**INSIGHTS INTO REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT**
ISSN 2669-0195 (online) https://jssidoi.org/ird/
2025 Volume 7 Number 3 (September)
http://doi.org/10.70132/d4894356469

**Publisher**
Sustainability for Regions

# EXPERIENTIAL MARKETING AND ITS EFFECTS ON CUSTOMER E-SATISFACTION AND CUSTOMER HAPPINESS WITH ONLINE PURCHASES IN MTHATHA

**Lucas Vukethwele [1]*, Siphenathi Fihla [2], Richard Chinomona [3]**

*[1*,2,3] Department of Economics and Financial Science, Walter Sisulu University, South Africa*
*[1*,2,3] SEEDS, Department of Economics and Financial Science, Walter Sisulu University, South Africa*

*E-mails: *[1]lvukethwele@wsu.ac.za (Corresponding author); [2]sfihla@wsu.ac.za ; [3]rchinomona@wsu.ac.za*

*Received 11 May 2025; accepted 18 July 2025; published 30 September 2025*

**Abstract**. The late 1990s and early 2000s saw the rise of electronic commerce as Internet access became more widespread, leading to the emergence of new online business models. Today, customers can access a wide range of brands offering similar products or services at comparable prices and quality levels, making e-satisfaction a crucial factor in customer happiness. However, other factors also affect overall satisfaction, with e-satisfaction closely linked to these elements. This research aims to investigate the influence of experiential marketing on customer e-satisfaction and happiness with online purchases in Mthatha. Following a positivist research paradigm, the study employs a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional design, distributing a fully structured self-administered questionnaire to 314 fashion industry customers in Mthatha. The methodology allows for the systematic collection of numerical data to analyse the relationship between experiential marketing and online purchase behaviour, to provide measurable insights into the impact of experiential marketing on consumers' purchasing decisions and inform business strategies within the fashion sector.

**Keywords:** sense experience; think experience; feel experience; act experience; relate experience; customer e-satisfaction; customer happiness; South Africa

**Reference** to this paper should be made as follows: Vukethwele, L., Fihla, S., Chinomona, R. 2025. Experiential marketing and its effects on customer e-satisfaction and customer happiness with online purchases in Mthatha. *Insights into Regional Development*, 7(3), 69-82. http://doi.org/10.70132/d4894356469

**JEL Classifications:** M3, M31

## 1. Introduction

According to Kanaan and Pathmanathan (2021), experiential marketing has emerged as a dynamic and innovative approach for brands to connect with consumers in an increasingly digital world. Unlike traditional marketing strategies focused solely on product features and benefits, experiential marketing aims to create memorable and immersive brand experiences that resonate with customers on a deeper level. By engaging multiple senses and emotions, experiential marketing seeks to forge stronger emotional connections between consumers and brands, ultimately leading to increased satisfaction and happiness with online purchases (Pathmanathan et al., 2021; El-Ebiary et al., 2021).

In recent years, the rise of e-commerce has revolutionised consumer shopping habits, creating new challenges and opportunities for brands. Online shopping offers convenience and accessibility but lacks the traditional stores' sensory experience. Experiential marketing addresses this gap by providing virtual experiences replicating the excitement and engagement of in-person shopping, bridging the physical and digital worlds.

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Enhancing the online buying experience is one of experiential marketing's primary benefits on customer e-satisfaction (Ehsani & Hosseini, 2023). Brands may make the shopping experience more interesting and pleasurable for customers by using interactive elements like immersive storytelling, personalised product recommendations, and virtual try-on tools. Brands may stand out in a crowded market and forge closer bonds with consumers by providing distinctive and unforgettable experiences. This will increase customer satisfaction with online purchases.

Customer satisfaction with online transactions is significantly impacted by experiential marketing. Experienced marketing initiatives can arouse emotions like happiness, excitement, and fulfilment by reaching out to consumers' emotions and desires. A cosmetics company might, for instance, develop engaging online beauty instruction that gives users confidence and empowerment in addition to education. Brands may create a sense of consumer satisfaction and fulfilment by providing value beyond the transactional exchange. This will eventually encourage advocacy and loyalty (Khan, Zubair, & Malik, 2019).

Experiential marketing surpasses traditional advertising methods by creating immersive encounters that evoke emotions and resonate with consumers personally. These experiences can influence purchasing decisions, shape long-term brand perceptions and foster loyalty. By engaging customers in memorable experiences that align with their values and aspirations, brands can cultivate a sense of connection and belonging, increasing satisfaction and happiness with online purchases. Additionally, experiential marketing enables brands to showcase authenticity and transparency, which today's consumers highly value. Brands that genuinely connect with customers through meaningful experiences are likelier to establish trust and loyalty, resulting in sustained satisfaction and happiness with online interactions (Friedrich, Schlauderer, & Overhage, 2019; Evans, 2019).

Experiential marketing goes beyond standard advertising by delivering immersive experiences that elicit emotions and connect with customers on a human level. These encounters can impact purchasing decisions, long-term brand perceptions, and loyalty. By immersing customers in memorable experiences that align with their values and aspirations, brands can foster a sense of connection and belonging, leading to heightened satisfaction and happiness with online purchases. Moreover, experiential marketing allows brands to demonstrate authenticity and transparency, which today's consumers increasingly value. Brands that authentically engage with customers through meaningful experiences are more likely to build trust and loyalty over time, resulting in sustained satisfaction and happiness with online interactions (Evans, 2019).

In much as Han, Nguyen and Lee (2015) have spoken about experiential marketing and its effects on customer e-satisfaction, they have overlooked this issue in an international context like the British context, Indonesian context, Malaysian context, and the same problem has hardly been communicated about in the South African context especial in South Africa Eastern Cape Province in particularly at Mthatha.

According to Shumba and Ferreira (2023), the broad concept of e-commerce encompasses many facets of experiential marketing and e-business outlets, including consumer e-satisfaction, customer happiness, and the incidence of competitive advantage. The goal of this research is to look at the impact of experiential marketing on customer e-satisfaction and enjoyment with online purchases in Mthatha. Over and above, this study aims to add to the current body of knowledge through practical and intellectual contributions. It is in the researcher's best interests to provide fresh knowledge on the relationship between experiential marketing characteristics, consumer e-satisfaction, and customer happiness, particularly in Mthatha, Eastern Cape, South Africa.

## 2. Theoretical Grounding

The theoretical grounding section presents the underlying theoretical frameworks that guide this research, namely the Social Exchange Theory (SET) and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). SET offers valuable insights

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into the exchange dynamics of social interactions and relationships, while TAM provides a robust framework for understanding the acceptance and adoption of technology by individuals. These theories collectively inform the conceptualisation of research problems and the formulation of hypotheses.

### 2.1 Social Exchange Theory

The Social Exchange Theory was developed by sociologist George C. Homans in the 1950s and further elaborated upon by other theorists such as Peter Blau and Richard Emerson. This study has adopted Social Exchange Theory to explain the nature of customer e-satisfaction and customer happiness in online shopping. Social Exchange Theory argues that attitudes and behaviours are determined by the rewards of interaction minus the penalties. This implies that rewarding customers for a particular positive action leads to customer satisfaction and customer happiness (Kim & Qu, 2020).

According to Nachmias, Mitsakis and Aravopoulou (2022), Social Exchange Theory is a cornerstone in understanding human interactions and relationships, rooted in the premise that individuals engage in social relationships to maximise rewards and minimise costs. At its core, the theory posits that people weigh the benefits and drawbacks of a relationship, and their decisions are guided by the perceived value of the outcomes they receive from it. Central to this theory is the concept of reciprocity—individuals aim to balance what they invest in a relationship and what they gain from it. This exchange occurs within various social contexts, from intimate relationships to professional interactions.

In intimate relationships, social exchange theory suggests that individuals evaluate the rewards and costs associated with their partner's actions. Rewards may include love, companionship, and support, while costs might entail sacrifices, conflicts, or emotional distress. People assess whether the benefits of staying in the relationship outweigh the drawbacks, and they adjust their behaviours accordingly. For instance, someone might invest more effort into a relationship if they perceive their partner's actions as highly rewarding, leading to a more profound commitment (Mirzaei & Esmaeilzadeh, 2021).

Social Exchange Theory is highly relevant to this study because it helps understand customer satisfaction and happiness with online purchases. This theory posits that individuals engage in social interactions based on the principle of maximising rewards and minimising costs. This theory can be applied to the relationship between customers and online retailers in online shopping. Social exchange theory emphasises the importance of trust in relationships. In online shopping, customers rely on trust signals such as positive reviews, brand reputation, secure payment methods, and transparent return policies. When customers trust the online retailer, they are more likely to engage in transactions with them, leading to higher satisfaction and happiness if the transaction meets or exceeds their expectations. Social exchange theory suggests that individuals feel a sense of obligation to reciprocate when they receive benefits from others. In the context of online shopping, this can manifest in various forms such as discounts, loyalty rewards, personalised recommendations, and excellent customer service.

### 2.2 Technology Acceptance Model Theory

The Technology Acceptance Model was introduced by Fred Davis in 1986. Technological system usability may significantly shape users' behaviour (Chen, Xu, & Arpan, 2017; Förster, 2024).

The Technology Acceptance Model is relevant to this study as it will assist e-business stores with prominent strategies to entice customers' attention and publicity. This study will give marketers and managers insight into the relationship between experiential marketing dimensions and customer e-satisfaction to achieve customer happiness in online purchases. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is a widely used framework for understanding users' acceptance of technology, particularly in the context of information systems and software. It primarily focuses on two key factors: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. These factors influence

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users' attitudes towards adopting and using a particular technology. When applied to the context of e-commerce and online purchases, TAM provides valuable insights into customers' satisfaction and happiness.

## 3. Conceptual Model & Hypothesis Development

The model visually depicted the causal relationships between the predictor variables, the mediator variable, and the outcome variable. Hypotheses were formulated based on this conceptual framework to guide the empirical investigation of the relationships between the constructs (see Figure 1).

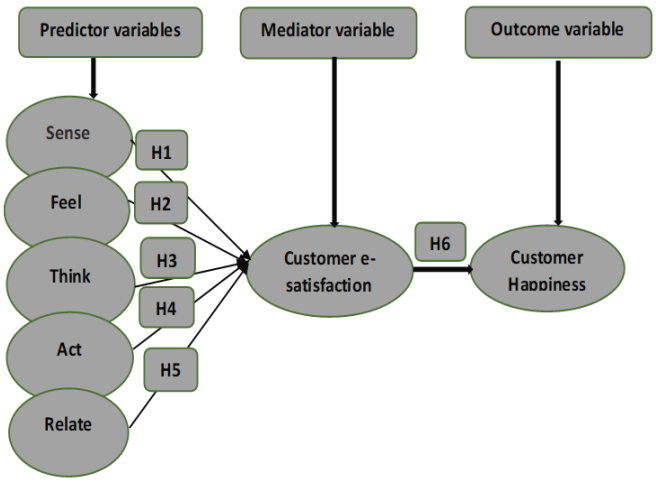



**Figure 1.** Conceptual model
*Source*: developed by the authors

### 3.1 Sense Experience and Customer E-Satisfaction

Sense experience refers to customers' overall sensory perception when interacting with a product, service, or brand. It encompasses sensory inputs such as sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste. When these sensory inputs are strategically designed and integrated into the customer experience, they can significantly impact customer e-satisfaction, or electronic satisfaction, which relates to customers' satisfaction with their online interactions and experiences. Sense experience plays a crucial role in shaping customers' e-satisfaction by enhancing the overall user experience, creating emotional connections, influencing perceptions of quality, and fostering engagement and advocacy. By strategically designing sensory experiences that align with their brand values and target audience preferences, companies can effectively increase customer satisfaction and drive loyalty in the digital realm (Foroudi, Melewar & Jin, 2024). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**$H_1$**. Sense experience has a negative relationship with customer e-satisfaction.

### 3.2 Feel Experience and Customer E-Satisfaction

Emotional marketing aims to evoke feelings and moods that align with the company's brand. Positive or negative emotions towards a product or service can significantly impact consumer behaviour. It involves using emotional triggers to influence consumer emotions, ranging from creating a cheerful mood to evoking strong feelings of joy and pride. The most impactful impressions often occur during initial contact with the product and can be reinforced over time. When customers feel appreciated and understood, they are more likely to develop brand loyalty (Kemp, Briggs & Anaza, 2020). Hence, it can be hypothesised that:

**$H_2$**. Feel experience has a positive relationship with customer e-satisfaction.

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### 3.3 Think Experience and Customer E-Satisfaction

Thinking is the experience that stimulates customers to be creative in developing a new idea or thinking about a company or its products. Think experiences are integral to customer e-satisfaction in the digital landscape. Businesses can create online environments that foster customer satisfaction and loyalty by prioritising user-friendly interfaces, personalisation, efficiency, effective communication, and consistency (Moodley & Buthelezi, 2023). These efforts not only enhance the overall customer experience but also contribute to long-term success in an increasingly competitive digital market. Hence.

**$H_3$.** Think experience has a positive relationship with customer e-satisfaction.

### 3.4 Act Experience and Customer E-Satisfaction

The act experience, which refers to customer interactions and engagements with a company or brand, plays a significant role in shaping customer satisfaction. Act experiences directly influence customer satisfaction by providing personalised, efficient, consistent, and engaging interactions, resolving issues effectively, fostering emotional connections, and demonstrating a commitment to continuous improvement. By prioritising the Act experience, companies can cultivate positive customer relationships and drive greater satisfaction and loyalty over time. Act experiences are pivotal in shaping customer satisfaction and fostering a positive relationship between consumers and businesses. Central to this relationship is the notion of personalised interactions. When companies tailor their engagements to suit individual customer preferences and needs, it communicates a profound sense of value and understanding. This personal touch goes a long way in cultivating satisfaction as customers feel acknowledged and appreciated in their interactions (Dash, Kiefer & Paul, 2021). Therefore, it can be hypothesised that:

**$H_4$.** Act experience has a positive relationship with customer e-satisfaction.

### 3.5 Relate Experience and Customer E-Satisfaction

Related experience among employees positively correlates with customer satisfaction by improving understanding, problem-solving capabilities, trust, service quality, communication, efficiency, and fostering long-term relationships. Investing in employee training and development to build relevant experience can yield significant returns in terms of customer satisfaction and loyalty. Related experience is pivotal in shaping customer satisfaction, acting as the bedrock upon which fruitful interactions are built. When employees possess relevant experience in their field, they inherently grasp the intricacies of customer needs and preferences (Brito, Félix & Mena, 2023). This understanding empowers them to navigate interactions with finesse, anticipating and addressing customer requirements precisely. Such adeptness fosters a sense of validation for the customer and elevates their overall satisfaction by aligning service delivery closely with their expectations. Hence:

**$H_5$.** Relate experience has a positive relationship with customer e-satisfaction.

### 3.6 Customer E-Satisfaction and Customer Happiness

E-satisfaction is a post-purchase measurement index that measures the state of consumer feelings about past purchases and shopping experiences. The measurement of consumer satisfaction level is risky because satisfaction with distribution services can influence consumers' decision to continue using them (Nisar, & Prabhakar, 2017). According to Schlauderer and Overhage (2019), consumer satisfaction is a response to the accumulation of shopping and consumption experiences made by consumers towards a brand. Customer e-satisfaction and happiness are closely intertwined. A positive online shopping experience, characterised by ease of use, meeting or exceeding expectations, perceived value, convenience, and loyalty, directly contributes to customer happiness. By prioritising these aspects of the online shopping journey, brands can enhance customer satisfaction and contribute to their overall happiness and well-being.

**$H_6$.** Customer e-satisfaction has a positive relationship with customer happiness.

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## 4. Methodology

There are various methodologies to choose from, depending on the nature of the study. However, this study is a quantitative study. The research method is a general approach and technique used to conduct a research study on a particular topic of interest (Sovacool, Axsen & Sorrell, 2018). Schaarschmidt and Morgan (2024) suggest that the choice of method varies depending on whether it is qualitative, quantitative, or mixed. This study will employ a positivist paradigm to achieve the objectives. The epistemological approach is likely to be positivist among the three philosophical elements of research: epistemology, axiology, and ontology. According to Mohsin, Ali, and Albayati (2024), positivism is closely associated with the characteristics and logic of the quantitative method. The positivist paradigm is selected because it gives the researcher independence and objectivity. Additionally, positivism allows for an objective analysis of facts and uses existing theories to formulate hypotheses. Moreover, variables can be investigated without the researcher's control or influence.

### 4.1 Data Collection Tool

The determining factor of the data collection tool that the researcher uses is the variables that this study aims to investigate. Preceded by the study's objectives, a fully structured self-administered questionnaire has been deemed the most suitable data collection tool. Primary data will be collected with the help of three assistants to speed up the process and ensure a positive response rate. The advantage of a questionnaire is that it reduces costs and guarantees anonymity (Al Saied & Alkhoraif, 2024).

### 4.2 Population and Sampling

According to Yuan et al. (2024), it is affirmed that the population is crucial as it delineates the scope and boundaries of the study. In this research study, the population comprises 3000 customers who engage in online purchases. These individuals are drawn from e-business stores' official websites, such as Facebook. The assumption underlying this population selection is that virtually everyone who purchases online will likely have a social media account, such as Facebook. Social media platforms like Facebook are widely utilised for various purposes, including connecting with brands and businesses, browsing products, and making purchases. Therefore, targeting customers who use online purchase platforms and are active on social media allows the researcher to access a sizable and relevant population for the study. By selecting this population, the researcher aims to capture a representative sample of individuals actively involved in online purchases, thereby ensuring the applicability and generalizability of the study findings to the broader population of online shoppers.

The literature distinguishes between two main types of sampling methods: probability sampling and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling, as defined by Fakih et al. (2023), involves selecting samples from a large population using methods grounded in probability theory. This approach ensures that each member of the population has a known and non-zero chance of being selected for the sample.

In this study, a simple random sampling method was adopted, which falls under the category of probability sampling. In simple random sampling, each member of the population has an equal chance of being selected for the sample. As described, simple random sampling is a probability sampling method where the selection process is independent of any individual characteristics, such as age, gender, employment status, or location. In this study, questionnaires were distributed to available and willing participants at various locations, including King Sabatha Dalindyebo local municipality, Walter Sisulu University Zamukulungisa site & NMD site, and Mthatha. This sampling approach was chosen for its practicality and convenience in accessing participants within the study's context.

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### 4.3 Data Analysis

Accordingly, quantitative data was collected from 300 customers who purchased goods and services online using a questionnaire. Composite reliability was employed to evaluate the measurement scale and confirm the internal consistency and reliability of the instrument used in the study. According to Sovey, Osman and Mohd-Matore (2022) the composite reliability value should be greater than 0.6, then the instruments are reliable. In this study, Smart PLS was used to compute composite reliability, and the results depict that all variables meet the acceptable threshold of 0.6. Hence, all the measurement instruments used in this study are deemed reliable.

**Table 1.** Reliability test results
Cronbach Alpha and Composite Reliability

| | **Cronbach's alpha** | **Composite reliability (rho_a)** |
|---|---|---|
| Act experience | 0.897 | 0.899 |
| Customer e-satisfaction | 0.908 | 0.909 |
| Customer happiness | 0.894 | 0.898 |
| Feel experience | 0.852 | 0.862 |
| Relate experience | 0.869 | 0.871 |
| Sense experience | 0.726 | 0.808 |
| Think experience | 0.839 | 0.843 |

Note: SE = Sense Experience; FE = Feel Experience; TE = Think Experience, AE= Act Experience, RE= Relate Experience, CS = Customer E-satisfaction and CH = Customer Happiness. Table 1 presents Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (rhoa) values for different constructs in a study. Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability are both measures of internal consistency reliability, which assess the extent to which the items within each construct consistently measure the same underlying concept. Across all constructs, both Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability consistently surpass 0.7, indicating robust internal consistency reliability. Specifically, act experience, Customer e-satisfaction, and Customer happiness exhibit high reliability, with Cronbach's alpha values of 0.897, 0.908, and 0.894, respectively, and corresponding composite reliability values of 0.899, 0.909, and 0.898. The sense experience construct shows a slightly lower Cronbach's alpha at 0.726 but maintains a reasonable composite reliability of 0.808. The remaining constructs, feel experience, relate experience, and Think experience, demonstrate reliability ranging from 0.839 to 0.852 for Cronbach's alpha and from 0.862 to 0.871 for composite reliability. Overall, these findings affirm the reliability of the measurement instruments utilised across various constructs in the study, facilitating robust data interpretation and analysis.

**Table 2**. Validity test results
Average variance extracted

| | Cronbach's alpha | Composite reliability (rho_a) | Composite reliability (rho_c) | Average variance extracted (AVE) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **AE** | 0.897 | 0.899 | 0.929 | 0.765 |
| **CH** | 0.894 | 0.898 | 0.919 | 0.654 |
| **CS** | 0.908 | 0.909 | 0.927 | 0.646 |
| **FE** | 0.852 | 0.862 | 0.901 | 0.696 |
| **RE** | 0.869 | 0.871 | 0.911 | 0.719 |
| **SE** | 0.726 | 0.808 | 0.844 | 0.649 |
| **TE** | 0.839 | 0.843 | 0.892 | 0.675 |

*Note*: SE = Sense Experience; FE = Feel Experience; TE = Think Experience, AE= Act Experience, RE= Relate Experience, CS = Customer E-satisfaction and CH = Customer Happiness.

The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values provided indicate the average amount of variance captured by each latent construct in a structural equation model. Typically, AVE values above 0.5 are considered acceptable, indicating that the constructs explain more than 50% of the variance in their respective observed variables and suggesting good convergent validity. In these findings, all the AVE values surpass the threshold, ranging from 0.646 to 0.765, indicating that each latent construct explains a substantial proportion of the variance in its

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indicators. This suggests that the measurement model is reliable and that the constructs are adequately represented by their indicators, contributing to the overall validity of the structural equation model.

**Table 3**. Model fit

| | **Saturated model** | **Estimated model** |
|---|---|---|
| SRMR | 0.060 | 0.065 |
| d_ULS | 1.923 | 2.231 |
| d_G | 0.874 | 0.897 |
| Chi-square | 1401.776 | 1427.739 |
| NFI | 0.794 | 0.790 |

Table 3 compares the fit indices of a saturated model with those of an estimated model. Fit indices are used to evaluate how well a model fits the observed data. The first row presents the Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), which measures the average discrepancy between the observed and model-implied covariance matrices. In the saturated model, the SRMR is 0.060, while in the estimated model, it is slightly higher at 0.065. The second row displays the Normed Fit Index (NFI), which assesses the relative fit of the model compared to a null model. Both models have similar NFI values, with the saturated model at 0.794 and the estimated model at 0.790. Overall, while the fit indices between the two models are quite close, indicating relatively good model fit, slight differences are observed, particularly in the SRMR values, suggesting potential variations in model fit between the saturated and estimated models.

### 4.4 Structural Model Assessment – Hypotheses Testing

Once the proposed measurement and structural model have been rigorously assessed and refined, the subsequent step involves delving into the causal relationships between latent variables using path analysis. This statistical method allows researchers to scrutinise the connections between variables, both direct and indirect, within a structural equation model framework. The process entails specifying a theoretical model that elucidates the hypothesised relationships among latent variables and their observed indicators. Following data preparation and model estimation, researchers evaluate the model's fit to the data using various indices and statistical tests. Interpreting the results involves discerning the strength and significance of the estimated paths, thereby elucidating the underlying causal mechanisms in the research domain.

According to Rodríguez & Ferreira (2024), SEM assumes that latent variables directly or indirectly influence other latent variables in the model, resulting in estimation results that explain how these latent variables are related. Table 4 below shows the estimated results of hypothesis testing in the present study. Figure 2 summarises the proposed hypotheses, path coefficients, t-statistics, and whether a hypothesis is accepted or rejected. According to the literature, higher path coefficients indicate strong relationships between latent variables and $t > 1.96$, which is a measure of the significance of the relationship (Purwitasari & Purnomo, 2023; da Silva et al., 2024).

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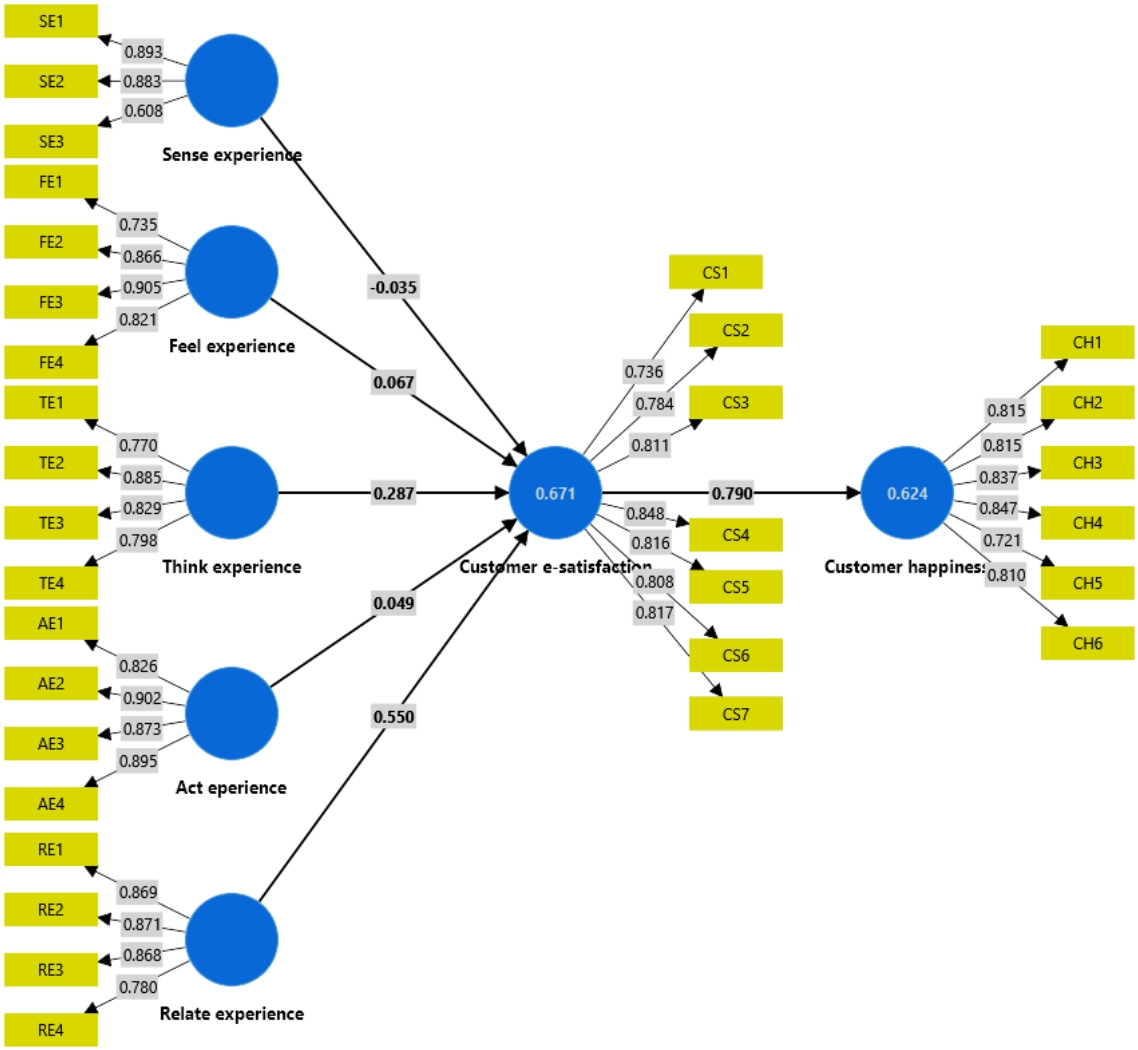



**Figure 2.** Structural Model

*Note*: SE = Sense Experience; FE = Feel Experience; TE = Think Experience, AE= Act Experience, RE= Relate Experience, CS = Customer E-satisfaction and CH = Customer Happiness

The individual path coefficients of H1, H2, H3, H4, H5 and H6 were -0.035; 0.067, 0.287, 0.049, 0.55 and 0.79, respectively. These results generally indicate that some hypothetical relationships have a positive association while H1 has a negative association with H5. Notably, the negative association between SE and CS (H1) contrasts with the positive associations observed in other relationships, highlighting the nuanced impact of different factors on customer satisfaction within the structural model. Similarly, to obtain and validate the directed dependencies among the variables, a Path Analysis was conducted as shown in Table 4 below.

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**Table 4**. Path Analysis Results

| Hypothesised relationship | Hypotheses | Path Co-efficient | T- statistics | P-value | Outcome |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SE → CS | H1 | -0.035 | 0.700 | 0.484 | Insignificant &not supported |
| FE → CS | H2 | 0.067 | 1.008 | 0.314 | Insignificant &not supported |
| TE → CS | H3 | 0.287 | 3.449 | 0.001 | Significant & supported |
| AE → CS | H4 | 0.049 | 0.722 | 0.47 | Insignificant &not supported |
| RE → CS | H5 | 0.55 | 9.049 | 0.00 | Significant & supported |
| CS → CH | H6 | 0.790 | 26.66 | 0.00 | Significant & supported |

*Note:* SE = Sense Experience; FE = Feel Experience; TE = Think Experience, AE= Act Experience, RE= Relate Experience, CS = Customer E-satisfaction and CH = Customer Happiness

This table outlines the hypothesised relationships, path coefficients, t-statistics, p-values, and outcomes for a series of hypotheses tested in a research study. Each row represents a different hypothesis, with the independent variable listed first, followed by the dependent variable (e.g., SE CS represents the relationship between Sense experience and Customer satisfaction). The path coefficients quantify the strength and direction of the relationship between variables. In this analysis, the hypothesis regarding the relationship between Sense experience and Customer satisfaction (H1) shows a path coefficient of -0.035, with a t-statistic of 0.7 and a p-value of 0.484, indicating an insignificant and unsupported relationship. Similarly, the hypotheses concerning Feel experience (H2) and Act experience (H4) also yield insignificant and unsupported results. However, hypotheses related to Think experience (H3), Relate experience (H5), and Customer satisfaction leading to Customer happiness (H6) exhibit significant and supported relationships, as evidenced by their respective path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values. For instance, H5 shows a strong path coefficient of 0.55, with a high t-statistic of 9.049 and a very low p-value of 0.00, indicating a significant and supported relationship between Relate experience and Customer satisfaction.

## 4. Results

*Results after $H_1$ test*

The results obtained after the H1 test confirmed a correlation between data sense experience and the customer's e-satisfaction with online service. After testing H1, a course coefficient of -0.035 was obtained. This indicates that sense experience (SE) has a negative influence on Customer E-satisfaction (CS). Furthermore, the results show that the relationship between sense experience is nonsignificant and positively correlated (t=0.7, p=0.484). The study revealed a negative association between sense experience and customer e-satisfaction in the context of online purchases. This indicates that as sense experience increases, customer e-satisfaction with online purchases tends to decrease. In other words, a greater emphasis on sense experiences, such as sensory aspects of products or the shopping environment, is associated with lower customer satisfaction with their online shopping experience.

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*Results after $H_2$ test*
The results obtained after testing H2 confirmed that there is a relationship between feel and customer e-satisfaction. After testing H2, a course coefficient of 0.067 was obtained. This indicates that feeling experience positively influences customer e-satisfaction (CS). Furthermore, the results show that the feeling experience is significantly positively correlated (t=1.008, p=0.314). This means that the observed correlation between the variables is not likely due to random chance, providing evidence for a genuine relationship. These findings highlighted the importance of providing customers with a positive Feel Experience when using online services, which can significantly contribute to their overall satisfaction. It may be beneficial for service providers to focus on enhancing the emotional and affective aspects of their online services.

*Results after $H_3$ test*
The results obtained after testing H3 confirmed the relationship between think experience and customer e-satisfaction. After testing H3, a path coefficient of 0.287 was obtained. This indicates that think experience (TE) positively impacts customer e-satisfaction (CS). Moreover, the results show that the relationship between website design is significantly positively correlated (t = 3.449, p = 0.001).

*Results after $H_4$ test*
The results obtained after the H4 test confirmed a correlation between the act experience and customer e-satisfaction. After testing H4, a path coefficient of 0.049 was obtained. This indicates that the act experience positively impacts customer e-satisfaction (CS). Moreover, the results show that the relationship between the overall quality of online services is significantly positively correlated (t=0.722, p=0.47).

*Results after $H_5$ test*
The results obtained after the $H_5$ test confirmed a correlation between the related experience and customer e-satisfaction. After testing $H_5$, a path coefficient of 0.55 was obtained. This indicates that the relate experience positively impacts customer e-satisfaction (CS). Moreover, the results show that the relate experience relationship is significantly positively correlated (t = 9.049, p = 0.000).

*Results after $H_6$ test*
The results obtained after the $H_6$ test confirmed a correlation between customer e-satisfaction and customer happiness. After testing $H_6$, a path coefficient of 0.0.79 was obtained. This indicates that customer e-satisfaction positively impacts customer happiness (CH). Moreover, the results show that the related experience relationship is significantly positively correlated (t = 26.66, p = 0.000).

## Conclusions

The findings of this study present a nuanced understanding of how different dimensions of customer experience—sense, feel, think, act, and relate—impact e-satisfaction in online environments, and how this satisfaction ultimately drives customer happiness. Notably, sense experience (H1) demonstrated a negative and statistically nonsignificant influence on e-satisfaction (coefficient = -0.035, p = 0.484). This suggests that trying to recreate sensory elements in a digital context—such as visuals, audio, or simulated tactile features—may not effectively contribute to customer satisfaction and may even have a counterproductive effect. The online medium inherently lacks physical interaction; therefore, sensory experience alone is not a reliable driver of satisfaction in e-commerce.

In contrast, the feel (H2), think (H3), act (H4), and relate (H5) experiences all had positive impacts on customer e-satisfaction, with the relate and think dimensions emerging as particularly influential. The relate experience, which involves fostering personal identity, connection, and social belonging, exhibited the strongest positive correlation (coefficient = 0.55, p = 0.000), suggesting that customers highly value online experiences that help

them feel connected to others or reflect their values. Similarly, the think experience (coefficient = 0.287, p = 0.001) highlights the importance of intellectually engaging content—such as innovative design or problem-solving features—in enhancing satisfaction. Although the feel and act experiences were positively related to e-satisfaction, their influence was weaker and statistically nonsignificant, indicating that emotional and behavioural engagement still matter but may not be as critical in isolation.

Most importantly, the final hypothesis (H6) revealed a strong and statistically significant relationship between customer e-satisfaction and customer happiness (coefficient = 0.79, p = 0.000). This affirms that improving customer satisfaction enhances transactional success and contributes to the customer's broader emotional state and long-term loyalty. When customers are satisfied with their online shopping experiences—particularly through cognitive stimulation and meaningful connections—they are more likely to feel happier overall. This reinforces the strategic value of focusing on customer experience design not just as a tool for sales conversion, but as a foundational component of long-term brand affinity and emotional engagement.

Therefore, businesses must address consumer concerns and build trust, particularly for those who may be hesitant about online purchases. This can be achieved by ensuring strong security protocols, offering clear and straightforward return policies, and creating user-friendly websites. Including customer reviews, ratings, and other forms of social proof can also alleviate potential doubts and contribute to a more favourable brand image. As customer happiness is deeply tied to the sense of trust and value they experience during the purchase process, businesses must make their online platforms visually appealing but also secure, functional, and transparent.

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**Author Contributions**: the authors contributed equally. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

**Lucas VUKETHWELE**, Mr.
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0009-0000-3879-0181

**Siphenathi FIHLA**, Dr.
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9632-2650

**Richard CHINOMONA**, Prof.
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6967-0390

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