisation, invasiveness and credibility of banks' digital communication explain 61% of the variance in consumers' attitude towards the digital communication of banks.

The model fit of the structural model was evaluated by utilizing several model fit indices. While a significant chi-square statistic was calculated [810.744 (df=264, p<0.001)], the other fit indices demonstrated acceptable model fit: SRMR=0.0485, RMSEA=0.064, IFI=0.941, TLI=0.932 and CFI=0.941.

6. DISCUSSION

This study aimed to determine the factors that influence consumers' attitudes towards digital communications within the South African banking industry by validating a six-factor model and determining the influence of entertainment, invasiveness, personalisation, informativeness and credibility of banks' digital communication on consumers' attitude towards the digital communication of banks. Based on the descriptive statistics calculated for the study, it was evident that the participants perceived the digital

communication of their banks as entertaining, informative, credible and personalised to them and have a positive attitude towards the digital communication of their banks. In addition, the participants do not perceive the digital communication of their banks as being intrusive. The confirmatory factor analysis suggests that the six-factor measurement model tested in the study is valid and reliable and demonstrates an acceptable model fit. In addition, the HTMT analysis provided evidence for discriminant validity. In line with the studies of Joshi and Jatniwala (2019:103) and Tosiriwattananon (2020:43), the path analysis revealed that the informativeness of banks' digital communication is a predictor of the perceived credibility of these communications. Furthermore, the results suggest that the credibility of banks' digital communications together with the personalisation of these communications have a significant positive influence on consumers' attitudes towards banks' digital communications. This lends support to Gregg (2022), who highlighted the importance of personalisation in banks' digital communication. In addition, the findings of this study are also consistent with the findings of Elsantil and Eid (2022:11) and Gaber et al. (2019:10), who validated the relationship between credibility and attitude, as well as the studies of Maseeh et al. (2021) and Kroneman et al. (2023), who reported on the relationship between personalisation and attitude. In line with the findings of Sukarnadi and Antonio (2024) and Bawack et al. (2023), the current study found that invasiveness has a significant negative influence on consumers' attitudes toward banks' digital communications. As such, the more invasive the digital communication of banks, the less favourable consumers' attitudes will be toward the digital communication of banks. The findings of the current study further revealed that entertainment has a non-significant influence on consumers' attitudes toward banks' digital communications. This finding is in contrast with the findings of Gaber et al. (2019:10) and Talih et al. (2017:383),

Table 4: Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio values (HTMT)

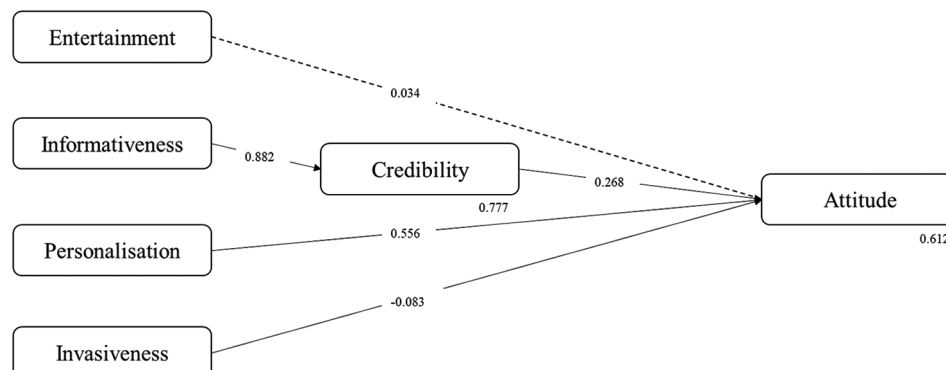
Latent factors	HTMT				
	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5
Entertainment (F1)					
Informativeness (F2)	0.725				
Personalisation (F3)	0.604	0.590			
Invasiveness (F4)	0.065	0.053	0.010		
Credibility (F5)	0.649	0.789	0.534	0.057	
Attitude (F6)	0.559	0.585	0.658	0.071	0.573

Table 5: Path analysis

Paths	Standardised β	Unstandardised β	SE	P-value
Entertainment→Attitude	0.034	0.028	0.052	0.595
Informativeness→Credibility	0.882	0.781	0.043	0.001*
Personalisation→Attitude	0.556	0.515	0.056	0.001*
Invasiveness→Attitude	-0.083	-0.063	0.027	0.019*
Credibility→Attitude	0.268	0.292	0.061	0.001*

β : beta coefficient; SE: standard error; P: two-tailed statistical significance

Figure 1: Structural model



Solid line: Significant relationship, Dash line: Non-significant relationship

who found that entertainment has a positive effect on consumers' attitudes toward social media advertisements. While entertainment has proven to be significant in the context of digital advertisements specifically, it might not be as significant in terms of the general digital communication of banks considering that these also include formal and informal communication used for task management, back-and-forth correspondence, internal requests and public messaging. In light of this, Beatty (2019) proposes that for banks to have good digital communication, the focus should be on accurate and trustworthy communication that is personal, relevant and timely, while simultaneously being proactive in nature and a means by which banks can guide customers regarding their finances.

7. CONCLUSION AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Given the important role communication now plays in the smooth operation and growth of banking organisations, banks need to develop proper communication if they wish to ensure that their customers are not only satisfied, but that they become loyal to their preferred bank of choice. This study aimed to determine the factors that influence consumers' attitudes towards digital communications within the South African banking industry by validating a six-factor model and determining the influence of entertainment, invasiveness, personalisation, informativeness and credibility of banks' digital communication on consumers' attitude towards the digital communication of banks.

From the results of the descriptive statistics it is evident that consumers perceive the digital communication of their banks as entertaining, informative, credible and personalised, but not invasive. In addition, they have positive attitudes towards the digital communication of their banks. Subsequent to validating the six-factor measurement model, the path analysis confirmed that credibility and personalisation has a direct positive influence on consumers' attitudes towards the digital communication of banks, while informativeness has an indirect positive influence through its influence on credibility, and invasiveness has a direct negative influence. Interestingly, it was found that entertainment has a non-significant influence on consumers' attitudes toward banks' digital communications.

The findings of this study contribute to the literature on consumers' attitudes towards the digital communication of banks within the South African context, as well as to the literature concerning the factors that influence these attitudes. The model tested in this study could serve as an important tool for understanding consumers' attitudes towards the digital communication used in specific industries in future studies. Furthermore, the findings of this study shed light on the factors and the subsequent influence these factors have on consumers' attitudes towards the digital communication of their banks and, therefore, may assist banks in South Africa to continuously assess and improve how they create, manage and enhance their digital communications.

It is imperative that banks identify what customers deem important in relation to digital communication. To do this, banks need to conduct research to determine what customers' needs and wants are in relation to banking products and services, what digital

communication channels they prefer, along with the preferred times they wish to receive banking digital communications. Banks then need to allow customers to decide how often they want to receive digital communications. This involves banks communicating with customers until customers tell them to stop. Furthermore, banks need to develop a well-planned digital communication strategy that not only communicates with customers across all channels, but that the communication shared, and the subsequent customer experience delivered, is not only personalised, but relevant. In addition, banks need to ensure that the communication channels used offer all-digital, relevant and secure communications to their customers, which will in essence drive both loyalty and profitability.

Banks need to create engaging video content that features the actual employees of a bank as a means of bringing a more entertaining and personalised element to their digital communication. To ensure that the intended target market is precisely targeted with the intended content, banks need to employ the use of social media platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram. Furthermore, banks should analyse the customer reviews across the social media platforms used, to identify ways in which they can improve their product and service offerings and to determine which platform would be the most appropriate and effective channel to use to share the intended message. Banks also need to ensure that the digital communication they develop and provide are transparent, responsive, personalised, regular, consistent, up to date, informative, interesting and of high quality. In terms of fraud, banks need to use digital communications to alert customers of potential fraud. These messages should inform customers about the latest forms of cybercrime, while simultaneously offering practical tips on how customers can protect themselves. When employing the use of notifications, banks need to ensure that the notifications used are simple, specific and precise concerning what activity has taken place and when and if any changes are taking place in their accounts. Furthermore, banks should give their customers the opportunity to change their notification preferences, such as short message service (SMS) or e-mail or both. In addition, banks should invest in the implementation of digital screens to engage with customers, to inform them of the products and services available, to convey care and respect by addressing customer concerns.

In this study, the focus was on exploring the factors that influence consumers' attitudes towards the digital communications used by South African banks. As such, several limitations may be identified in relation to this study. The non-probability convenience sampling method was used, which indicates the need for caution to be taken when generalising the results of this study. Owing to the use of a single cross-sectional research design, the findings of this study may lack the depth of a longitudinal study. Therefore, it is recommended that a longitudinal study be undertaken to investigate any potential changes in the factors that influence consumers' attitudes towards the digital communications used by South African banks. Furthermore, a comparative study can be undertaken to determine if any significant differences exist in consumers' attitudes towards the digital communication of banks between generational cohorts and genders to ultimately enable South African banks to tailor their digital communication strategies and thereby satisfy the needs of the different generational cohorts and genders more effectively.

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