

武汉理工大学

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坦桑尼亚电信部门中的投诉管理和 客户满意度研究

Study of Complaint Management
and Customer Satisfaction in
Tanzania's Telecom Sector

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坦桑尼亚电信部门中的投诉管理和客户满意度研究

数字化时代背景下，服务失败场景中的投诉管理实践是企业经营发展的关键难题，相关研究仍存在诸多空白，这一问题在新兴市场中表现得尤为突出。相较于开拓新客户，维系存量顾客的成本更低、效益更优，高效的投诉处理不再是单一的基础性服务工作，而是支撑企业长效发展的重要战略举措。现有实证研究尚未充分厘清投诉管理具体实践在投诉解决过程中对顾客满意度的作用机制，相关实践主要涵盖服务质量控制、网红社交媒体营销、顾客反馈利用与组织透明度建设等核心维度。

本研究通过系统梳理国内外相关文献，进一步拓展服务补救理论的研究边界。服务补救理论指出，科学完善的投诉解决机制可使顾客满意度恢复并超越服务失误未发生前的水平。区别于传统线性研究模型，本研究构建了非线性作用机制，明确投诉管理实践可通过信任这一心理机制与顾客敏感性这一行为机制，间接作用于顾客满意度。为系统探究各变量间的动态关联，本研究采用序贯研究设计开展实证分析。研究一以坦桑尼亚电信行业为调研场景，通过对行业顾客、客服人员及管理者开展定性访谈，提炼当前行业主流的投诉管理实践，并依托Braun和Clarke提出的主题分析法完成数据编码与分析工作。研究二基于前述研究成果，以562名调研对象的有效数据为基础，开展大样本定量分析。

本研究以刺激有机体反应框架（S-O-R）为核心定量建模依据，将服务质量控制、透明化组织文化、顾客反馈利用及社交媒体网红介入界定为外部刺激因素，剖析各类刺激因素对顾客信任、顾客行为敏感性等内在心理与行为状态的影响。研究依托顾客关系管理理论确立信任的核心中介作用，借助服务补救悖论阐释服务失误的负面体验向积极消费结果转化的内在逻辑，同时基于消费者行为理论明确顾客行为敏感性的调节作用，整合多理论视角构建出衔接管理实践、顾客心理过程与消费行为结果的一体化分析框架。

结构方程模型实证结果显示，四类投诉管理实践均对顾客满意度产生显著正向影响。中介效应检验证实，顾客信任在投诉管理实践转化为顾客满意度的

过程中承担核心中介载体职能。调节效应检验表明，顾客行为敏感性能够显著调控社交媒体网红应用、组织透明度与顾客满意度之间的关联关系。协方差结构方程模型分析、内生性检验及敏感性分析共同验证了本研究实证结果的稳健性。

本研究从理论层面完善了服务补救与投诉管理领域的研究体系，形成三项核心学术贡献。首先，研究引入中介与调节双重作用机制，优化升级传统服务补救研究框架，有效揭示数字化传播环境下顾客消费反应的复杂性与非线性特征，突破了单一直接效应研究的局限。其次，本研究将社交媒体网红营销纳入投诉管理战略研究范畴，弥补现有学术研究的短板，重新界定网红主体在数字场景中的价值，证实其可作为可信参与主体塑造顾客认知、培育顾客信任、优化服务补救效果。最后，研究立足新兴市场电信行业特色情境构建综合性分析模型，为阐释新兴市场环境下投诉管理领域的行为特征、技术逻辑与结构动态关系提供了贴合现实的研究框架。

在实践层面，本研究结合重要性绩效地图分析、优先级矩阵分析与成本收益分析，构建了一套科学化、流程化、证据化的投诉管理战略决策体系。该体系能够帮助企业管理者摒弃经验化、直觉化的被动投诉应对模式，依据核心影响要素完成资源的系统性精准配置。实证结果表明，社交媒体网红营销是提升顾客满意度的核心驱动因素，但当前企业对该管理路径的优化与应用仍存在明显不足，针对性投入该领域可实现低资源投入、高服务成效的运营目标。组织透明度是培育顾客信任、规整顾客期望的基础性战略支撑，服务质量控制则是规避服务失误、保障企业运营稳定的核心保障。本研究证实，投诉管理成效并非取决于单一管理举措的落地实施，而是依托科学的优先级排序与规范化实施流程实现整体提升，其中网红驱动的投诉管理策略具备极大的挖掘潜力，是未来企业优化投诉管理体系、提升顾客满意度的核心突破口。

关键词：投诉管理, 消费者满意度, 社交媒体意见领袖, 消费者反馈利用, 信任

Study of Complaint Management and Customer Satisfaction in Tanzania's Telecom Sector

Complaints management practices during service failures remain a critical yet underexplored challenge in today's digital era, particularly in emerging markets. This concern is consequential because retaining an existing customer is far less costly than acquiring a new one, making effective complaints handling not just a service task but a strategic necessity. Despite its importance, limited empirical attention has been given to how specific complaints management practice namely service quality control, social media influencer utilization, customer feedback utilization, and organizational transparency shape customer satisfaction during complaint resolution.

Drawing on an extensive review of the literature, this study advances the service recovery paradox, which posits that effective complaint resolution can lead to higher customer satisfaction than if no failure had occurred. Moving beyond traditional linear models, this study proposes that complaints management practices influence satisfaction indirectly through psychological (trust) and behavioral (customer sensitivity) mechanisms. To examine these dynamics, a comprehensive sequential design is employed. Study 1 involves qualitative interviews with customers, Customer Service Representatives, and managers in Tanzania's telecom sector to identify prevailing complaint management practices, analyzed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis. Study 2 builds on these insights through a quantitative investigation based on data from 562 respondents.

Grounded in the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) framework, the quantitative model in Study 2 conceptualized service quality control (SQC), transparent organizational culture (OCC), customer feedback utilization (CFU), and social media influencer engagement (SMI) as stimuli that elicited organismic responses in the form of customer trust and behavioral sensitivity. Customer Relationship Management (CRM) theory underpinned the positioning of trust as a central mediating mechanism, while the service recovery paradox explained how effective complaint handling transformed negative experiences into positive outcomes. Consumer behavior theory further elucidated the moderating role of behavioral sensitivity in shaping these relationships. Collectively, these

theoretical perspectives provided an integrated framework linking managerial practices, psychological processes, and behavioral outcomes.

Using SmartPLS 4, the PLS-SEM results indicate that all four complaints management practices significantly influence customer satisfaction. Mediation analysis confirms that trust in the company plays a central role in translating these practices into satisfaction outcomes, while moderation analysis reveals that customer behavioral sensitivity significantly conditions the effects of social media influencer utilization and organizational transparency. These findings are robust, as confirmed through covariance-based SEM, endogeneity testing, and sensitivity analyses.

The study makes three key theoretical contributions that advance the service recovery and complaint management literature. First, it extends the service recovery framework by incorporating mediating and moderating mechanisms, thereby capturing the complex, non-linear nature of customer responses in digitally mediated environments and moving beyond simplistic direct-effect explanations. Second, it introduces social media influencer utilization as a strategic dimension of complaint management, filling a notable gap in the literature by repositioning influencers as credible actors who shape trust, perception, and recovery outcomes in the digital space. Third, it develops a comprehensive, contextually grounded model tailored to emerging market telecom sectors, offering a more realistic framework that reflects the unique behavioral, technological, and structural dynamics of these environments.

From a practical perspective, the findings provide a sequenced, evidence-based framework for strategic decision-making in complaint management, grounded in Importance–Performance Map Analysis (IPMA), a priority matrix, and cost–benefit evaluation. This structured approach enables managers to shift from intuitive responses to a systematic allocation of resources across key complaint management levers. Social media influencer utilization emerges as the most impactful yet under-optimized driver of customer satisfaction, indicating that targeted investment in this area can yield substantial improvements with relatively efficient resource use. Organizational transparency follows as a foundational strategic pillar for strengthening trust and aligning customer expectations, while service quality control remains essential for ensuring consistent operational reliability and preventing service failures. Collectively, the study highlights that complaint management effectiveness depends on prioritization and sequencing rather than isolated

actions, with influencer-driven strategies offering the greatest untapped potential within a broader, evidence-based framework for enhancing trust and satisfaction outcomes

Keywords Complaints Management, Customer Satisfaction, Social Media Influencers, Customer Feedback Utilization

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List Acronyms and Abbreviations

AVE	Average Variance Extracted
CRM	Customer Relationship Management
CBS	Customer Behavior Sensitivity
CFU	Customer Feedback Utilization
CSR	Customer Service Representatives
HTMT	Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio
IPT	Information Processing Theory
ISO	International Standards Organization
SERVPERF	service performance
SERVQUAL	service quality
SQC	Service Quality in Complaints
SMI	Social Media Influencer
SOR	Stimulus Response Organism
SEM-PLS	Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). Partial Least Squares
TCRA	Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor

Chapter 1 Introduction

This chapter provides a background of the research problem, outlines the study's objectives of examining complaints management and customer satisfaction in Tanzania's telecom sector. It reviews the historical foundations, then summarizes the methodology of two studies: a qualitative exploration of practices and a quantitative analysis of their effects on satisfaction and trust.

1.1. Research Background, Objective and Significance

1.1.1. Research Background

The telecommunications industry in Tanzania has transformed from an underdeveloped sector into one of the country's most dynamic and rapidly growing industries [1,2,3]. This growth is driven by technological advances, increased investment, regulatory reforms, and a growing middle class demanding mobile and internet services [4,5]. The liberalization of the telecom sector in the early 2000s allowed private sector entry, fostering competition, innovation, and rapid expansion [1]. Major operators such as Vodacom, Airtel, Tigo, TTCL, and Halotel now serve millions of subscribers.

According to the Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority (TCRA), mobile phone subscriptions surpassed 50 million by the end of 2023, with a penetration rate exceeding 80% [1,5,7]. This growth has significantly reshaped how Tanzanians communicate, access information, and conduct business. However, despite impressive expansion, the sector still grapples with systemic challenges such as network unreliability, frequent outages, billing discrepancies, and inadequate customer service [2,5,8]. These persistent issues highlight a critical tension between rapid growth and service quality maintenance, suggesting a need for more nuanced and effective complaint management strategies.

While previous studies have emphasized on sector growth and other broad challenges, there remains a gap in understanding the contextual effectiveness of complaint management practices tailored to the Tanzanian telecom environment [1]. This research thus addresses this gap by exploring how complaint management not only

resolves individual grievances but also shapes overall customer satisfaction and loyalty in a competitive, resource-constrained context.

The Strategic Significance of Complaint Management is agreed by majority of researchers. Complaint management is a critical component of customer relationship management (CRM), encompassing the processes organizations use to handle complaints effectively. As literature [5] emphasizes, effective service recovery plays a central role in sustaining long-term customer relationships and enhancing perceived service quality. These processes include stages such as receipt, recording, analysis, and resolution, all aimed at satisfying customers and enhancing service quality [2,7,11,12]. The literature consistently underscores several benefits of effective complaint management. One key benefit is customer retention, as promptly addressing complaints helps prevent customer churn, which is especially vital in the highly competitive telecom market. It is well-established that the cost of acquiring new customers far exceeds the expenses associated with retaining existing ones [2,7]. Additionally, loyal customers often contribute to positive word-of-mouth, thereby strengthening the brand's reputation [2,3]. However, while this notion is widely accepted, it requires critical examination within the Tanzanian context, where socio-economic factors and cultural perceptions may influence loyalty dynamics differently compared to developed markets.

Another major benefit is service improvement; analyzing complaints provides valuable insights into service deficiencies, enabling telecom companies to implement corrective actions [15,26]. Beyond reactive fixes, effective complaint management fosters proactive refinement of service delivery, innovation in customer support mechanisms, and strategic decision-making [13,16,25]. Despite this, the extent to which Tanzanian telecom operators utilize complaint data analytically remains underexplored, indicating a need for further investigation into organizational capabilities and barriers.

Furthermore, complaint management facilitates strategic resource allocation through data-driven approaches that help prioritize investments in technology and human resources based on actual customer needs [25]. For example, complaints regarding network coverage can guide infrastructure expansion. While this is

theoretically sound, practical challenges such as regulatory constraints and funding limitations must be critically assessed to understand their real-world impact on service enhancement.

By embedding complaint management within broader CRM and strategic frameworks, this study aims to critically examine not only the processes themselves but also the contextual factors that shape their effectiveness, thereby offering deeper insights that extend beyond conventional benefits.

Similarly, customer complaints and satisfaction in the telecom sector is an area of great interest in Tanzania telecom sector due to the stiff competition in the sector with companies like Vodacom, Tigo, Halotel, Airtel and TTCL competing for market share. Customer satisfaction is a key indicator of organizational success, reflecting the degree to which services meet or exceed customer expectations [4]. In telecom, satisfaction is influenced by network quality, pricing, customer service, and complaint handling. Numerous studies link satisfaction to increased loyalty and profitability [5,6]. However, many studies assume a linear relationship between service quality and satisfaction without fully considering mediating variables like trust, customer expectations shaped by socio-cultural factors, or the role of digital literacy factors particularly relevant in emerging markets like Tanzania. This study responds to such research gaps by incorporating local contextual factors and examining how complaint management intersects with these broader determinants to affect customer satisfaction uniquely in Tanzania's telecom landscape.

Network quality remains fundamental to customer satisfaction [5]. Reliable coverage, fast data speeds, and minimal interruptions are essential in today's connected world [1,26,28]. Tanzanian customers frequently encounter issues such as dropped calls and inconsistent rural coverage [26], directly impacting satisfaction and loyalty [1,3,5,7,11]. However, investments in infrastructure and technologies like 5G and fiber optics promise improvements [16,26,29]. Additionally, AI-driven predictive maintenance and transparent communication during outages are highlighted as best practices globally [25,32,38]. Moreover, critical reflection is required on whether these technological and communication strategies are sufficiently adapted to local infrastructure realities, socio-economic disparities, and customer digital literacy levels

in Tanzania. For instance, does the focus on advanced technologies inadvertently neglect rural or low-income populations, potentially exacerbating digital divides and dissatisfaction.

Competitive pricing also significantly influences satisfaction [8,45]. Price sensitivity in Tanzania necessitates balancing affordability with service quality [14]. Transparent pricing and fair billing build trust, while promotional packages enhance value [8,16,48]. Flexible, tiered pricing models help meet diverse customer needs [8]. Yet, there is limited research exploring how perceptions of pricing fairness interact with trust and complaint management effectiveness in this market.

This highlights the strategic need for telecom providers to prioritize early customer touchpoints to build trust and positive perceptions from the outset. Strengthening these initial interactions can shape customers' expectations, influence how they interpret service failures, and ultimately determine their satisfaction with complaint resolution processes. By integrating trust-building practices into early engagement telecom operators can create a stronger foundation for managing complaints effectively and enhancing overall customer satisfaction in the Tanzanian context

1.1.2. Statement of the Problem

The landscape of complaints management has undergone profound transformation due to the rapid proliferation of multichannel communication and the amplified role of social media and influencers in shaping customer interactions [36, 46, 59]. Despite extensive literature on complaint management strategies, there is a pronounced paucity of empirical research examining how these contemporary practices specifically impact customer satisfaction with complaint resolution, especially within emerging markets such as Africa [41,73,91]. This gap is particularly critical given that prevailing theoretical models and empirical findings largely derive from developed economies, thereby neglecting the unique socio-economic, cultural, and infrastructural contexts that characterize African markets [29]. Such contextual voids undermine the generalizability and applicability of existing complaint management frameworks.

Within this global context, the African telecom sector and Tanzania in particular represents a compelling and timely setting for investigation. The sector is distinguished by a demographic profile dominated by a youthful, digitally literate population and an

expanding middle class with increasing expectations for service quality, responsiveness, and innovation [14,17,23]. Concurrently, this sector is experiencing rapid regulatory reforms designed to foster competitive markets and enhance consumer protections [25–28]. Yet, there remains limited scholarly attention devoted to how complaint management practices such as transparent organizational culture, strategic engagement of social media influencers, and customer feedback utilization affect critical mediators like customer trust and consumer behavioral sensitivity, which in turn influence overall customer satisfaction in these dynamic environments [1,15, 20, 25].

The Service Recovery Paradox (SRP) suggests that effective handling of service failures can make customers more satisfied than if no failure had occurred[42]. In the context of complaint management, practices like effective service quality control, effective customer feedback utilization, a transparent organizational culture, and effective social media influencer engagement during complaints management act as recovery mechanisms which influence satisfaction. Therefore, by resolving issues fairly, promptly, and empathetically, these practices enhance perceived fairness, build trust, and generate positive emotions, all of which increase customer satisfaction. SRP thus explains why well-executed complaint management can turn negative experiences into opportunities for higher satisfaction.

Using the Stimulus Organism Response theory, Service Recovery, Consumer behavior and Customer relationship management theory this study addresses critical shortcomings that are in extant literature. The current study adopts a rigorous sequential mixed-methods approach, beginning with qualitative inquiry to elucidate context-specific complaint management nuances, followed by a quantitative study employing Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to statistically model and validate the complex interrelations among complaint management practices, trust, behavioral sensitivity, customer satisfaction [12,30,32,37]. This methodological strategy enriches theoretical understanding and also enhances empirical robustness and contextual relevance.

Ultimately, by extending complaint management frameworks to account for emerging market specificities and integrating cognitive psychological insights, this research aspires to provide theoretically grounded and actionable knowledge. Such insights are vital for telecom operators seeking to refine customer-centric strategies,

optimize complaint resolution effectiveness, and secure competitive advantage within Africa's rapidly evolving telecommunications landscape [6, 9, 10, 11,13].

1.1.3. Research Objectives

The general objective is to study the Complaint Management practices and their influence in Customer Satisfaction. The objectives are systematically structured to progress from the exploration of complaint management practices, to examining direct effects, followed by the analysis of mediation and moderation roles. Hence, Specifically, the study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

Objective 1: To explore the complaints management practices that influence customer satisfaction

Objective 2: To study the influence of complaints management practices on customer satisfaction

Objective 3: To study the influence of complaints management practices on customer trust in company

Objective 4: To study the influence of trust in company on customer satisfaction

Objective 5: To investigate the mediating role of 'trust in the company' between customer complaints management practices and customer satisfaction.

Objective 6: To examine the moderating effect of 'customer behavior sensitivity' on the relationship between customer complaints management practices and customer satisfaction.

1.1.4. Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study focus on exploring the multifaceted dynamics of complaint management practices within the telecommunications sector, particularly in the context of Tanzania. Specifically, the study poses the following research questions

Research Question 1: What are the complaints management practices that influence customer satisfaction?

Research Question 2: How do complaints management practices impact customer satisfaction?

Research Question 3: How do complaints management practices influence customer trust in the company?

Research Question 4: What is the impact of trust in the company on customer satisfaction?

Research Question 5: To what extent does 'trust in the company' mediate the relationship between complaints management practices and customer satisfaction?

Research Question 6: How does 'customer behavior sensitivity' moderate the relationship between complaints management practices and customer satisfaction?

1.1.5. Research Significance

This study aimed to investigate the complaint management practices and its influence on customer satisfaction in Tanzania's Telecom Sector holds substantial significance in both academic and practical domains, aiming to delve into critical aspects of telecom service management that impact customer perceptions, trust, and satisfaction. This section explores the overarching significance of this research endeavor, highlighting its potential contributions to knowledge, industry practices, and societal implications.

The academic contribution of this study lies in its ability to address critical gaps in the existing literature on complaints management and customer satisfaction within the telecom sector, particularly in the context of Tanzania, where comprehensive empirical evidence remains limited. By providing context-specific insights, the study deepens understanding of how complaints management practices shape customer satisfaction within Tanzania's unique socio-economic and regulatory environment. The research further enriches theoretical discourse by integrating the Stimulus–Organism–Response Model, Service Recovery Theory, Consumer Behavior Theory, and Customer Relationship Management to explain the complex interplay between complaints management practices, customer trust, consumer behavior sensitivity, and customer satisfaction. Through a mixed-methods approach, the study advances theoretical and empirical understanding in the fields of customer satisfaction, service management, and organizational behavior. Moreover, while extant literature largely emphasizes the direct influence of complaints management practices on customer satisfaction, this study makes a significant contribution by demonstrating the mediating role of customer trust and the

moderating role of consumer behavior sensitivity, thereby addressing important dimensions that have been insufficiently explored in prior research.

From a practical perspective, the study provides valuable insights for telecom operators, industry stakeholders, policymakers, and regulators in Tanzania by identifying the key drivers of customer satisfaction within complaints management practices. The findings offer a strategic foundation for refining complaints management systems to improve service delivery, strengthen customer retention, and support sustainable business growth. By emphasizing the importance of service quality improvement, effective utilization of customer feedback, engagement with social media influencers, and the promotion of transparent organizational cultures, the study demonstrates how telecom companies can enhance customer experiences, build loyalty, and encourage positive word-of-mouth. In addition, the findings provide evidence-based insights that can support policymakers and regulators in evaluating and strengthening existing telecom regulations, particularly in areas related to consumer protection, service standards, and fair competition, thereby contributing to the development of a more responsive and competitive telecom sector.

From a societal perspective, the study contributes to empowering telecom consumers in Tanzania by advocating for improved service standards, transparent communication, and customer-centered complaints management practices that enhance customer satisfaction and trust. By encouraging telecom companies to become more responsive and accountable to consumer needs, the research supports the development of a more informed, confident, and satisfied customer base, which may further promote digital inclusion and socio-economic development. In addition, the study aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 9, by supporting initiatives aimed at strengthening resilient infrastructure, fostering innovation, and promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization within the telecom sector., promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation.

1.1.6. Scope of the Research

This research investigates complaints management practices and their influence on customer satisfaction within Tanzania's telecom sector as shown in figure 1.1. The study is conducted across three regions in Tanzania (Dar es Salaam, Morogoro and

Dodoma) and comprises two interconnected studies. Study 1 employs a qualitative approach, involving retail customers, service representatives, and managers of telecom companies, to identify dominant complaints management practices. Study 2 builds on these findings through a quantitative survey of retail customers across the regions, examining the impact of ‘service quality, customer feedback utilization, social media influencer engagement, and organizational transparency’ during complaints management on customer satisfaction, with trust in the company as a mediator and customer behavior sensitivity as a moderator. The study is limited to the telecom sector and does not cover other industries or regions outside the selected areas.

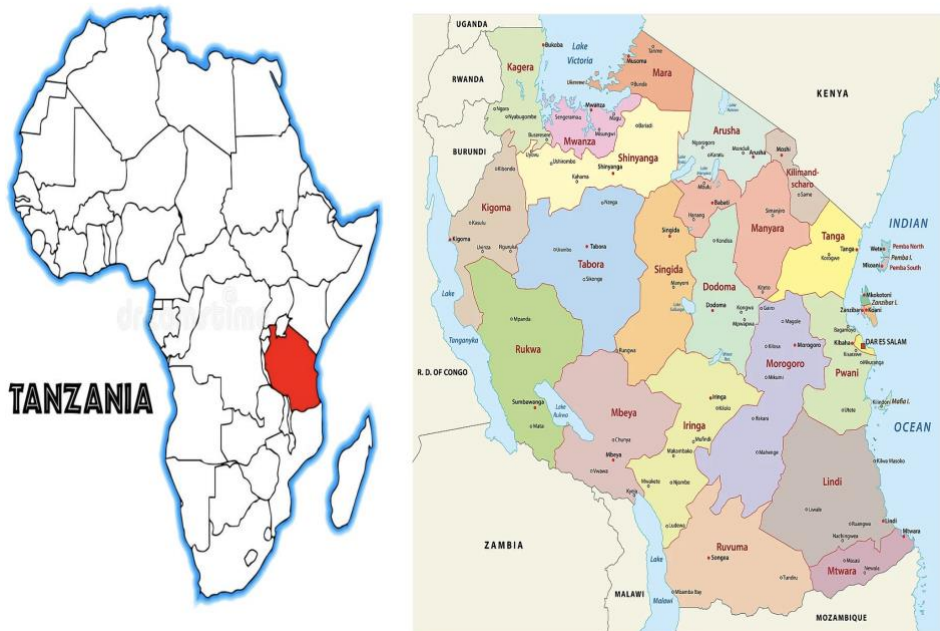


Figure 1.1 Map of the Study Area
Source: URT 2020

1.2. Research Contents and Methodology

1.2.1. Research Philosophy and Justification of Mixed Methods

This study is underpinned by the pragmatist research philosophy, which prioritizes practical outcomes and asserts that research questions should dictate methodological choices [76,77]. Pragmatism is especially suited for real-world problem investigations, such as the complex interplay of complaint management and customer satisfaction in Tanzania’s telecom sector. Given the multifaceted nature of the phenomena under

investigation, a sequential mixed methods approach was adopted, beginning with an exploratory qualitative phase followed by a quantitative phase. The initial qualitative phase enabled an in-depth exploration of the lived experiences and perceptions of stakeholders including customers and company representatives regarding complaints management practices. This phase facilitated the identification of critical themes, patterns, and variables that quantitative methods alone might overlook [77,78]. The rich, contextual insights derived from qualitative interviews informed the development of a theoretical framework, which subsequently guided hypothesis formulation and the design of the quantitative survey instruments [79].

The quantitative phase involved collecting data from a larger, representative sample within the telecom sector, allowing for statistical testing and validation of the hypotheses generated in the qualitative phase. This phase generated generalizable findings that strengthen the study's practical relevance and broader applicability in the Tanzanian telecom context [78,82]. Crucially, the integration of qualitative and quantitative findings ensured a comprehensive understanding of the research problem, allowing for robust conclusions grounded in empirical evidence and contextual realities. The sequential mixed methods design anchored in pragmatism therefore enables the study to achieve both depth and breadth, providing actionable insights for improving complaint management and enhancing customer satisfaction.

The decision to employ an exploratory sequential mixed methods design was deliberate and based on the study's objectives and contextual needs. The research sought to unpack the complex dynamics of complaint management practices and their impact on customer satisfaction within the telecom industry. An initial qualitative exploration was essential to capture the nuanced, often subtle factors influencing these practices, which quantitative approaches alone could not adequately reveal. The qualitative phase specifically addressed the first research question: "What complaint management practices used by telecom companies influence customer satisfaction with complaint resolution?" By collecting qualitative data through in-depth interviews, the study gathered detailed stakeholder perspectives, enabling the development of quantitative instruments that are both contextually relevant and comprehensive. The subsequent quantitative phase focused on testing the influence of identified complaint

management practices on customer satisfaction, thus answering the second research question. This phased approach, illustrated in Figure 1.2, ensured methodological rigor, contextual sensitivity, and empirical validity.

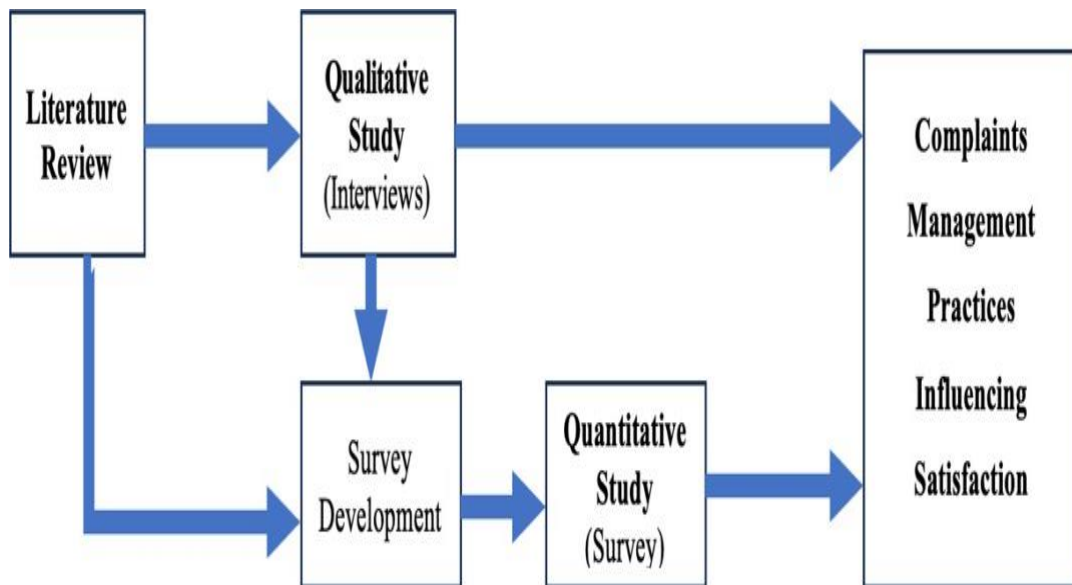


Figure 1.2 Sequential Mixed Methods

Alternative mixed methods designs were considered but ultimately dismissed due to their limitations relative to the study's goals. The convergent parallel design, which involves simultaneous qualitative and quantitative data collection, was unsuitable because it precludes the critical initial qualitative exploration that informs quantitative instrument development [80]. Without this foundational step, the study risked overlooking important variables and nuances specific to customer complaints management in Tanzania's telecom sector [79]. Similarly, the explanatory sequential design, which begins with quantitative data collection followed by qualitative data for explanation, was deemed premature. Quantitative instruments developed without prior qualitative insights could fail to capture the complexity of complaints management practices and customer satisfaction drivers, resulting in incomplete or misleading results [74]. The embedded design, often characterized by one dominant method, risked marginalizing either the qualitative or quantitative phase, which conflicted with this study's equal emphasis on both methodologies [81]. Lastly, the multiphase design was impractical given the study's scope and timeline, as it involves extended research phases that could delay actionable insights [82]. Thus, the exploratory sequential mixed

methods design was chosen for its systematic progression from rich qualitative exploration to quantitative validation, perfectly aligning with the study's aims to produce nuanced, empirically supported and practical findings.

The study's objectives were framed to reflect the sequential mixed methods design. The first objective, addressed qualitatively, was to explore complaint management practices influencing customer satisfaction. This phase involved semi-structured interviews with purposively sampled stakeholders, including customers, customer service representatives, and managers with deep experience in complaint handling. Data were transcribed and analyzed thematically following Braun and Clarke's approach [83], identifying key themes that shaped the understanding of effective complaint management strategies.

Subsequent objectives were addressed quantitatively through an online survey administered to respondents who had experienced complaint resolution processes. Objective two assessed the direct influence of complaint management practices such as service quality, customer feedback utilization, social media influencer engagement, and transparent organizational culture on customer satisfaction. Data analysis employed Smart PLS 4 software, chosen for its capacity to handle complex structural models and suitability for exploratory research with moderate sample sizes.

Objective three investigated how these complaint management practices impact customer trust in the company, recognizing trust as a vital mediator in fostering long-term customer relationships. Objective four further examined the influence of customer trust on satisfaction, highlighting trust as a foundational element in effective complaint management. Objective five explicitly tested the mediating role of trust between complaint management practices and customer satisfaction, elucidating how trust acts as a critical mechanism linking effective complaint handling to positive customer outcomes. Objective six explored the moderating effect of customer behavior sensitivity, the degree to which customers respond to complaint management efforts on the relationship between complaint management practices and satisfaction. This analysis provided insights into how customer heterogeneity affects perceptions of complaint resolution effectiveness and informed the tailoring of management strategies to diverse customer needs.

The figure 1.3 provides a technical roadmap and table 1.1 provides a summary of the research methodology.

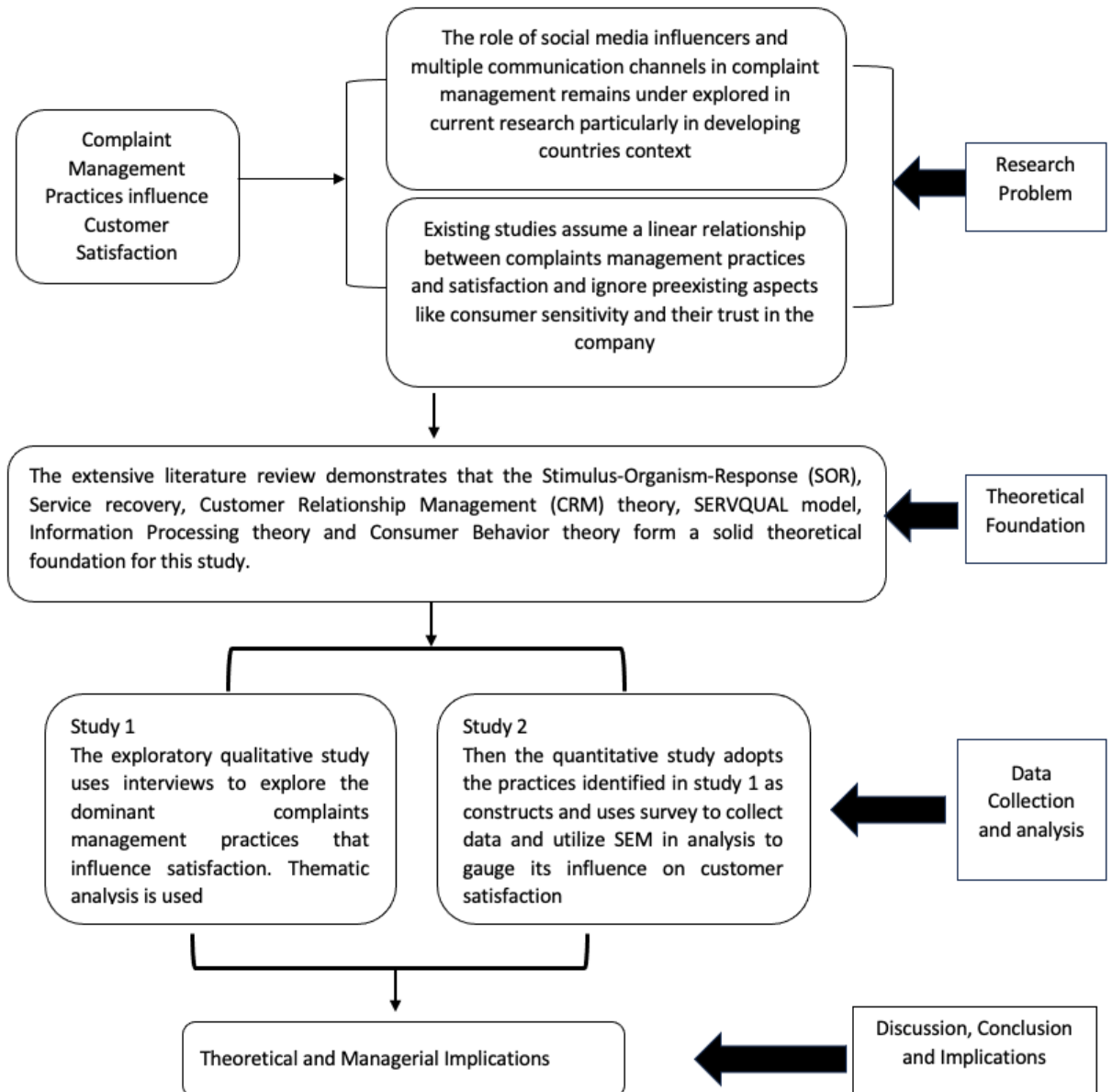


Figure 1.3 Research Technical Route

Table 1.1 Research Method and Objectives

Part	Objective	Research Methodology
Phase 1 – Qualitative Study	Objective 1: To explore the complaints management practices that influence customer satisfaction	• Phase I followed an exploratory sequential mixed-methods design. • Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted. • Participants were recruited using purposive and referral (snowball) sampling techniques. • Interviews were conducted with 21 key stakeholders: – 6 Customer Service Representatives – 2 Managers – 13 Customers from telecom companies • Data were analyzed using thematic analysis.
Phase 2 – Quantitative Study	Objectives 2 to 6: To empirically test the conceptual model	• Phase II included a quantitative study to validate the conceptual model. • The model was developed based on findings from Phase I and a literature review. • Structured online surveys were used to collect data on key variables. • Survey questionnaires are provided in Appendix A • Participants were selected using purposive and snowball sampling methods. • Statistical analyses were conducted to test the proposed relationships and hypotheses.

1.2.2. Research Design

This research project employs a sequential mixed-methods design comprising two studies focused on complaint management in Tanzania's telecommunications sector. Study 1 uses in-depth interviews with three key stakeholder groups: customers, customer service representatives (CSRs), and managers to uncover rich, context-specific themes related to complaint handling. Building on these qualitative insights, Study 2 quantitatively examines the relationships among complaint management practices, customer trust (as a mediator), customer behavior sensitivity (as a moderator), and overall customer satisfaction (dependent variable) using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). Grounded in the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) framework, Service Recovery, consumer behavior theory and CRM theory, this integrated approach offers both theoretical depth and practical relevance for improving complaint resolution in emerging markets. An overview of the study sequence, and variable relationships is presented in Figure 1.4 for visual reference.

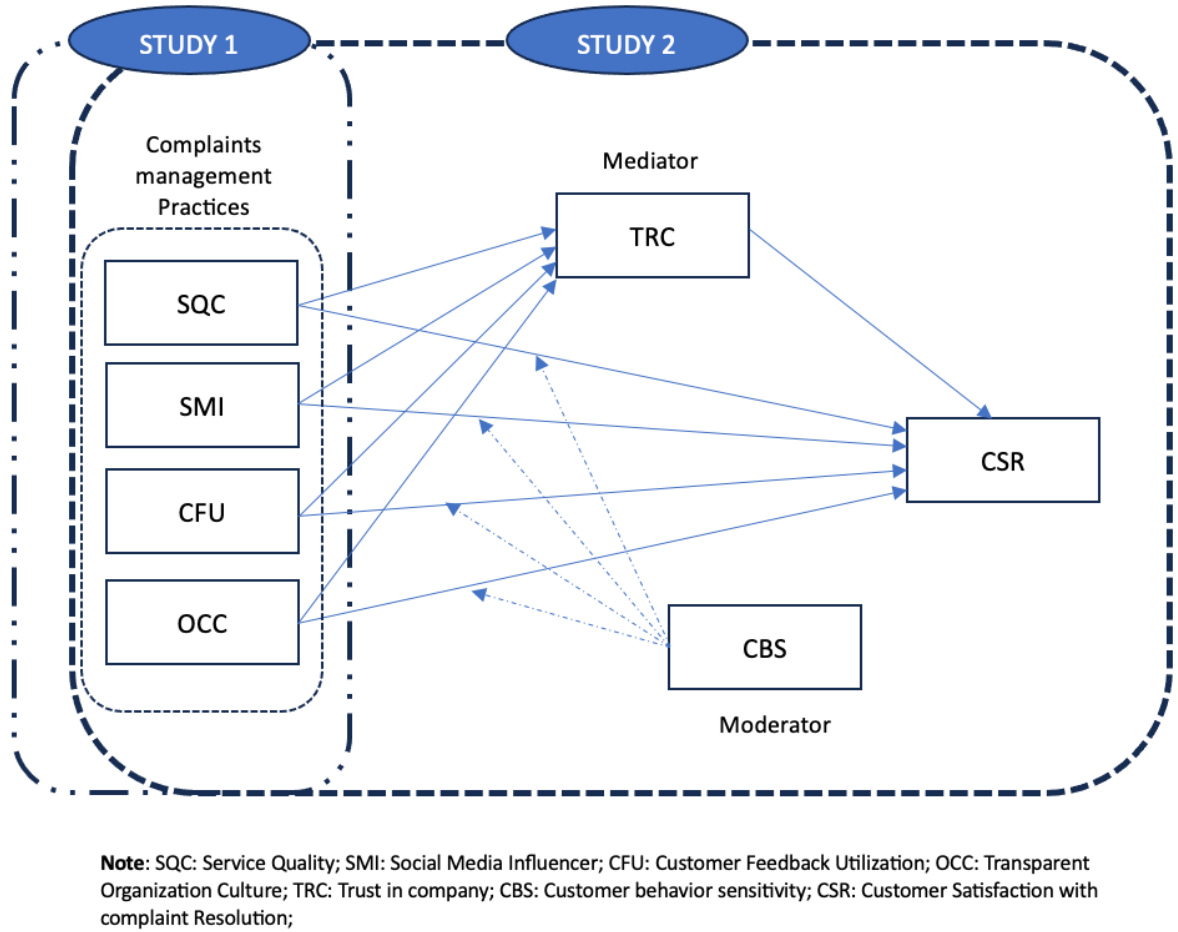


Figure 1.4 Two Studies Sequential Mixed Methods Research Design

This study adopted an exploratory sequential mixed-methods design for objective 1, thuscommencing with a qualitative phase to investigate complaints management practices within the telecom sector. Semi-structured interviews, guided by pre-determined questions, were conducted with 21 participants, including six customer service representatives, two managers, and thirteen customers from Vodacom, Tigo, Airtel, Halotel, and TTCL. Participants were initially identified through purposive sampling to ensure relevant expertise and subsequently expanded via snowball sampling to capture diverse stakeholder perspectives. Each interview, lasting approximately 30 minutes, was digitally recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using thematic analysis, enabling the identification of recurring themes and patterns regarding effective complaints management strategies and their impact on customer

satisfaction. This qualitative phase provided rich, nuanced insights that informed the subsequent quantitative phase, with data collection concluding upon achieving thematic saturation, ensuring comprehensive coverage of stakeholder experiences.

The quantitative study (objective 2,3,4,5 and 6) investigated the impact of complaints management practices on customer satisfaction in the telecom industry. Using a survey-based approach, structured questionnaires were administered to customers who had previously lodged complaints, targeting individuals with recent complaint interactions through purposive and snowball sampling. Data were collected online to ensure anonymity, with constructs measured using validated scales from the qualitative study and literature. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was employed to test hypothesized relationships, while ethical standards were maintained throughout. Sample size is critical for reliability and precision in SEM; guidelines suggest at least 200 respondents, with PLS-SEM requiring a sample ten times the maximum number of paths to dependent constructs [89,93,98]. Both studies exceeded these thresholds, meeting G*Power recommendations of more than 85 respondents (Figure 1.5), ensuring robust and trustworthy results.

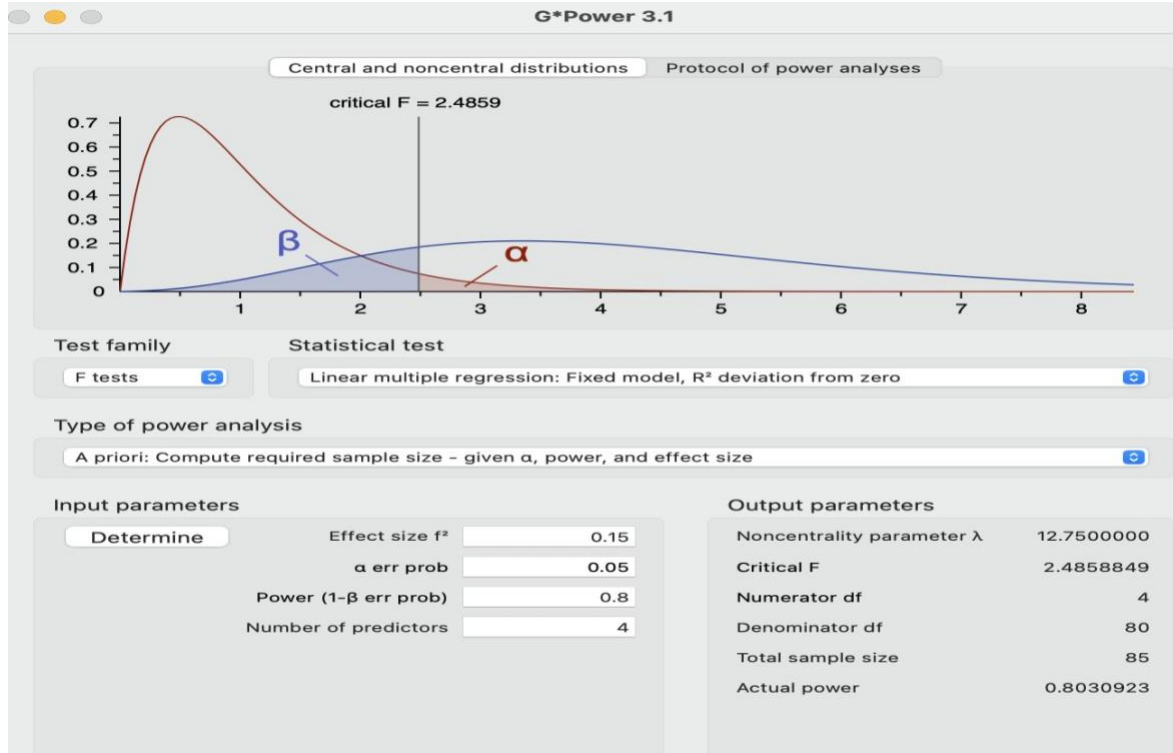


Figure 1.5 G Power Statistics

The pilot study assessed the feasibility and effectiveness of the research design and refined the data collection instruments for the main study on the impact of complaint management practices on customer satisfaction and trust in the telecom sector. The primary objectives were to identify potential issues, ensure clarity and relevance of survey questions, and test the data collection process. A sample of 21 respondents, representative of the larger target population, was selected. These participants were customers of various telecom companies. The pilot study utilized the same questionnaire intended for the main study, covering complaint management strategies, customer-centric organizational culture, social media influencers and customer satisfaction. Findings indicated areas for improvement: unclear questions were revised and technical issues with the online platform were addressed. These adjustments enhanced the reliability and validity of the data collection process for the main study, ensuring robust and actionable findings on the impact of complaint management practices on customer satisfaction and trust.

To minimize survey fatigue in our study several strategies were implemented. The questionnaire was designed with user experience in mind, incorporating clear and concise language, logical sequencing of questions, and varied question types to maintain engagement. Additionally, the questionnaire was divided into manageable sections, each with progress indicators to help respondents gauge their advancement. Furthermore, efforts were made to keep the overall time commitment transparent from the outset, and respondents were incentivized with acknowledgments to maintain their motivation throughout the completion of the survey. Furthermore, the pilot study provided insights that were instrumental in reducing survey fatigue to respondents. These measures collectively helped to mitigate the risk of survey fatigue and ensured higher-quality responses.

The need for multiple indicators in this study was crucial for capturing the complexity and multidimensionality of the constructs being measured. Each construct often represented a broad concept that could not be fully understood through a single item or indicator. By employing a larger set of indicators, the study more accurately and reliably reflected the nuances and variations within each construct. This approach enhanced the content validity, ensuring that the full scope of the construct was represented and that the data collected was comprehensive.

For the quantitative phase of this study, SmartPLS 4 was employed as the main analytical tool to conduct Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using the Partial Least Squares (PLS) approach. SmartPLS 4 was selected due to its suitability for handling small to medium sample sizes, its robustness against violations of normality, and its ability to model complex relationships involving both reflective and formative constructs. Additionally, SmartPLS offers advanced features for evaluating model reliability, validity, and predictive relevance, which are crucial for exploring the impact of complaints management practices on customer satisfaction. Its user-friendly graphical interface and efficient handling of complex models make it particularly advantageous for studies emphasizing prediction and theory development.

While alternative SEM software such as AMOS, LISREL, Mplus, and the lavaan package in R were considered, each presented specific limitations. AMOS and

LISREL, as covariance-based SEM tools, require larger sample sizes and assume data normality, which could compromise analysis reliability given the study's dataset. Mplus, although highly versatile, involves a steep learning curve and high licensing costs. Similarly, R's lavaan package requires extensive programming skills, making it less practical for rapid model evaluation.

In addition to SmartPLS 4, SPSS and Microsoft Excel were utilized as supportive tools. SPSS facilitated descriptive statistics, preliminary data screening, and reliability assessments, while Excel was used for initial data organization, cleaning, and basic calculations. Together, these tools complemented SmartPLS 4 by ensuring that the dataset was accurately prepared and rigorously examined before the main SEM-PLS analysis.

Overall, the combination of SmartPLS 4 as the primary analysis tool, supported by SPSS and Excel, provided a robust and efficient framework for quantitatively analyzing the relationships between complaints management practices, customer trust, and satisfaction.

1.2.3. Research Organization

The dissertation is divided into seven chapters, each aligned with the primary objective of exploring complaint management practices and their impact on customer satisfaction and resulting anchoring behavior. The structure of the dissertation is outlined in Figure 1.6

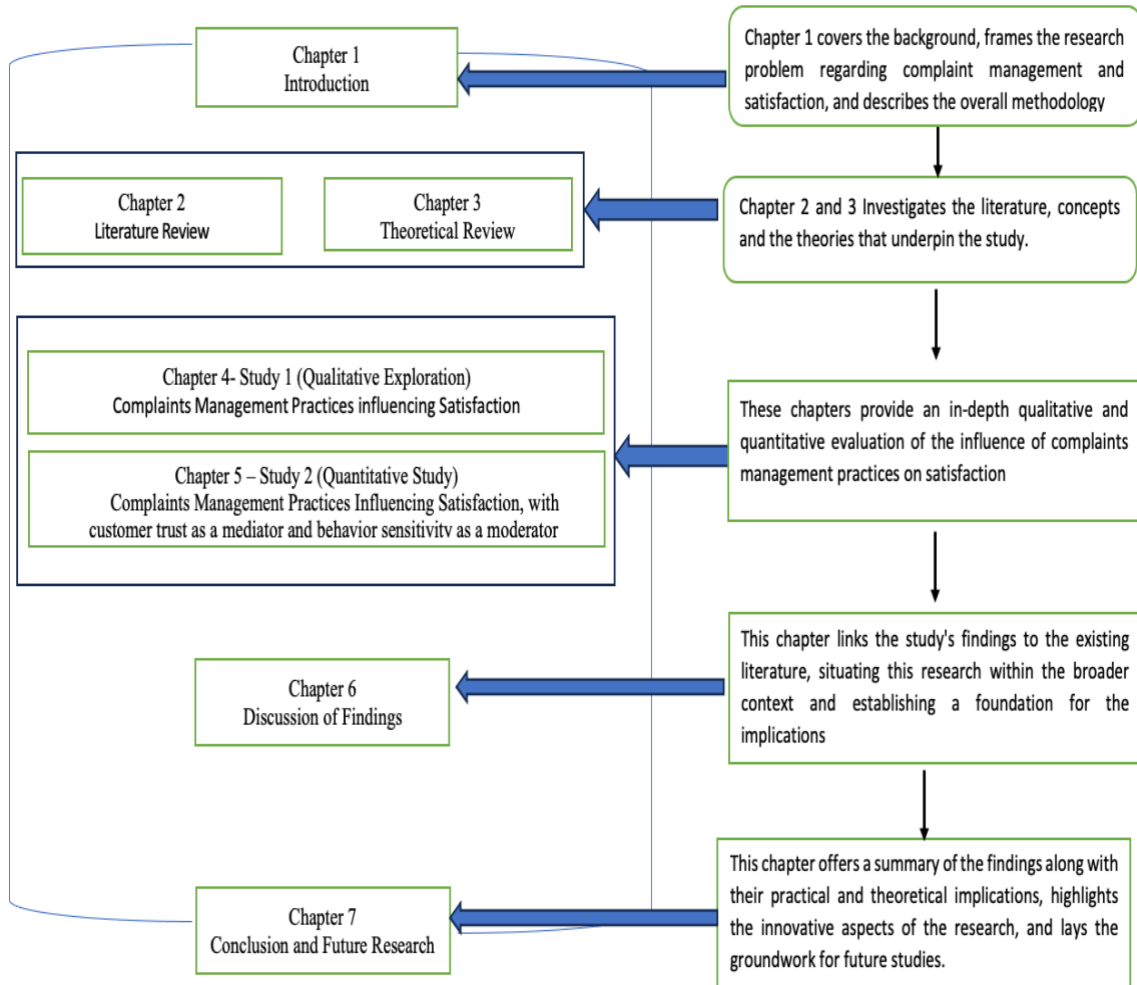


Figure 1.6 Organization of the dissertation

Chapter 1-Introduction: This chapter sets the stage for the study, beginning with the background that emphasizes the vital role of effective customer complaints management in the telecommunications industry, especially with the rise of social media platforms and social media influencers. The problem statement identifies the gap in current research regarding the interplay between social media, organizational culture, and influencer engagement in shaping customer satisfaction. The significance of the study is outlined, highlighting its potential contributions to both theoretical understanding and practical application in improving complaints management strategies and practices. The scope of the study is defined, clarifying the boundaries and focus areas of the study. The literature review summarizes key concepts and previous research findings relevant to the study.

Finally, the research methodology section details the design, data collection methods, and analytical approaches to be used, ensuring a structured and systematic examination of the research questions.

Chapter 2- Literature Review: The literature review examined the evolution of complaints management, showing its shift from reactive handling to strategic, customer-centric approaches driven by digitalization and changing consumer expectations. It outlined the major dimensions of complaints management and integrated key theories linking complaints, customer satisfaction and trust. The literature review also highlighted significant debates in the field, including contradictions on the effectiveness of feedback utilization, the role of transparency, and the impact of social media on complaint outcomes. It further identified global and Tanzanian-specific knowledge gaps, particularly the limited empirical focus on developing markets, customer behavior sensitivity and the interplay of trust. Finally, it clarified the definitions of core concepts to ensure conceptual precision throughout the study.

Chapter 3-Theoretical Review: This chapter explores the theoretical frameworks that underpin the study, focusing on the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) model, Service recovery, consumer behavior and customer relationship management theories. The theories elucidates the relationships between customer complaints management practices and customer outcomes. The chapter showcase the interplay of theories and the variables of interest, providing a robust basis for the conceptual model. By integrating the theoretical and empirical perspectives, the chapter ensures that the research is grounded in established knowledge while also identifying areas where new insights can be generated.

Chapter 4- Complaints Management Practices influencing Satisfaction, Qualitative Study: This chapter presents the findings from the qualitative research component of the study. Through in-depth interviews with customers and industry experts, rich, nuanced insights into their experiences and perceptions regarding complaints management in the telecom sector are gathered. The qualitative data are analyzed to identify common themes, patterns, and emerging trends, providing a deeper understanding of the customer

perspective. These findings set the stage for the development of measurement items for the quantitative study. The findings also shed light on the complexities of customer complaints management. The chapter concludes by discussing how these qualitative insights inform and refine the overall conceptual model of study 2.

Chapter 5: Complaints Management Practices Influencing Satisfaction, with Customer Trust as a Mediator and Consumer Behavior Sensitivity as a Moderator. Chapter 5 presents a theory-informed quantitative analysis examining how complaints management practices influence customer satisfaction, with a focus on the mediating role of customer trust and the moderating effect of consumer behavior sensitivity. Drawing on the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) framework and CRM theory, the chapter tests a structural model linking four key practices—Service Quality Control, Customer Feedback Utilization, Transparent Organizational Culture, and Social Media Influencer Utilization—to customer satisfaction with complaint resolution. Using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and a robust sample of 562 respondents, the chapter establishes construct validity and explores both direct and indirect effects, offering insights into the psychological mechanisms (trust) and conditional factors (sensitivity) that shape customer responses. The findings not only extend theoretical understanding by introducing consumer behavior sensitivity as a boundary condition but also provide valuable context-specific knowledge from Tanzania's telecom sector, addressing a gap in the literature on complaints management in emerging markets.

Chapter 6 - Discussion of Findings: This chapter synthesizes the qualitative and quantitative findings, discussing their implications for theory and practice. It interprets the results in the context of existing literature, exploring how the study contributes to our understanding of effective customer complaints management in the telecommunications industry. The chapter discusses the practical implications for telecom companies, suggesting strategies for leveraging complaints management strategies to enhance satisfaction and future customer judgement.

Chapter 7: Conclusion and Future Research. The final chapter summarizes the key findings of the study, highlighting their theoretical and practical significance. It provides a concise overview of how the research objectives were met and discusses the contributions to both academic knowledge and industry practice. The chapter emphasizes the importance of integrating social media, transparent organizational culture, and influencer engagement in customer complaints management strategies. It also outlines the limitations of the study, acknowledging potential constraints and suggesting directions for future research. By offering practical recommendations and identifying areas for further investigation, this chapter ensures that the study's findings are not only impactful but also pave the way for continued exploration in the field.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

This chapter examines the essential literature and core concepts underpinning the study, with a specific focus on the historical development of complaints management research and the associated debates, inconsistencies, and gaps. Through this in-depth exploration, the chapter establishes a strong conceptual foundation which is strongly integrated and underpinned by theory. Henceforth, guide the qualitative investigation, informs the design of the quantitative study, and enhances understanding of the dynamics shaping customer complaints and customer satisfaction.

2.1. Conceptual Integration and Theoretical Underpinings

The growing complexity of service environments has intensified the need for a more integrated understanding of complaints management and its influence on customer outcomes [30]. While prior studies have examined elements such as service recovery, customer satisfaction and trust, these constructs are often treated in isolation or linked through narrowly defined models [64]. This fragmentation presents both a theoretical and practical limitation. From an academic perspective, it constrains the development of a coherent body of knowledge capable of explaining how multiple organizational practices jointly shape customer responses. From a managerial standpoint, it offers limited guidance for firms seeking to design holistic complaint management systems that reflect the interconnected nature of customer experiences.

In practice, customer complaints rarely arise or resolved within a single dimension of organizational action. Instead, they unfold across multiple touchpoints, including direct service interactions, digital feedback channels, and increasingly, social media environments where third-party actors such as influencers shape perceptions [34]. As a result, managing complaints effectively requires more than isolated improvements in service quality or responsiveness; it demands an integrated approach that aligns operational practices, communication strategies, and organizational culture[49]. However, existing literature does not sufficiently capture this multidimensionality, particularly in emerging market contexts where structural, technological, and behavioral dynamics differ from those in developed economies [55]. This gap

underscores the need for a conceptually integrated framework that reflects both the complexity of modern complaint environments and the diversity of customer responses. To address this limitation, the present study integrates key constructs—complaints management practices, customer trust in the company, customer satisfaction with complaint resolution (CSR), and customer behavior sensitivity—into a unified conceptual structure. These concepts emerged from the themes of the qualitative study and were incorporated in the following quantitative study as constructs. Complaints management practices are conceptualized as a multidimensional construct encompassing service quality, customer feedback utilization, social media influencer utilization, and transparent organizational culture. These dimensions collectively represent the firm's strategic approach of dealing with complaints, capturing both internal processes and external engagement mechanisms. Customer trust is positioned as a critical mediating mechanism through which these practices influence customer satisfaction, reflecting the psychological evaluation of the firm's reliability and integrity. Customer Satisfaction with the complaints resolution represents the ultimate evaluative outcome of the complaint handling process, while customer behavior sensitivity is incorporated as a moderating factor that accounts for variations in how customers perceive and react to service experiences.

The integration of these constructs is theoretically underpinned by a combination of complementary perspectives that together provide a robust explanatory foundation which is better explained in the theoretical review section. The Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) framework offers the primary structural lens, conceptualizing complaints management practices as external stimuli that influence internal customer states (such as trust), which in turn shape behavioral and attitudinal responses (satisfaction). The suitability of this framework lies in its ability to accommodate complex, multi-stage relationships, making it particularly relevant in contexts where customer responses are shaped by both cognitive and emotional processes. Furthermore, service recovery theory provides a focused explanation of how firms can effectively respond to service failures. Additionally, attribution theory underpins the understanding of how customers interpret service failures and recovery efforts. It explains how customers assign responsibility for negative experiences and how these interpretations

influence their levels of trust and satisfaction. This perspective is particularly valuable in explaining variations in customer responses, especially when combined with the moderating role of customer behavior sensitivity. Together, these theories are not merely juxtaposed but are integrated to provide a layered and contextually grounded explanation of the relationships among the study's core constructs.

The integration of these theoretical perspectives offers a distinct conceptual and theoretical contribution by moving beyond the conventional use of isolated frameworks toward a more synthesized and explanatory model of complaints management. Rather than applying theories in parallel, this study demonstrates how they can be systematically combined to explain different layers of the customer response process. Specifically, the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) framework provides the structural logic of the model, Service recovery theory explains how firms' responses to service failures influence customer reactions and satisfaction, Consumer behavior theory explains the formation and role of trust as a relational mechanism, and attribution theory accounts for variability in customer interpretations of service failures and recovery efforts. This layered integration advances theory by showing not only what relationships exist, but why and how they unfold within a unified explanatory system.

Conceptually, the study contributes by reframing complaints management as a multidimensional and interactive system rather than a set of independent practices. By integrating service quality, customer feedback utilization, social media influencer utilization, and transparent organizational culture into a single construct, the study captures the systemic nature of organizational responses to customer dissatisfaction. More importantly, it explicitly links these dimensions to mediating (customer trust) and moderating (customer behavior sensitivity) mechanisms, thereby addressing a critical gap in the literature where the internal psychological processes and contextual contingencies influencing customer satisfaction are often underdeveloped [67]. This positions the model as both integrative and process-oriented, offering a more realistic representation of how complaint handling translates into customer outcomes.

Therefore, this section does more than introduce concepts; it establishes a coherent conceptual–theoretical lens that guides the entire literature review. It clarifies the analytical boundaries of the study, justifies the selection and integration of constructs, and provides a structured foundation for examining subsequent discussions on the evolution of complaints management, its dimensions, theoretical debates, and empirical evidence across contexts. By doing so, it ensures that the literature review is not descriptive but analytically driven, with each subsequent section building upon a clearly articulated and theoretically grounded framework.

2.2. Evolution of Complaints Management and Customer Satisfaction

Research on complaints management and customer satisfaction has undergone considerable evolution, moving from early explorations of service recovery to more integrated perspectives that highlight their strategic importance in shaping customer relationships. This trajectory provides the foundation for examining the historical development of complaints management research, the dimensions that define effective practices, and the theoretical constructs that explain how customers evaluate and respond to complaint handling. At the same time, ongoing debates and contradictions reveal that not all practices yield consistent outcomes, particularly in relation to customer feedback use and the role of behavioral sensitivities. These discussions naturally point to persisting knowledge gaps at both global and national levels, with Tanzania offering a context where cultural dynamics and sensitivity to service experiences remain underexplored. Together, these themes frame the subsections that follow and establish the basis for a deeper understanding of the evolving landscape of complaints management.

2.2.1. Historical Trajectory of Complaints Management Research

The evolution of complaints management reflects a gradual but profound shift from reactive, fragmented approaches to strategically integrated, trust-centered systems. Early literature conceptualized complaints primarily as expressions of consumer dissatisfaction, with firms offering minimal response[68]. Through the 1980s and 1990s, other scholars advanced the field by classifying complaint behaviors and linking effective resolution to customer loyalty, though these efforts lacked integration with

technological advancements[69,70]. The 2000s introduced structured complaint handling within CRM frameworks, emphasizing empathy and systematization, yet often failed to address reputational impacts or agility[71]. A turning point occurred with the rise of social media in the 2010s, as complaints became public, viral, and reputation-threatening necessitating a shift to proactive webcare [72]. However, strategies to manage influencer-driven complaints remained nascent. The latest phase marks a significant pivot towards influencer involvement, transparency and trust-building, yet contextual gaps in developing markets remain[73]. Importantly, existing literature highlights the pressing need to investigate complaints management in the context of social media's pervasive influence, increasingly sensitive consumers, brand trust dynamics and the role of behavioral sensitivities in shaping complaint behaviors [21]. The table 2.1 summarizes this historical trajectory, outlining key developments, seminal contributions and persistent gaps in each era.

Despite significant advances in complaint management research over the decades, a fundamental problem persists: many organizations still fail to strategically leverage customer complaints as opportunities for trust-building and loyalty enhancement, especially in today's complex, multi-channel digital environment [88,112]. Early studies predominantly viewed customer complaints as problems to be resolved, rather than as opportunities for strategic advantage [44]. Although later research developed typologies of complaint behavior and established connections between complaint handling, satisfaction and loyalty, these efforts were often limited by weak empirical support and did not account for the growing influence of digital and social media platforms[45,46]. The critical gap remains in understanding how complaint management outcomes influence brand reputation, particularly through the lens of trust, and how to effectively manage the growing influence of social media, including the roles of influencers and viral backlash [48,50,51]. Furthermore, existing literature largely neglects customer behavior sensitivity and the unique complaint dynamics in developing markets, limiting its global applicability [54,55]. This study confronts these problems head-on by integrating social media influencers into complaint resolution strategies, empirically modeling trust as a mediator, and exploring customer sensitivity within emerging markets. By addressing these pressing gaps, the research offers a

much-needed, contemporary framework that enables organizations to respond more strategically, ethically and effectively to customer complaints in an increasingly digital and interconnected world. Table 2.1 provides a summary of complaints management research historical evolution.

Table 2.1 Complaints Management Research Evolution

Period	Key Developments	Seminal Articles	Focus / Contributions	Gaps Identified	How This Study Addresses Gaps
Pre-1980s Foundational Theories	Initial recognition of complaint behavior as a consumer right; limited organizational response mechanisms	[68]	Theoretical foundation of complaint behavior; categorized consumer responses	Complaints seen as problems, not opportunities	Introduces strategic, customer-centric complaint handling viewing complaints as opportunities for trust and loyalty building
1980s Taxonomy and Formalization	Emergence of complaint typologies and behavioral models	[69]	Identified types of complainants and response styles; internal vs external complaints	Minimal focus on service recovery; no clear link to satisfaction	Examines complaint resolution effectiveness linking directly to customer satisfaction
1990s Service Recovery & Loyalty	Integration of complaints into service quality and relationship marketing	[70]	Emphasis on linking complaint handling to customer loyalty and retention	Limited empirical data; no integration with emerging technologies or multi-channel dynamics	Incorporates social media channels and influencer impact; considers multi-channel complaint behaviors
2000–2010 CRM and Systems Thinking	Structured complaint management systems within CRM; service recovery frameworks	[71]	Identified effective organizational responses; stressed the value of empowerment and empathy	Underexplored link between complaint outcomes and satisfaction; lacked agility in response time	Investigates trust as a mediator linking complaint management to satisfaction; emphasizes responsive, agile complaint handling via digital tools
2010–2015 Digital & Social Complaints	Social media transformed complaint visibility; public and viral complaints emerged	[72]	Public complaints reshaped reputation management; introduced proactive vs reactive webcare	Lack of strategy for managing influencers or viral backlash; challenges with consistency across channels	Integrates influencer roles explicitly; proposes strategic approaches to managing viral complaints and influencer communications
2016–Present Omni-Channel, Influencers, Trust, & Transparency	Use of social media influencers in complaints recovery; focus on trust, transparency, and personalization	[73]	Highlighted influencer mediation; complaint management tied to brand storytelling, community response, and trust building	little focus on customer behavior sensitivity; little understanding of complaint dynamics in developing markets	Models trust as central mediator; examines customer sensitivity to complaints, especially in emerging markets context

Despite the chronological richness of complaints management research, much of the literature remains theoretically fragmented and insufficiently contextualized in light of contemporary challenges. Foundational studies provided early taxonomies and linked complaint handling to customer loyalty, yet they did not foresee the disruptive impact of digital interactivity and algorithm-driven visibility on complaint expression[68]. Later works recognize the reputational risks posed by viral complaints, but they often overlook the role of behavioral sensitivities in shaping customer expectations and perceived fairness during the resolution process[71,72]. Furthermore, the predominance of Western-centric perspectives constrains the generalizability of findings to emerging markets, where institutional trust, digital literacy and consumer assertiveness differ. These gaps underscore the need for a more integrative and contextually grounded framework one that positions trust as a mediating mechanism, attends to the emotional salience of social media ecosystems and incorporates context-sensitive consumer behavior and cognitive heuristics that shape complaint escalation and resolution satisfaction.

2.2.2. Dimensions of Complaints Management

While historical accounts of complaint management research offer a chronological lens on the field's emergence, they fall short of constructing a cohesive analytical map of its conceptual clusters, theoretical underpinnings, and methodological trajectories. Much of the extant literature, while informative in isolation, reflects fragmentation across key domains, failing to integrate cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions that are critical to understanding how complaints are processed, responded to and ultimately influence customer satisfaction [57,192]. Grounding this critique in consumer behavior theory, one observes that complaint behavior is not purely rational or transactional it is inherently shaped by customer expectations, perceived fairness, emotional arousal and memory bias [20,36]. These dimensions interact dynamically, yet many studies limit their focus to singular factors [38,66], overlooking the psychological mechanisms that determine whether a customer internalizes a resolution as satisfactory.

For instance, Information Processing Theory (IPT) suggests that individuals interpret and evaluate complaint outcomes through the lens of prior experiences, issue

salience and existing cognitive schemas [62,63,86]. This theoretical perspective helps illuminate the role of behavioral sensitivity, wherein negative past experiences skew current judgments potentially leading to dissatisfaction even when resolutions are objectively fair [7,21,22]. Few empirical studies incorporate this lens to explore how customers “process” complaint outcomes cognitively and emotionally. This gap underscores a critical oversight: complaint satisfaction is not merely an outcome, but a constructed perception influenced by mental framing, emotional valence and context. Furthermore, methodological limitations abound. Many studies adopt cross-sectional survey designs, often relying on self-reported measures of satisfaction without triangulating with behavioral outcomes [68,72]. As a result constructs such as trust and customer behavior sensitivity are rarely operationalized to be used in complaints management research. For instance, SERVQUAL-based studies emphasize reliability and responsiveness but often under-represent empathy and assurance dimensions that are more relevant in emotionally charged complaint contexts [84,88,101]. CRM-oriented research, on the other hand, tends to focus on technical system usability [2], neglecting content-specific communication quality and emotional tone in complaint resolution interfaces.

The accompanying Table 2.2 reveals not just analytical gaps but conceptual blind spots across dominant research clusters. In service quality and satisfaction dimension, foundational works remain anchored in transactional metrics such as timeliness and price fairness reflecting a legacy paradigm that struggles to account for the evolving emotional and reputational stakes of complaints in digital spaces[75,76]. This study challenges that narrow scope by positioning emotion and public visibility as central to service evaluation, as extant literature have conflicting findings on the relative importance of emotional tone versus procedural transparency in determining perceived service quality during complaint resolution [128,170].

Similarly, in Service Recovery and Justice dimension, while studies such commend firms for exceeding expectations, they often treat satisfaction as a static endpoint, failing to interrogate how trust and emotion mediate the path to that outcome[77]. Unfortunately, the extant literature offers mixed interpretations some studies depict trust as a rational, stable consequence of service interactions [182,183], whereas others

argue for a more fluid, emotion-based understanding [67,88]. Similarly, emotional responses are inconsistently positioned, either as incidental reactions[44] or as central forces driving customer evaluations[78]. These divergent perspectives reveal a critical gap in fully grasping how emotional and psychological factors interact to shape recovery experiences. Hence, there is a need of this study that accommodate the conflicts so as to shed more light on the matter.

The Emotional and Behavioral Outcomes dimension, despite its focus on emotions [79], tends to analyze emotions separately rather than considering their combined effect on satisfaction behavior. Existing studies provide conflicting insights: some focus on discrete emotional reactions at specific complaint stages [94], while others demonstrate how emotions evolve and interact with cognitive and behavioral factors[72,89]. This fragmented perspective has led to conflicting conclusions regarding the role of emotions in customer retention some studies downplay the influence of fleeting emotions[195], while others emphasize the enduring impact of emotional experiences[80]. Our study advances beyond this fragmentation by tracing emotional trajectories across complaint resolution stages and integrating key psychological constructs: trust as a mediator that links emotional responses to satisfaction, customer behavior sensitivity as a moderator that shapes emotional intensity. This holistic approach offers a more nuanced understanding of how evolving emotions drive long-term satisfaction.

In Social Media and Public Complaints dimension, the literature acknowledges the power of digital platforms but remains largely reactive mapping trends rather than theorizing the structural implications of public complaint dynamics on brand trust[30,32]. We move beyond mapping to explicating how visibility, tone, and responsiveness reconfigure customer perceptions[81]. Likewise, Technological studies exhibit a techno-centric bias, privileging usability over emotional design[82]. This study critiques that reductionism by showing how existing customer behavior sensitivity can either de-escalate or exacerbate emotional tensions. Finally, research on Cultural and Psychological behavioral sensitivities acknowledges individual variations in how complaints are handled but seldom links these differences to wider strategies for building trust or managing emotions [11,42]. We broaden this discussion by

proposing that cultural sensitivity and the alignment of cognitive and emotional processes are essential foundations not merely improvements for achieving satisfaction restoration in complex complaint situations.

Table 2.2 Dimensions of Complaints Management

Dimensions	Seminal Authors	Study Findings	Gap	This Study's Contribution
Service Quality and Satisfaction	[75]	Service quality and price fairness positively affect loyalty, with satisfaction mediating.	Limited to traditional service quality and pricing, no social media or digital complaint context.	Integrates digital platforms and social media complaints to update how service quality shapes satisfaction.
	[76]	Timely responses improve satisfaction in complaint handling.	Ignores emotional reactions or public complaints.	Examine emotional and public-facing complaint handling via social media.
Service Recovery and Justice	[77]	Compensation exceeding expectations boosts loyalty.	Ignores emotional and trust-based mediators.	Incorporates emotional trust and satisfaction to capture deeper customer responses.
	[78]	Recovery satisfaction linked to justice perceptions.	Lacks integration of technological and cross-channel dimensions.	Examines perceptions in digital platforms in relation to satisfaction
Emotional and Behavioral Outcomes	[79]	Customers with stronger social networks are more emotionally affected.	Uses a quantitative approach	Utilize a mixed methods approach with multiple analytical rigor checks
	[80]	Empathy and listening improve gratitude during service recovery.	Focused only on emotional outcomes not tied to satisfaction	Connects emotional strategies with satisfaction and trust to provide a full pathway to customer outcomes.
Social Media and Public Complaints	[30]	Companies underutilize social media for complaint response.	No linkage to satisfaction, trust	Examines how social media complaint responses affect satisfaction and brand trust.
	[32]	Complaint visibility increases with firm replies on social media.	Doesn't examine customer satisfaction	Analyzes both reputational and satisfaction outcomes of public complaint responses.
Technology and Complaint Interfaces	[81]	Screen size and design affect complaint intensity.	Ignores satisfaction and emotional outcomes.	Extends interface design effects by linking them to satisfaction and complaint resolution perception.
	[82]	CRM system factors influence user satisfaction.	Focus on system usability, not complaint content or handling.	Adds content-specific complaint resolution via digital CRM platforms.

Adding further complexity, empirical findings are frequently contradictory. Some studies emphasize the power of empathy in eliciting customer satisfaction[80], while other studies argues that responsiveness alone can drive satisfaction, pointing to a more rational, time-sensitive judgment process[76]. Such divergence prompts deeper questions: Are emotional cues universally influential, or do they interact with contextual factors such as complaint severity, customer disposition, or cultural expectations? These contradictions underscore the limitations of linear models and highlight the need for multi-level frameworks that account for moderating and mediating dynamics.

An integrated theoretical approach becomes essential here. Consumer behavior theory, when combined with IPT and CRM, can illuminate how complaint experiences are filtered not only through objective features like resolution speed but also through mental biases, emotional states, and relational histories. Customer behavior sensitivity, for example, reveals why customers with prior negative experiences may discount even fair resolutions unless firms engage in deliberate trust-rebuilding through transparency, personalization, or mediated reassurance via influencers [20,22]. Yet, many studies ignore these behavioral biases, resulting in under-theorized models that fail to explain variance in customer satisfaction outcomes. Equally, SERVQUAL's treatment of empathy as a single item does not do justice to the multifaceted nature of emotional engagement [101]. In complaint scenarios, empathy is not incidental, it is instrumental, involving both cognitive empathy (understanding the customer's experience) and affective empathy (emotionally resonating with their frustration), both of which influence trust restoration and satisfaction.

This study addresses these gaps by proposing a more nuanced and integrative model. Its novelty lies not in identifying new variables per se, but in reorganizing existing knowledge into a coherent, testable framework that foregrounds trust as a key mediating mechanism. It further incorporates customer behavior sensitivity as a moderating construct to explain why the same complaint-handling strategies yield varied outcomes across different customer segments. Moreover, by situating the analysis within the emerging market context of Tanzania's telecom sector characterized by digital service growth, limited consumer protection infrastructure, and distinct

cultural expectations the study adds important contextual variation to a literature base largely shaped by Western assumptions.

This transition from isolated empirical findings to a unified, theory-driven model marks a significant advance in complaints management research. It invites scholars to move beyond “what works” toward more refined questions of “why,” “for whom,” and “under what conditions” complaint handling strategies succeed or fail. In doing so, it lays the foundation for a more holistic, behaviorally grounded, and contextually sensitive understanding of complaint management in the digital age.

2.2.3. Constructs and Theories in Complaints Management and Customer Satisfaction Research

The theoretical landscape of complaints management and customer satisfaction is multifaceted, with distinct yet overlapping frameworks providing lenses to understand how customers interpret service failures and organizational responses. Critical examination of these theories reveals both their explanatory strengths and inherent limitations, as well as tensions that remain unresolved in current literature.

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) theory predominates as the strategic framework for complaint handling, emphasizing relational exchanges that foster long-term customer loyalty through personalized recovery and feedback mechanisms [32,64,136]. CRM's strength lies in operationalizing customer engagement and facilitating systematic complaint resolution processes. However, methodological reliance on quantitative surveys within CRM studies often emphasizes transactional metrics (e.g., satisfaction scores, repeat purchase intention) at the expense of exploring emotional and cognitive customer responses in depth. This has led to conflicting findings where CRM-driven initiatives improve satisfaction metrics but fail to fully restore trust or emotional goodwill, highlighting a disjunction between behavioral outcomes and affective customer states [136]. This tension suggests CRM's mechanistic focus insufficiently captures the nuanced psychological processes customers undergo post-complaint, thereby limiting the theory's explanatory power in complex service failures.

SERVQUAL theory remains a cornerstone for assessing service quality dimensions (responsiveness, empathy, reliability, assurance, tangibles) linked to complaint

satisfaction [31, 41,72,90]. Its enduring popularity is rooted in its structured approach to measuring customer perceptions and identifying quality gaps. Nonetheless, SERVQUAL's conceptualization of service quality as a relatively static construct contrasts with dynamic customer expectations shaped by evolving technological and social media contexts. Empirical studies reveal mixed results regarding SERVQUAL's predictive validity in online complaint settings, where response timing and transparency are paramount [30,31,37]. For example, some research reports that swift digital responses significantly enhance satisfaction, while others indicate that overly rapid, automated replies may be perceived as insincere, thus diminishing perceived empathy and fairness [41,172]. This divergence exposes a theoretical tension within SERVQUAL's dimensions when applied to digital complaint management, calling for theoretical extensions that incorporate temporal and relational nuances specific to online environments.

Social Media Theory and Social Influence Theory have emerged as pivotal in understanding contemporary complaint dynamics [30,31,37,41,172]. These frameworks emphasize the role of digital platforms in amplifying customer voices and the influence of social media actors, including influencers, on public complaint resolution outcomes. Qualitative content analyses and mixed-methods studies reveal the complex interplay of organizational responsiveness, public scrutiny, and influencer advocacy in shaping satisfaction and trust[67,72]. However, these studies often grapple with methodological challenges in isolating the unique effect of influencers versus organic consumer sentiment, leading to inconsistent findings on their impact on complaint satisfaction [172]. Furthermore, the rapid evolution of social media platforms outpaces theoretical development, exposing a gap where traditional complaint management theories struggle to fully capture the multidimensional and networked nature of digital complaint ecosystems.

Finally, Information Processing Theory (IPT) and Justice Theory deepen understanding of the cognitive and fairness-based evaluations customers employ when assessing complaint outcomes [8,145]. These theories highlight perceived distributive, procedural, and interactional justice as critical mediators of satisfaction and trust. Empirical findings using longitudinal surveys and experimental designs underscore that

even high service quality fails to guarantee satisfaction if justice perceptions are unmet[89]. Yet, the challenge remains in operationalizing these justice constructs consistently across diverse complaint contexts, as fairness perceptions are highly subjective and culturally contingent. This variability contributes to conflicting results regarding the relative importance of each justice dimension in complaint satisfaction.

Hence, the theoretical corpus on complaints management reveals complementary yet sometimes conflicting insights. CRM offers operational rigor but lacks psychological depth; SERVQUAL provides a structured quality assessment but struggles with digital context nuances; while Social Media and Justice theories address emergent relational dynamics yet face challenges in methodological precision and theoretical integration. These tensions highlight the necessity for interdisciplinary frameworks that synthesize cognitive, emotional, relational, and technological factors to more fully capture the complexity of complaint management and customer satisfaction. Table 2.3 provides the overview of complaints management research.

Table 2.3 Constructs and Theories in Complaints Management Research

Research Title	Constructs Used	Theories Used	Reference.
Investigating User Satisfaction of Customer Relationship Management In A Telecom Company	Customer Satisfaction, CRM, Social Influence	CRM	[2]
The moderating role of complaint handling on brand hate in the cancel culture	Complaint Handling, Brand Hate, negative satisfaction anchor	Complaint Handling Framework	[7]
Price Knowledge and Price Expectations: Their Role for Customer Relationship Marketing	Price Knowledge, Price Expectations, CRM	Consumer Behavior Theory	[8]
Elaboration and numerical anchoring: Implications of attitude theories for consumer judgment	Customer Behavior Sensitivity, Attitudes	Attitude Theory,	[20]
The Effect of anchor characteristics on consumer complaints behavior	Anchoring, complaints behavior	Anchoring Bias Theory	[21]
Cognitive biases in marketing communication: Influence of Anchoring and Message Framing	Customer perception, Message Framing,	Cognitive Bias Theory, Framing Theory	[22]
Quality of Service Perception in Telecom Business in Tanzania	Service Quality, Customer Perception	Service Quality Theory	[29]
Handling complaints on social network sites – An analysis of complaints and complaint responses	Complaint Handling, Social Media Use, customer Satisfaction	Social Media Theory, Complaint Management Theory	[30]
Whose and What Social Media Complaints Have Happier Resolutions?	Complaint Resolution, Social Media Complaints	SERVQUAL	[31]
Complaint Deescalation Strategies on Social Media	Complaint Deescalation, Social Media Strategy	CRM, Social Media Theory	[37]
Complaint handling on social media: The impact of multiple response times on consumer satisfaction	Response Time, Consumer Satisfaction	SERVQUAL	[41]
Service recovery: a framework and empirical investigation	Service Recovery, Customer Satisfaction	CRM, Service Recovery Theory	[64]
Impact of magnitude of service failure and complaint handling on satisfaction and brand credibility	Service Failure, Complaint Handling, Brand Credibility	SERVQUAL	[72]
Explaining customer satisfaction with complaint handling	Complaint Handling, Customer Satisfaction	SERVQUAL	[90]
The impact of customer compassion on face-to-face and online complaints	Customer Compassion, Complaint Handling	SERVQUAL	[94]
Evaluating electronic CRM success: mediating role of customer feedback management	Electronic CRM, Customer Feedback Management	CRM , Information Processing Theory (IPT)	[136]
Modeling customer perceptions of complaint handling over time	Complaint Handling, Perceived Justice, Satisfaction	Consumer Behavior Theory ,Justice Theory,	[145]
Timing of apology after service failure: moderating role of future interaction expectation	Apology Timing, Service Failure, Customer Satisfaction	SERVQUAL, Expectation Theory	[168]
Organizational responses to customer complaints: What works and what doesn't	Organizational Response, Complaint Handling, Trust	SERVQUAL,	[169]
Role of social media influencers in service failure and recovery strategies	Social Media Influencers, Service Failure, Recovery Strategy	Social Influence Theory	[172]
Consumer complaints and complaint management in tourism sector	Complaint Management, Consumer Complaints	Complaint Management Theory	[179]

A review of the existing literature reveals a fragmented approach to understanding customer complaint management, with most studies grounded in single theoretical frameworks such as Customer Relationship Management (CRM) [2,64], or SERVQUAL [31,72,90]. While these models offer valuable insights into isolated aspects such as service quality and customer satisfaction they fall short of capturing the multifaceted nature of customer experiences, especially in the context of digital and social media-driven interactions. This lack of theoretical integration has limited the ability of researchers to fully explain how organizational practices, psychological perceptions, and consumer behaviors interact to influence satisfaction outcomes.

Despite the growing recognition of the emotional and relational dimensions of complaint handling, few studies have explored the role of 'trust in the company' as a mediating variable. Trust is a central psychological construct that helps explain why some customers feel satisfied and loyal even after experiencing service failures, provided the company responds appropriately[88]. Trust transforms a transactional complaint into a relational turning point, reinforcing customer confidence and long-term engagement. Its inclusion as a mediator offers a deeper understanding of how complaint resolution strategies such as transparency, timely response, or influencer engagement translate into positive customer outcomes [37, 172].

Furthermore, existing models often treat customers as a homogenous group, overlooking individual differences in perception and response [145]. This oversight neglects the fact that customer reactions to complaint management strategies can vary significantly depending on personal sensitivity, emotional reactivity and behavioral tendencies. Incorporating consumer behavior sensitivity as a moderating variable allows for a more differentiated analysis by acknowledging that highly sensitive consumers may be more reactive to delays, tone or perceived indifference in complaint handling, whereas less sensitive consumers may be more tolerant or rational. Including this variable enhances the model's explanatory power and reflects the real-world diversity of consumer expectations and experiences [8, 145].

Therefore, the current study addresses this critical gap by proposing an integrated model that combines CRM, SERVQUAL, Information Processing Theory, and Consumer Behavior Theory while introducing trust in the company as a mediator and

consumer behavior sensitivity as a moderator. This approach aims to offer a more comprehensive and contextually relevant understanding of complaint management in the telecom sector, particularly in developing markets such as Tanzania, where customer engagement dynamics are complex and evolving.

2.2.4. Debates and Contradictions in Complaints Management Research

Research on complaints management and its influence on customer satisfaction reveals a dynamic and often contradictory landscape. While many studies emphasize that effective complaint handling generally enhances satisfaction, others highlight inconsistencies across service environments, communication channels, and customer segments. For instance, although service quality is frequently positioned as central to complaint resolution outcomes [41,72], emerging evidence suggests that even comprehensive service recovery efforts do not always yield positive outcomes [161]. Some studies observe that in some cases, recovery efforts may backfire, particularly when customer expectations are exceptionally highly sensitive or when service errors are repeated[96]. Furthermore, literature point out that customer responses vary significantly based on personality traits, issue severity, and channel of communication[98]. In multichannel industries like telecommunications, fragmented customer journeys and internal communication breakdowns further complicate the consistency of service recovery practices.

Methodological disparities further intensify these contradictions. Quantitative studies typically detect overarching patterns but may overlook contextual nuances and emotional depth, while qualitative inquiries offer rich detail yet lack scalability and generalizability[165,169]. This study addresses both shortcomings through a sequential mixed-methods design, which allows context-specific insights from qualitative data to inform a broader, generalizable quantitative framework. Such an approach supports the development of a complaints management strategy that accounts for industry complexity and individual customer differences.

Contradictions are also evident in the domain of customer feedback utilization. Feedback is traditionally valued as a tool for service improvement and customer engagement, yet its impact is not always constructive. Although structured feedback mechanisms may help organizations enhance responsiveness and innovation [127, 136,

138], public feedback especially on social media can amplify negativity and damage brand reputation if not handled effectively. Golmohammadi et al. (2021) note that platforms like Twitter and Facebook often serve as stages for customer dissatisfaction, potentially deterring other consumers. This inconsistency highlights theoretical tensions: the S-O-R model frames 'feedback' as a stimulus provoking varied emotional responses; CRM theory emphasizes its role in building trust, which falters when feedback is poorly managed; and consumer behavior combined with Information Processing Theory explains how customers mentally filter feedback, often anchoring on negative experiences. Previous studies tend to overlook these complex, context-dependent dynamics. By employing a sequential mixed-methods design, this study bridges that gap first exploring nuanced perceptions qualitatively, then validating findings quantitatively providing deeper insight into how feedback influences satisfaction, trust and overall customer behavior in telecom complaint management.

Beyond the complexities of communication channels and responsible actors, scholarly perspectives increasingly diverge on the optimal speed and style of complaint responses. While promptness is widely recognized as a cornerstone of effective complaint resolution and a key driver of customer satisfaction [74,110,169], emerging research suggests that speed alone is insufficient. Literature argue that rapid replies lacking empathy, contextual sensitivity, or meaningful engagement may fail to restore satisfaction, and in some cases, may even aggravate customer frustration[123]. This challenges the conventional wisdom that faster is always better, pointing instead to the importance of response quality and tone. The debate becomes even more complex in public complaint forums. One study emphasize the value of personalized, well-crafted public responses in reinforcing brand credibility and trust[32]. In contrast, studies reveal that poorly executed public responses especially those perceived as defensive, generic, or dismissive can intensify dissatisfaction and damage the company's reputation[97,98]. These contrasting findings expose the limitations of one-dimensional metrics such as speed and underscore the need for more holistic, context-aware approaches to complaint handling. This study builds on such insights by examining not only the timeliness but also the perceived authenticity and emotional

resonance of complaint responses, particularly in multichannel and public-facing contexts.

Technological enablers such as digital complaint systems and CRM platforms have become central to complaint management strategies, offering integrated, data-driven solutions to personalize responses. Research emphasize their role in improving satisfaction through streamlined interactions[105], while some studies warn that over-reliance on automation can lead to depersonalized responses that harm customer trust [145]. Although some studies show positive effects of technology on complaint resolution [40,42], others report mixed results, highlighting challenges in balancing efficiency with empathy [31,32,37]. This inconsistency points to a gap in understanding how technology impacts customer satisfaction across different contexts. This study addresses that gap by exploring the interplay between technological tools and customer behavior sensitivity, aiming to guide organizations in integrating technology and human touch more effectively for better complaint management outcomes.

These contradictory findings from extant literature underscore the importance of employing more sophisticated research frameworks that incorporate moderating and mediating variables to unpack the nuanced interplay between complaints management practices and customer satisfaction outcomes. Literature emphasize moderators like customer behavior sensitivity, which influence how customers perceive and react to complaint handling efforts[134]. Likewise, some studies demonstrate the mediating role of trust in the company, which can bridge the relationship between service recovery efforts and customer satisfaction[135,136]. Yet, despite their theoretical importance, such variables remain underutilized in empirical complaints management research, particularly within the complex, multichannel telecom environment.

In light of these theoretical and practical gaps, the present study seeks to fill these voids by integrating trust as a mediating variable and customer behavior sensitivity as a moderating variable within a comprehensive framework. Additionally, it critically evaluates multi-channel complaint management strategies including the burgeoning influence of social media platforms and influencers to develop a more robust, evidence-based model for understanding and managing customer complaints effectively. This approach aligns with calls in recent telecom research to adopt customer-centric and

transparent organizational cultures, advanced technological tools, and nuanced customer feedback mechanisms as pillars of effective complaint management that ultimately foster higher customer satisfaction and brand reputation [25,29,38].

2.2.5. Empirical Insights Across Global and African Settings

A growing body of empirical research across regions, industries, and methodological traditions demonstrates that complaint handling is not merely an operational necessity but a strategic driver of customer trust, satisfaction, and behavioural outcomes. Studies conducted in both developed and emerging markets consistently highlight how responsiveness, transparency, cultural sensitivity, and digital communication channels shape customer perceptions of fairness and organizational credibility. At the same time, recent work foregrounds the influence of technological adoption, social media ecosystems, and structural inequalities especially in Global South contexts on how customers experience and evaluate complaint processes. Together, these insights provide a rich empirical foundation that informs the present study's integration of service quality practices, feedback systems, organizational culture, digital engagement, and customer behaviour sensitivity within a trust-mediated framework. The following review weaves together key empirical findings to demonstrate the multidimensional nature of complaint management and its relevance to understanding customer satisfaction in the telecom sector.

Literature [45,54] observed that responsive CRM systems significantly enhance customer satisfaction and trust, demonstrating that proactive complaint handling fosters loyalty; however, when read against broader evidence, this relationship appears more complex than a simple cause–effect pattern. Some studies show [61,73] showed that effective complaint resolution promotes loyalty and retention, yet his findings also imply that customers respond not only to the outcome of resolution but to the intent they perceive behind it, suggesting that satisfaction emerges from both procedural fairness and relational authenticity. Literature [53,62,75] add further nuance by arguing that trust is shaped primarily by perceived responsiveness rather than by technical service processes alone, positioning trust as a psychological lens through which customers interpret all subsequent interactions a dynamic that intensifies the consequences of poor responsiveness. In parallel, studies [45,54,75] highlight how

efficient complaint handling mitigates negative emotions such as brand hate, revealing that complaint management operates as an emotional regulatory mechanism rather than simply a restorative service tool. Taken together, these studies do more than affirm that responsiveness matters; they collectively expose a deeper mechanism in which operational efficiency, perceived intent, and emotional regulation interact to shape trust, satisfaction, and customer behaviour, offering a more layered empirical foundation for understanding complaint management outcomes in emerging-market telecom settings.

Some studies argued that customer sensitivity shapes the effectiveness of relationship marketing, implicitly challenging uniform complaint-handling approaches by showing that customers with higher expectations or greater knowledge respond differently to the same recovery efforts[76]. This introduces a tension often overlooked in complaint management literature: strategies that appear effective on average may underperform among more discerning customer segments. Complementing this perspective, studies demonstrated that network value mediates the relationship between firm strategies and performance, suggesting that complaint management does not merely resolve issues but actively participates in constructing perceived value and loyalty [73,75,79]. Their findings broaden the discussion by positioning complaint handling as a strategic contributor to the firm's relational capital rather than a reactive service function. Meanwhile, research show that vendor and organizational relationships shape service responsiveness in B2B telecom environments, underscoring that the efficiency of complaint handling is as dependent on internal structural arrangements as it is on customer-facing processes[80,82]. Taken together, these studies reveal a multi-level mechanism in which customer sensitivity, perceived network value, and organizational alignment intersect to determine the ultimate effectiveness of complaint management—highlighting the need for more adaptive, context-aware, and structurally supported strategies in telecom settings.

The role of digital channels in complaint management is increasingly pivotal, yet the evidence reveals a more intricate dynamic than simple responsiveness. Einwiller and a study observed that organizational reactions to public complaints on social media strongly influence corporate reputation and trust, underscoring the reputational stakes

of visible online interactions[65]. Building on this, some research showed that prompt and personalized responses elevate satisfaction, but their findings also imply that speed alone is insufficient—customers evaluate the authenticity and relational tone embedded in digital replies[68,70]. Literature added further nuance by demonstrating that public complaint resolution shapes brand credibility, suggesting that transparency in digital spaces acts as a signal of organizational integrity[61,64]. Yet consumer expectations are not formed solely by firms: Research revealed that social media influencers play a significant role in shaping customer interpretations of service quality and complaint handling, introducing an external, perception-shaping force that complicates traditional CRM-driven models [36,65]. Literature, further argued that effective digital de-escalation strategies can restore trust and relational equity, highlighting that online complaint management is fundamentally a process of redirecting negative emotional trajectories[75,77]. Collectively, these studies indicate that digital complaint handling is not merely about operational responsiveness but about managing visibility, shaping expectations, signaling transparency, and regulating customer emotions within highly public and socially mediated environments.

Cultural and contextual factors fundamentally reshape how customers interpret and respond to complaint management, revealing that effectiveness is never universal but socially conditioned. Some studies showed that cultural norms strongly shape how online complaints are evaluated, implying that identical complaint-handling tactics can produce divergent outcomes across cultural groups—an insight that challenges models assuming uniform customer rationality[59,61]. This complexity is evident in Tanzania, where studies found that cultural orientations influence switching behaviour, loyalty patterns, and the interpretation of firm responses, suggesting that complaint outcomes cannot be divorced from local value systems[65]. Research further demonstrated that technology adoption and culturally congruent communication shape expectations and behavioural responses, underscoring that digital engagement strategies must reflect local communicative norms[69]. These micro-level cultural effects intersect with broader structural realities: Literature [75] documented persistent urban–rural infrastructure gaps that influence satisfaction and service usage, while studies showed that unequal access across African contexts continues to shape digital experiences and

complaint trajectories[78]. Some research extended this argument by highlighting how infrastructural and regulatory constraints in Sub-Saharan Africa frame customer expectations and even inform consumer activism, indicating that structural context shapes not only service delivery but also the intensity and form of customer responses[79]. Collectively, these studies reveal that complaint management in emerging markets is embedded within a layered socio-cultural and infrastructural environment, where norms, disparities, and regulatory realities interact to shape trust, satisfaction, and behavioural outcomes.

Empirical studies from other African contexts complement these insights but also reveal contextual nuances that complicate universal assumptions about complaint management. Studies showed that CSR initiatives strengthen trust and customer retention, indicating that customers judge complaint responses within the broader moral and social posture of the firm; this challenges narrow, process-focused models by suggesting that trust is partly built outside the complaint encounter itself[73]. Other literature found that ineffective customer feedback utilization lowers satisfaction, but their results also expose a cultural tension: feedback mechanisms imported from Western CRM models may fail when they disregard local communication norms and power dynamics, making customer feedback utilization a culturally contingent rather than purely technical practice[75]. Similarly, some researchers reported that rapid, transparent complaint resolution enhances trust, directly supporting trust's mediating role[76], yet their findings hint that transparency operates as a symbolic gesture of accountability—particularly important in contexts where customers historically doubt corporate fairness. Some studies further demonstrated that transparent organizational culture improves perceptions of fairness and confidence, reinforcing the relevance of transparent organization culture but also suggesting that internal culture is not merely an antecedent to service quality; it is a perceptual lens through which customers interpret every interaction[80]. Collectively, these studies show that complaint outcomes in African markets are shaped by an interplay of cultural sensitivity, organizational integrity, and relational symbolism, emphasizing that effective complaint management is as much about aligning with contextual expectations as it is about operational efficiency.

Tanzania-specific studies provide essential contextual depth, revealing structural and institutional factors that shape complaint management in ways not fully captured by global models. Literature emphasized that governance and regulatory innovation critically influence service quality, suggesting that organizational efforts to improve complaint handling are constrained—and sometimes enabled—by broader policy environments [83]. Some studies further showed that local partnerships in Tanzanian telecom firms create both opportunities for improved responsiveness and risks that complicate accountability, indicating that complaint handling effectiveness is partly a function of inter-organizational coordination rather than solely internal capability[68,70]. Despite these structural developments, research found that although service quality remains a strong driver of satisfaction, the formal complaint systems in place are still ineffective, exposing a persistent implementation gap that undermines customer confidence and signals a need for more coherent and customer-centric complaint infrastructures[73]. Reinforcing the centrality of relational mechanisms, studies demonstrated that trust mediates customer–firm interactions and loyalty across multiple African contexts, underscoring that even when structural challenges persist, trust acts as the key psychological bridge that converts complaint management practices into favourable behavioural outcomes[68]. Collectively, these Tanzania-specific insights show that effective complaint management is shaped by the interplay between regulatory conditions, organizational partnerships, system design gaps, and trust-driven relational dynamics.

Taken together, these empirical insights underscore that effective complaint handling is inherently multi-dimensional, encompassing operational responsiveness, digital engagement, influencer-mediated perceptions, organizational transparency, cultural sensitivity, and infrastructural realities. Across contexts, trust consistently emerges as a central mediating mechanism, translating managerial actions into customer satisfaction and loyalty, while customer behaviour sensitivity and contextual disparities act as critical moderators that shape how complaints are perceived and processed. This synthesis highlights that complaint management is not merely procedural but relational and symbolic, requiring alignment between organizational practices and customer expectations. Consequently, these findings strongly justify an

integrated model in which Service Quality Control (SQC), Customer Feedback Utilization (CFU), Transparent Organizational Culture (OCC), and Social Media Influencer (SMI) utilization serve as key predictors, with trust mediating their effects and customer behaviour sensitivity moderating outcomes—offering a theoretically grounded and contextually relevant framework for examining complaint management effectiveness in the Tanzanian telecom sector. See table 2.4 showing a summary of the review.

Table 2.4 Empirical Review

Author(s)	Region / Context	Focus	Key Empirical Insights	Relevance to the Study
[54]	Bahrain	CRM satisfaction	Responsive CRM improves satisfaction and trust; proactive complaint handling boosts loyalty	Supports the importance of system responsiveness and CRM in enhancing customer trust and satisfaction.
[61]	Global	Customer loyalty	Satisfaction from complaint resolution strongly influences loyalty and retention	Provides evidence linking effective complaint handling to long-term customer behaviour, relevant for validating behavioural outcomes.
[62]	Saudi Arabia	Reputation measurement	Customer trust depends on perceived responsiveness	Highlights the role of responsiveness in building trust, supporting the inclusion of trust as a mediating variable.
[63]	Asia-Pacific	Brand hate and complaint handling	Effective complaint management mitigates negative sentiment and brand hate	Supports examining complaint management as a moderating factor in customer behaviour outcomes.
[59]	Europe	Price expectations	Customer awareness of service pricing influences relationship marketing effectiveness	Suggests the need to consider customer knowledge and expectations in complaint response strategies.
[83]	Global	Network strategies	Network value mediates the relationship between firm strategies and performance	Reinforces the relevance of operational strategies, including complaint handling, on perceived value and loyalty.
[102]	Sri Lanka	B2B telecom	Vendor relationships influence service responsiveness	Highlights organizational factors influencing complaint handling, supporting investigation of firm practices.
[71]	Malaysia	Consumer engagement	Brand engagement drives loyalty towards telecom providers	Justifies inclusion of engagement mechanisms linking complaint handling to customer behavioural outcomes.

[32]	USA	Social media complaints	Public complaint responses influence corporate reputation and trust	Supports examining social media channels as platforms for complaint management and trust-building.
[34]	USA	Social media	Prompt, personalized complaint responses lead to higher satisfaction	Emphasizes importance of real-time response, informing strategies for digital complaint handling.
[48]	Global	Complaint publicization	Public complaint resolution affects brand credibility	Reinforces including transparency and visibility of complaint handling in the study.
[124]	Global	Social media influencers	Consumers adopt influencers' exemplars, shaping expectations and behaviour	Justifies integrating social media influencer utilization as a factor affecting complaint perception and behaviour.
[36]	Global	Influencer marketing	Influencers shape consumer decision-making, including service expectations	Supports investigating how influencers guide customer expectations in complaint contexts.
[60]	USA	Social media de-escalation	Complaint de-escalation strategies restore trust and relational equity	Informs practical strategies for complaint management in digital and online channels.
[45]	Global	Culture & online complaints	Cultural norms affect evaluation of online complaints	Supports inclusion of behavior sensitivity as a moderating factor in complaint handling.
[46]	China	Mobile complaints	Small-screen device use intensifies complaint frequency and severity	Highlights the role of technology in complaint frequency, relevant for studying mobile and digital complaints.
[43]	Tanzania	Telecom service quality	Urban–rural infrastructure gaps affect satisfaction	Provides context for emerging market constraints affecting trust and complaint resolution.
[98]	Togo	Service inequality	Unequal access affects customer experience	Justifies considering structural and access disparities in complaint handling practices.
[92]	Ghana	CSR & retention	CSR initiatives strengthen trust and retention	Supports examining organizational practices that indirectly influence customer trust and satisfaction.
[99]	Tanzania	Switching behaviour	Cultural norms influence loyalty and complaint responses	Validates the role of culturally sensitive factors and customer behaviour sensitivity in complaint responses.
[82]	Tanzania	Regulatory innovation	Governance influences service quality	Emphasizes regulatory and institutional context affecting complaint handling effectiveness.
[89]	Tanzania	Local firm linkages	Partnerships yield benefits but also risks	Supports considering partnerships with influencers.
[39]	Tanzania	Service quality & satisfaction	Strong influence on satisfaction; complaint systems ineffective	Justifies including Service Quality Control (SQC) as a key predictor of customer satisfaction.

[115]	Kenya	Complaint resolution	Quick, transparent handling strengthens trust	Supports trust as a mediating variable between complaint management and satisfaction.
[103]	Nigeria	Social media engagement	Digital responsiveness increases satisfaction	Reinforces inclusion of social media influencer utilization in complaint handling.
[105]	Eswatini / Southern Africa	Organizational culture	Transparent processes enhance fairness and confidence	Justifies Transparent Organizational Culture (OCC) as a factor influencing complaint outcomes.
[106]	Ghana	Customer feedback mechanisms	Ineffective feedback utilization reduces satisfaction	Supports exploring culturally sensitive Customer Feedback Utilization (CFU) practices.
[107]	Tanzania	Technology adoption & expectations	Preference for personalized, culturally aligned communication	Supports inclusion of Customer Behaviour Sensitivity (CBS) in complaint handling models.
[108]	Sub-Saharan Africa	Telecom challenges	Infrastructural/regulatory challenges shape expectations and activism	Justifies considering CBS and trust as mediator and moderator in emerging markets.
[109]	Multi-country Africa	Trust & loyalty	Trust mediates customer–firm interactions and loyalty	Reinforces trust in the company as a central mediating variable in the study.

Therefore a review of the literature reveals a clear geographic pattern in complaint management research, with the majority of foundational studies conducted in global or non-African contexts. For instance, global research in underscore the role of responsive CRM, effective complaint handling, and trust in shaping satisfaction, loyalty, and brand perceptions. Complementary research from Europe , the USA, China, and Malaysia extends these insights, highlighting the influence of digital engagement, real-time responsiveness, device-mediated complaint frequency, and social media influencers in shaping customer expectations and relational outcomes. While these studies provide robust theoretical foundations, they are predominantly situated in contexts with advanced infrastructure, high digital penetration, and relatively homogeneous regulatory environments, raising questions about their applicability to emerging African markets.

In contrast, African-focused studies bring crucial contextual nuance that problematizes a one-size-fits-all approach. Research from Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Eswatini, Togo and multi-country African studies demonstrate that complaint handling is embedded in service constraints, cultural expectations, and organizational capacities. These studies highlight that trust, transparency, and culturally aligned customer

feedback mechanisms are not merely desirable but necessary for ensuring effective complaint management. Tanzanian-specific research further sharpens this focus and the research emphasize digital and infrastructural disparities between urban and rural areas, by showing the critical role of governance, regulatory innovation, and local partnerships, whilst also pointing to the persistent ineffectiveness of formal complaint systems despite high service quality. Together, these studies highlight a core problem: models developed in high-resource, digitally mature contexts may overestimate the reach and efficacy of digital complaint channels and underestimate the role of cultural, structural, and relational factors in African telecom settings.

Thus, this regional analysis underscores the need for contextually embedded models of complaint management that integrate operational practices (SQC, CFU, OCC, SMI), relational mechanisms (trust), and moderating factors such as customer behaviour sensitivity, while accounting for Africa-specific infrastructural, cultural, and regulatory realities. By juxtaposing global generalizations with African empirical evidence, this synthesis stimulates dialogue on adapting complaint management frameworks to emerging markets, emphasizing that effective strategies must be relational, culturally sensitive, and structurally informed rather than purely procedural.

2.2.6. Knowledge Gaps Summary

The existing body of literature on complaint management presents several critical limitations that warrant further investigation. Much of the prior research has been conducted in developed markets such as North America, Europe, and Asia, particularly in sectors like banking and retail, offering limited applicability to the sub-Saharan African context [1, 5, 7]. This geographic and sectoral imbalance raises concerns about contextual validity, as institutional, cultural, and infrastructural differences in emerging economies such as Tanzania are likely to shape customer expectations and organizational responses differently. Although a few studies have focused on African countries, they lack sufficient depth and fail to generalize effectively to the unique telecom service dynamics now evolving in Tanzania [10, 26].

Additionally, existing research predominantly explores complaint management through traditional customer service channels such as face-to-face interactions, call centers, or email [2,5,6]. However, the rise of social media platforms has redefined the

landscape of complaint management, shifting it into a public, real-time, and highly visible domain. Yet, the literature scarcely explores how social media influences service recovery, brand perception, and complaint resolution effectiveness, an oversight particularly notable in the context of telecom firms in developing economies [31, 32, 40].

Internal organizational enablers such as a transparent culture, timely responsiveness, and effective feedback utilization are consistently underrepresented in current complaint management frameworks[106]. Although these customer-centric principles are widely acknowledged in theory, they rarely translate into measurable constructs or are systematically examined as critical determinants of successful complaint resolution [4, 5, 7]. Consequently, the prevailing research landscape tends to overemphasize customer emotions and behavioral responses, while largely overlooking the pivotal role that internal organizational mechanisms play in either facilitating or impeding the effective handling of complaints. This gap signals a pressing need to reorient inquiry towards how these internal enablers can be operationalized, measured, and leveraged to enhance complaint resolution outcomes.

Similarly, although customer trust in the company is widely acknowledged as an outcome of effective complaint resolution, its role as a mediating mechanism remains insufficiently theorized and empirically validated, revealing a critical gap in the literature [26, 29, 30]. Most prior studies adopt direct-effect models that link complaint management practices—such as responsiveness, transparency, and fairness—straight to customer satisfaction or loyalty, thereby neglecting the underlying psychological processes that explain how these effects unfold. Drawing on the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) framework, this omission is significant because it ignores the “organism” component, where trust operates as a central internal evaluative state through which customers interpret service recovery efforts. In complaint situations characterized by uncertainty, perceived risk, and relational disruption, customers do not automatically translate recovery efforts into satisfaction; instead, they first reassess the firm’s credibility, integrity, and benevolence, forming (or failing to form) trust. This indicates that trust is not merely an outcome but a necessary explanatory mechanism that transmits the effects of complaint management practices to post-recovery

evaluations. The lack of robust mediation-based investigations is particularly evident in digitally mediated complaint contexts, where heightened visibility and immediacy further complicate trust formation. Addressing this gap by positioning trust as a mediator provides a more process-oriented and theoretically grounded explanation of how complaint management practices influence customer satisfaction and loyalty, thereby advancing both conceptual clarity and empirical consistency in the literature.

Equally underexplored is customer behavior sensitivity, the extent to which individuals respond differently to service failures and recovery efforts. Though consumer heterogeneity is widely acknowledged, few studies have modeled this sensitivity as a moderating variable that could account for divergent satisfaction or trust outcomes [30,32,84]. This gap limits the development of nuanced complaint management approaches tailored to varied customer profiles.

Methodologically, the field remains heavily skewed toward quantitative survey-based designs, often capturing perceptions at a single point in time. Such cross-sectional methods risk simplifying the complex, emotional, and evolving nature of complaint experiences. The scarcity of mixed-methods designs further restricts theoretical advancement and hinders a more holistic understanding of complaint dynamics, particularly in rapidly changing sectors like telecommunications [84, 113, 114]. Hence, this study utilized the mixed methods approach to address the limitation

Lastly, theoretical fragmentation persists. Many studies rely on isolated constructs like justice theory, satisfaction theory, or the expectancy-disconfirmation model, often lacking an overarching framework. This piecemeal approach results in fragmented insights and inhibits theory-building. An integrated approach drawing on frameworks such as the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) model and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) theory could bridge this gap and enhance our understanding of the psychological and behavioral mechanisms underpinning complaint experiences [5, 8, 114]. In light of these substantial gaps, this study aims to provide a contextualized, theory-driven, and methodologically diverse investigation of complaint management in Tanzania's telecom sector. By incorporating underexplored variables such as social media-based complaint mechanisms, trust as a mediator, and customer behavior

sensitivity as a moderator this research seeks to enrich both empirical knowledge and theoretical frameworks. See table 2.5 summarizing the gaps.

Table 2.5 Knowledge Gaps

Knowledge Gap Area	Description	Implications and Motivation for this Research	Reference
Context-Specific Research	Existing studies mostly focus in developed countries or other sectors like banking and retail.	Calls for research tailored to the Tanzanian telecom context, accounting for unique challenges such as infrastructure, regulation, and customer expectations.	[1,5, 7,10,26]
Outdated Literature in Telecom Industry	Current body of research has not kept pace with rapid changes such as mobile money expansion, use of social media influencers	Necessitates updated studies that reflect current technological and regulatory developments and their impact on customer satisfaction and complaint resolution.	[2,5,6, 31, 32, 40].
Cultural and Socio economic Factors	Limited exploration of how corporate- cultural norms affect complaint behavior and satisfaction.	Suggests a need to investigate how transparent organization culture influence customer expectations and perceptions of service quality and complaint management.	[4, 5, 7,106].
Customer Feedback Utilization	Lack of in-depth studies on how feedback is collected, analyzed, and integrated into service improvement strategies.	Indicates an opportunity to explore systemic feedback analysis practices to enhance complaint management effectiveness.	[39] [41] , [48], [64], [72], [84] [90]
Role of Social Media	Insufficient research on how telecom companies use social media for handling complaints and managing reputation.	Requires investigation into social media’s influence on customer satisfaction and potential as a strategic complaints management tool.	[94], [108], [110], [114],[136], [172]
Limited mixed Methods Studies	Scarcity of studies combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of complaint management dynamics.	Highlights the need for mixed methods research to triangulate findings, enrich contextual insights, and validate outcomes across methodological paradigms.	[14], [15], [16], [17], [84], [108], [113], [114]
Theoretical Integration	Current research treats complaint management theories in isolation without combining them into a unified framework.	Highlights the need for integrated theoretical models to better explain the complex dynamics of complaint resolution.	[5], [8], [26], [29], [30], [114]

2.3. Definitions of Core Concepts

2.3.1. Customer Complaints

In the telecommunications industry, customer complaints are formal or informal expressions of dissatisfaction that arise when customers perceive a gap between expected and actual service performance, whether related to network quality, billing accuracy, customer support, or overall service experience [94,95]. They reflect multiple dimensions of customer perceptions, including fairness, responsiveness, reliability, and transparency, making them critical indicators of service shortcomings or failures. Effectively addressing complaints is essential, as unresolved dissatisfaction can damage trust and loyalty, whereas timely and transparent resolution can enhance customer satisfaction and even strengthen long-term relationships. Over time, the evolution of complaints management from traditional reactive channels to digital platforms and public social media forum underscores the growing strategic importance of treating complaints not only as problems to be solved but also as opportunities to demonstrate accountability and reinforce positive customer perceptions [93,97].

2.3.2. Service Quality

Service quality in the telecommunications industry refers to the extent to which service delivery meets or exceeds customer expectations, often assessed through models such as SERVQUAL and SERVPERF [7]. SERVQUAL emphasizes the gap between customer expectations and perceptions across five dimensions: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles. While SERVPERF focuses solely on actual performance outcomes. Within the context of complaint handling, service quality reflects how effectively an organization resolves customer issues through timely responses, transparency, and empathetic interactions, thereby fostering trust, satisfaction, and long-term loyalty

2.3.3. Customer Feedback

Customer feedback refers to the information provided by customers regarding their experiences, expectations, and perceptions of a company's products or services according to literature[108]. It is a critical tool for improving service delivery, enhancing customer satisfaction, and guiding organizational operations. Feedback can

be collected through surveys, interviews, focus groups, customer interactions, and online reviews, offering actionable insights into customer needs and areas for improvement. In complaints management, effectively utilizing feedback enables organizations to identify the root causes of dissatisfaction, implement corrective measures, and refine policies and processes to prevent recurrence, thereby fostering trust, loyalty, and competitive advantage. Integrating frameworks such as the Information Processing Theory allows organizations to systematically capture, process, and act upon customer input, ensuring that feedback drives meaningful strategic and operational improvements [110,115]

2.3.4. Social Media Influencers

Social media influencers are individuals who have amassed substantial followings on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, and who possess the ability to influence their followers' opinions, decisions, and behaviors [108]. Initially recognized for promoting products and services, their roles have expanded to include brand advocacy, crisis communication, and customer engagement [107]. In the context of telecommunications complaint management, influencers are leveraged to address customer grievances, manage crises, and restore brand reputation by fostering trust and credibility through authentic, timely, and personalized communication [97]. Their persuasive power lies in their perceived authenticity and close relationships with followers, enabling them to correct misinformation, reassure customers, and mitigate negative sentiment during crises [109]. Despite these strengths, integrating influencers into complaint management presents challenges, such as maintaining credibility, ensuring alignment with brand values, measuring impact, and addressing ethical concerns like transparency in partnerships [110]. By adopting best practices, telecom companies can leverage influencers' reach and influence to manage complaints effectively, strengthen customer relationships, and enhance long-term loyalty and competitive advantage in the digital marketplace [111].

2.3.5. Customer Trust in Company

Customer trust in the company refers to the confidence that customers place in a company's reliability, integrity, competence, and transparency, particularly in

resolving complaints and addressing service issues [112,96]. In the telecommunications sector, trust is a critical determinant of customer satisfaction, loyalty, and long-term profitability, given the prevalence of service interruptions, technical issues, and ongoing subscription-based relationships [114,93]. It is cultivated through proactive communication, transparent policies, effective issue resolution, and secure handling of customer data, especially amid privacy concerns and regulatory scrutiny [113,111]. Trust not only mediates the relationship between complaint management strategies and customer satisfaction [112,96] but also differentiates telecom providers in highly competitive markets where multiple companies offer similar services [93]. With the rise of digital platforms, social media, and high-speed networks like 5G, customers have heightened expectations for responsiveness, service quality, and reliability, making trust essential for sustaining long-term customer engagement, reducing churn, and reinforcing brand reputation [93,112].

2.3.6. Customer Behavior and Sensitivity

Customer behavior sensitivity refers to the extent to which customers are emotionally and cognitively affected by how their complaints are handled [97]. This sensitivity moderates how customers respond to complaint management strategies, particularly regarding responsiveness, empathy, and fairness [115]. Highly sensitive customers place great importance on being heard and treated empathetically, and personalized handling of complaints can significantly enhance their satisfaction, loyalty, and perceptions of the company [32]. In contrast, less sensitive customers may prioritize the efficiency and effectiveness of complaint resolution over emotional engagement, highlighting the need for a balanced approach that addresses both practical and emotional aspects [113]. The influence of customer sensitivity on satisfaction can vary across industries and organizational contexts [106], emphasizing the importance of tailoring complaint management strategies to diverse customer expectations and emotional needs. Understanding customer behavior sensitivity is particularly critical in sectors like telecommunications, where experiences with service issues and complaint handling strongly shape brand perception, loyalty, and overall customer satisfaction [93].

2.3.7. Service recovery

Service recovery refers to actions taken to resolve service failures and restore customer satisfaction [42]. However, it is only one element of a broader complaints management system, which systematically captures and learns from customer feedback to prevent future failures [42]. Social media has become a key platform for real-time recovery efforts, enhancing responsiveness and transparency [42]. Scholars caution that isolated recovery efforts provide short-term relief; instead, recovery must be integrated into a structured complaints management framework to build lasting customer trust and loyalty [65,66]. This shift from reactive fixes to proactive, comprehensive management is vital for sustainable customer satisfaction.

Chapter 3 Theoretical Review

After summarizing, organizing, and analyzing existing domestic and international empirical studies. This chapter presents the major theories that underpin the study, with emphasis on the theoretical perspectives that account for customer complaints management practices. Through an in-depth examination of these theories, the chapter provides the conceptual grounding needed to guide the qualitative phase, shape the quantitative hypotheses and model development, and clarify the theoretical drivers of customer complaints and customer satisfaction.

3.1. Theoretical Overview and Integration

A substantial body of research exists on customer complaints management; however, the literature remains theoretically fragmented, as many studies rely on isolated frameworks that fail to adequately capture the complexity of customer responses in service failure and recovery contexts [68]. In particular, prior research has inadequately explained how firm-level complaint management practices translate into internal customer evaluations and, ultimately, satisfaction outcomes. To address this gap, the present study advances a theoretically integrated framework by positioning the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) model as the overarching meta-theoretical structure that organizes and connects multiple complementary theories into a coherent explanatory system. The SOR framework is particularly suitable in this context due to its ability to link external stimuli with internal cognitive and affective processing and subsequent behavioral responses [36,117,118]. However, its application in complaints management has often been limited by insufficient integration with other relevant theories, thereby constraining its explanatory depth.

The qualitative study establishes and provides ground for the themes to emerge. Thereafter the emerging themes are incorporated into the theoretical model following extensive literature review. Within this structure, complaint management practices—including service quality, social media influencer engagement, customer feedback utilization, and transparent organizational culture—are conceptualized as stimuli. While prior studies frequently acknowledge the importance of these factors, they often lack a clear theoretical grounding for how such stimuli are collectively operationalized and interpreted

by customers[36,64,87]. To address this limitation, the SERVQUAL model is embedded to conceptualize service quality as a measurable and multidimensional construct, capturing key service dimensions that are critical [85, 102]. At the same time, Information Processing Theory is integrated to explain how customers cognitively interpret external signals, particularly those conveyed through social media influencers and digital platforms [36, 105]. This integration responds to a key gap in the literature, where the role of mediated information in shaping complaint evaluations has been underexplored, despite its growing relevance in contemporary service environments[87].

The organism component is theoretically enriched through the integration of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) theory and the Service Recovery Paradox, addressing another limitation in existing studies that tend to oversimplify internal customer responses. CRM theory provides a relational foundation by explaining how firms strategically manage interactions to build and sustain customer trust [61, 63]. However, CRM alone does not fully capture the dynamic nature of customer reactions following service failures. To overcome this limitation, the Service Recovery Paradox is incorporated, demonstrating that effective recovery efforts can transform service failures into opportunities for enhancing satisfaction and strengthening trust [42, 64]. By embedding trust within the organism stage, the study extends traditional SOR applications, which often focus narrowly on emotional responses, to include relational and evaluative internal states as central explanatory mechanisms.

Furthermore, consumer behavior theories are integrated to introduce customer behavioral sensitivity as a moderating psychological condition. Existing complaint management literature often assumes homogeneity in customer responses[67], overlooking the fact that individuals differ significantly in how they perceive and react to service failures. Consumer behavior research highlights these differences in cognitive and emotional processing [30, 32], thereby justifying the inclusion of behavioral sensitivity as a key boundary condition. This addition enhances the explanatory power of the framework by accounting for variability in internal processing, offering a more nuanced understanding of customer reactions.

At the response level, Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory and Attribution Theory are implicitly integrated to address limitations in how satisfaction has been conceptualized in

prior research. Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory explains satisfaction as the outcome of comparisons between expected and actual service performance [144, 167], yet it does not fully account for how customers interpret the causes of service failures. Attribution Theory complements this by explaining how customers assign responsibility for both failures and recovery efforts [19, 41]. The integration of these theories provides a more comprehensive explanation of satisfaction formation, particularly in complaint contexts where perceptions of fairness and accountability play a critical role. Thus the service recovery paradox acts as a glue to hold the two theories together.

The integration of these theoretical perspectives offers several important theoretical contributions. First, it addresses the fragmentation in the complaints management literature by demonstrating how multiple theories can be systematically aligned within a unified SOR-based framework. Second, it extends the SOR model by incorporating trust as a central mediating mechanism and behavioral sensitivity as a moderating condition, thereby enhancing its applicability to complex service environments. Third, it advances a multi-layered conceptualization of stimuli, integrating operational (service quality), relational (CRM), and informational (information processing) dimensions, which better reflects the realities of modern telecom contexts. As a result, the study extends both the SOR theory and service recovery theory by showing that the effects of firm-level recovery efforts are not purely direct; rather, they unfold through the mediating influence of customer trust and are contingent on individual behavioral sensitivities. This highlights a nuanced, interactive process of stimulus interpretation during service recovery, offering a more precise theoretical lens for understanding how complaints management practices translate into customer satisfaction outcomes.

From a practical perspective, this theoretical integration provides a more actionable framework by explicitly linking managerial interventions—such as improving service quality, leveraging social media influencers, and enhancing transparency—to underlying psychological processes and customer outcomes. By clarifying how these practices influence trust formation, cognitive evaluation, and satisfaction, the framework enables telecom managers to design more targeted and effective complaint management strategies, moving beyond fragmented and intuition-driven approaches.

Therefore, the discussion establishes a strong and meaningful foundation for understanding customer complaints management through an integrated theoretical lens. By connecting multiple complementary theories within the SOR framework, the study addresses gaps in existing literature and clarifies how firm-level complaint management practices shape customer trust, evaluation, and satisfaction. Recognizing that no single theory fully explains these dynamics, the following sections provide a detailed and critical analysis of each perspective, highlighting its assumptions, strengths, and limitations. Moreover, they demonstrate how these theories are systematically integrated within the proposed framework.

3.2. The Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) Model

The Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) theory has long served as a foundational model for understanding human behavior, originally conceptualized by Donald Hebb in 1955 and later refined by Mehrabian and Russell (1974) within the context of environmental psychology [187]. The model outlines a systematic process whereby external stimuli influence internal psychological states (organism), which then shape observable behavioral responses. Over the decades, the SOR model has evolved from its psychological origins to become a versatile analytical framework applied in marketing, consumer behavior, and service management studies [188]. In these domains, stimuli include marketing activities, service experiences, and environmental cues; the organism comprises emotional and cognitive reactions such as trust, expectations, or sensitivity; and the response represents resulting behaviors like satisfaction or loyalty [117,118]. The model's strength lies in its ability to unravel the mechanisms through which environmental inputs are cognitively and emotionally processed to yield customer outcomes making it particularly useful for analyzing the complexities of customer complaint behavior in service settings[187].

Despite its widespread application, the SOR framework faces several research gaps and contradictions, particularly in complaints management contexts. While studies have consistently used SOR to model the pathway from service quality or feedback mechanisms to satisfaction, results have not always been conclusive [120]. For example, some scholars report that high service quality during complaints management leads to increased satisfaction via trust [130], while others caution that customer feedback practices during

complaints management may appear performative or even aggravate dissatisfaction if not followed by meaningful action [137]. Similarly, the effectiveness of social media influencers as stimuli in the complaints process has been debated [173]. In some cases, influencers can enhance credibility and engagement [36], yet in others, especially where authenticity is questioned, their involvement may reduce trust or satisfaction [174]. These inconsistencies signal the need for a more nuanced application of the SOR framework, particularly one that recognizes individual differences in how consumers process stimuli.

A critical gap in the literature is the underexplored role of customer behavior sensitivity within the SOR structure [186]. While trust has been employed as an internal organismic mediator, the moderating effect of behavioral sensitivity; how acutely a customer reacts to stimuli such as service quality lapses or corporate transparency remains largely neglected [145,187]. This omission limits the explanatory power of many SOR-based studies, especially in sectors like telecom, where customer expectations are evolving rapidly [190]. Furthermore, much of the existing SOR-based complaints management research has been conducted in Western contexts, raising concerns about the generalizability of these findings to non-Western settings, such as Tanzania, where consumer values and digital communication patterns may differ significantly [2].

This study seeks to address key theoretical and contextual gaps by reapplying the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) framework across two interlinked studies in a structured and contextually grounded manner. In Study 1, which adopted a qualitative approach, the SOR framework was applied in an exploratory context where interviews with customers, customer service representatives, and managers were conducted to uncover perspectives on effective complaints management practices(stimuli). The emergent themes from these interviews such as service quality control during complaints management, customer feedback utilization during complaints management, transparent organizational culture, and the role of social media influencers were identified as key complaints management practices and later operationalized as stimuli in Study 2. In that study, the model was extended by incorporating customer behavior sensitivity (CBS) as a moderating organism element and trust in the company (TRC) as a mediating organism factor, with customer satisfaction positioned as the final response.

3.3. Service Recovery Paradox

The Service Recovery Paradox (SRP) refers to a phenomenon where customers who experience a service failure but perceive the recovery effort as highly effective end up being more satisfied and loyal than if the failure had never occurred[201]. Originally introduced by McCole, Berry, and Parasuraman (1996), the paradox challenges the assumption that service failures always damage customer satisfaction[206]. Instead, it suggests that well-executed recovery strategies can restore and even enhance customer trust and loyalty beyond baseline levels[208].

The Service Recovery Paradox (SRP) presents a compelling yet paradoxical insight into customer satisfaction dynamics, revealing inconsistencies that make it highly relevant for contemporary research. While SRP suggests that effective recovery from service failures can not only restore but even enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty, empirical evidence remains mixed, some studies confirm the paradox [42], while others find recovery efforts insufficient to fully compensate for initial failures [66]. This contradiction underscores the complexity of customer responses and highlights the necessity of integrating nuanced theories like SRP with other theories to better understand these phenomena in the modern service environment, characterized by rapid information flow, multi-channel interactions, and heightened customer sensitivity[68].

The mixed evidence surrounding SRP research stems from growing recognition that recovery outcomes depend heavily on contextual and psychological factors[173]. Research indicates that customers' assessments depend more on perceptions of fairness in terms of distributive, procedural, and interactional aspects rather than solely on the size or extent of the recovery offered [104]. Moreover, SRP effects often fade over time; studies indicate that while recovery may boost immediate satisfaction, it rarely sustains long-term loyalty[68]. In digital settings, impersonal responses can weaken recovery impact [173], and cultural differences further moderate SRP outcomes[42]. As a result, scholars now advocate integrating SRP with other theories like CRM, consumer behavior and expectancy-disconfirmation to better explain customer responses in today's emotionally charged, multi-channel service environments[64]. We address these limitations by integrating SRP with CRM and behavioral factors, offering a more comprehensive view of recovery effectiveness

Our study accommodated the Service Recovery Paradox (SRP) across its phases, offering a comprehensive lens on how effective recovery strategies can enhance customer satisfaction. In Study 1, the qualitative inquiry uncovered real-world insights from customers, customer service representatives, and managers, highlighting recovery actions as pivotal stimuli that trigger emotional and cognitive responses, providing the initial grounding for the SRP's relevance. Study 2 built on these insights by applying the SOR framework, where recovery practices served as stimuli, customer behavior sensitivity (CBS) functioned as a moderating organism factor, and trust in the company (TRC) as a mediating organism response thereby quantitatively modeling the conditions under which recovery efforts lead to enhanced satisfaction, as predicted by the SRP. Collectively, these studies not only integrate the SRP but also address its contradictions by contextualizing it within a broader framework that accounts for individual differences and behavioral dynamics.

3.4. Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Theory

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) theory centers on strategically managing a company's interactions with current and potential customers to build lasting, mutually beneficial relationships[193]. Originating in the 1990s from relationship marketing, CRM initially focused on leveraging customer data and technology to improve sales and service efficiency. Over time, it has expanded beyond transactional processes to encompass a customer-centric philosophy that integrates marketing, sales, service, and digital engagement [55]. CRM emphasizes personalized communication, trust-building, and value creation across multiple touchpoints to enhance customer satisfaction, loyalty, and long-term profitability[185]. Its theoretical foundation combines operational tools with behavioral insights, aiming to understand and anticipate customer needs in increasingly complex and dynamic market environments.

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) theory offers a strategic framework for fostering long-term relationships through personalized engagement and trust-building, yet its application to complaints management remains conceptually limited [194]. While traditionally focused on leveraging customer data to deliver consistent service across touchpoints, CRM literature often overlooks the emotional and justice-oriented expectations central to complaint situations [185]. By integrating CRM with Service

Recovery Theory, which emphasizes fairness, empathy, and effective redress, and aligning it with the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) model, which captures how stimuli (e.g., firm responses) influence internal customer states and subsequent behaviors, this study reframes CRM as more than an operational tool. Instead, it positions CRM as a psychologically responsive system capable of addressing both emotional and relational dimensions of service failure. This theoretical convergence enriches CRM's value by enhancing its relevance in emotionally charged, multichannel complaint contexts where trust and satisfaction are at stake.

A key shortcoming in prior research lies in CRM's transactional bias [194]. Many studies assume that complaint resolution is improved simply by drawing on customer history to tailor responses[201]. Yet this approach often fails in emotionally charged contexts, where customers seek not customized offers, but acknowledgment, transparency, and meaningful redress [98]. CRM's default mechanisms scripted interactions and automated workflows frequently produce depersonalized responses that intensify rather than resolve dissatisfaction [87]. This limitation requires attention because it exposes a critical flaw in CRM theory and practice: overreliance on personalization through data while neglecting emotional engagement. Addressing this can refine CRM models and help firms deliver more effective, trust-enhancing complaint response

Furthermore, CRM frameworks tend to generalize customer behavior, implicitly treating all customers as equally receptive to standardized recovery efforts [100]. This neglects individual differences in behavioral sensitivity, emotional expectations, and perceived justice factors that significantly influence how complaints are interpreted and judged [183]. Such oversights reduce the explanatory power of CRM in post-failure situations, where customer reactions are highly subjective and often unpredictable [67]. This study addresses these gaps by integrating customer behavior sensitivity, highlighting individual differences in complaint responses. This enhances CRM theory's explanatory power and guides firms in delivering more personalized, effective complaint resolutions that build trust and satisfaction

Another critical gap in CRM research and practice is the insufficient adaptation of traditional CRM systems to the complexities of digital and multichannel environments [55]. Existing literature highlights that many organizations struggle to effectively manage

complaints voiced on social media, where customers demand rapid, transparent, and authentic interactions [61,63]. These platforms amplify reputational risks and expose firms to heightened public scrutiny, yet CRM systems designed primarily for internal operational efficiency often lack the flexibility and responsiveness required to meet these expectations [32]. Moreover, the influential role of social media influencers in shaping customer perceptions and complaint outcomes remains largely unaddressed within current CRM framework literature, despite evidence showing their growing impact on brand reputation and customer trust [193]. This omission of social media further limits CRM's effectiveness in digital complaint management, highlighting the need for more integrative and adaptive models that incorporate influencer dynamics and address the evolving nature of customer engagement across multiple channels..

Therefore, this review highlights key limitations in existing CRM framework literature, including their transactional focus, limited attention to emotional and behavioral nuances, and inadequate alignment with digital complaint channels. To address these gaps, this study repositions CRM theory as a unifying framework across its two components. In Study 1, CRM informs a qualitative exploration of complaint management practices, offering insights into how firms attempt to rebuild relationships through trust, transparency, and responsiveness. Study 2 builds on this by empirically examining how these practices influence customer satisfaction, incorporating trust in the company as a mediator and customer behavior sensitivity as a moderator, thus capturing the relational and perceptual dimensions often overlooked in CRM research. Together, these studies extend CRM theory beyond operational efficiency, positioning it as a dynamic, psychologically attuned model for managing and restoring customer relationships in complex service failure contexts.

3.5. Consumer Behavior Theory

Consumer behavior theory explores the psychological, emotional, and behavioral processes that drive customers' decisions and responses [57]. At its core, this theory seeks to understand how customers perceive, interpret, and act upon experiences with organizations, including complaint handling and resolution [56]. Rooted in early psychological and behavioral research by pioneers such as Wilhelm Wundt and Edward Thorndike in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, consumer behavior theory integrates insights from psychology, economics, sociology, and marketing to provide a holistic view

of decision-making [36]. The value of this theory lies in its ability to reveal how cognitive processes, emotions, attitudes, and social influences shape consumer reactions, thereby guiding businesses in designing effective complaint management strategies to improve customer satisfaction and loyalty [41].

Despite its foundational importance, consumer behavior theory suffers from several enduring limitations that restrict its explanatory power and practical relevance, particularly in contemporary complaints management research. First, the theory largely prioritizes individual-level cognitive and affective processes, often at the expense of capturing the complexity of social, cultural, and contextual influences that shape consumer behavior [56,57]. This reductionist focus underestimates the role of situational variables and network effects, such as social norms or group identity, which are increasingly important in multi-channel and social media complaint environments [67]. This reductionist view treats consumers as isolated actors, overlooking how complaints are increasingly shaped by collective dynamics such as social validation, group identity, geography and emotional contagion. In social and digital contexts, where grievances often gain traction through shared experiences and peer amplification, incorporating group-level analysis provides a more accurate and actionable understanding of consumer behavior.

Secondly, consumer behavior theory suffers from a conceptual split that treats rationality and emotion as separate, often competing drivers of consumer response [36]. On one hand, it portrays consumers as logical decision-makers who assess service failures based on cost-benefit calculations [148]; on the other, it emphasizes emotional reactions [203]. This fragmented view fails to reflect how consumers actually process and respond to negative service experiences, which typically involve an intertwined mix of cognition and emotion [198]. As a result, the theory cannot consistently explain consumer complaint behavior across situations, highlighting the need for a framework that integrates cognitive, emotional, and social influences [42,57]. Without such integration, the theory risks offering oversimplified or misleading explanations of consumer decisions. This study addresses this gap by incorporating both affective and cognitive dimensions within a broader context-sensitive model, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of consumer complaint behavior.

Third, consumer behavior theory has shown limited adaptability to the rapid technological and communication shifts transforming complaint landscapes. It inadequately accounts for the distinct dynamics of digital platforms, where consumer interactions are public, instantaneous, and socially performative, challenging the traditional private and deliberative decision-making models [30, 32]. The theory's failure to integrate constructs such as online engagement patterns, virality, and real-time feedback mechanisms results in a conceptual gap when applied to modern complaints management scenarios [37]. This study addresses these shortcomings by explicitly integrating digital communication dynamics and social media interaction patterns into the analysis, offering a framework that better reflects the complexities of modern complaint processes and provides actionable insights for managing consumer dissatisfaction in online contexts.

Therefore, our research directly addresses these theoretical limitations through a multi-study approach. Study 1 uses qualitative methods to explore complaints management practices in telecom, enabling a rich contextualization of consumer behaviors beyond simplistic cognitive or emotional models. Study 2 empirically tests the impact of complaints management practices on satisfaction, incorporating trust as a mediating variable and customer behavior sensitivity as a moderator, thereby capturing individual differences and the nuanced interaction of psychological and behavioral factors. Collectively, these studies advance a more integrative and context-sensitive framework that bridges cognitive, emotional, social, and organizational dimensions, responding to the fragmented and static nature of existing consumer behavior literature in complaints management.

3.6. Service Quality Model

Service quality has long been regarded as a cornerstone of customer satisfaction, particularly in the domain of complaints management [85]. Among the dominant models, SERVQUAL (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985) remains widely cited for its structured measurement of service quality across five dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy [104]. Rooted in disconfirmation theory, it operationalizes service quality as the gap between customer expectations and perceptions an idea that has shaped both academic research and managerial practice for decades [148].

However, despite its widespread use, the application of SERVQUAL in complaints management particularly within technology-intensive and intangible service sectors like

telecommunications has been increasingly challenged due to critical conceptual limitations. This is because the model assumes service quality is a static [102], there is measurable gap between expectations and perceptions [162], yet this assumption fails to capture the emotionally charged, context-dependent nature of complaint experiences [167]. In complaint scenarios, customers' evaluations are often shaped by prior dissatisfaction, frustration, and a heightened sensitivity to how the firm responds, dynamics that SERVQUAL's standardized dimensions do not fully address [208]. Moreover, SERVQUAL presumes a direct link between service quality and satisfaction, overlooking the role of mediating and moderating variables. In reality, trust in the company often mediates the relationship, customers must believe the firm is fair and competent before quality perceptions translate into satisfaction [130]. Additionally, customer behavior sensitivity moderates these relationships, as more sensitive customers interpret and react to the same service cues differently [145]. These overlooked dynamics have contributed to inconsistent findings in the literature, with some studies affirming SERVQUAL's relevance [162], while others reveal limited or contradictory effects [102]. These contradictions reflect a deeper theoretical misfit; SERVQUAL, in its traditional form, is ill-equipped to account for the complex interplay of emotional, behavioral, and contextual factors that shape customer satisfaction following complaints [186].

To address these shortcomings, this study reconceptualizes SERVQUAL through the lens of a multi-theoretical framework integrating the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) model, Consumer Relationship Management (CRM) theory, and Consumer Behavior theory. In this reconfiguration, SERVQUAL functions not as a sufficient explanation of complaint satisfaction during complaints management, but as a starting point; a stimulus that initiates a psychological and behavioral response chain. This shift allows for a more nuanced exploration of how service quality perceptions interact with internal cognitive and emotional states such as trust in the company and how these interactions ultimately influence satisfaction with complaint resolution.

By incorporating the SOR model, the study captures the complexity of post-complaint decision-making. It recognizes that service quality cues do not impact customers directly, but rather through organismic variables like trust and customer behavior sensitivity [89]. CRM theory contributes by emphasizing the relational dimension of complaints handling,

reframing service quality as part of a trust-building process rather than a one-off transaction [85]. Meanwhile, Consumer Behavior theory enables a deeper understanding of individual differences in response to complaint experiences, countering SERVQUAL's static view of customer expectations with a more dynamic, psychologically grounded approach [192].

This integrated model advances the complaints management literature in three important ways. First, it problematizes the overreliance on SERVQUAL as a standalone framework in emotionally charged, digitally influenced service failures. Second, it introduces critical variables; 'trust' and 'behavior sensitivity' that more accurately reflect the processes through which customers interpret service encounters. Third, it offers a theory-driven basis for understanding why traditional service quality dimensions may fail to predict satisfaction in complex complaint scenarios. In doing so, this study not only responds to a significant theoretical gap but also proposes a more robust, context-sensitive approach to understanding customer satisfaction in complaints management. Rather than rejecting SERVQUAL outright, it repurposes the model within a broader theoretical structure capable of addressing its conceptual blind spots. This approach is particularly valuable for industries like telecommunications, where service experiences are increasingly shaped by intangible interactions, digital interfaces, and real-time public scrutiny.

3.7. Information Processing Theory

Information Processing Theory (IPT), rooted in cognitive psychology, provides a foundational framework for understanding how individuals perceive, process, store, and retrieve information [195]. Developed during the mid-20th century as an alternative to behaviorist models, IPT conceptualizes human cognition as a sequence of stages; attention, encoding, storage, and retrieval, that influence decision-making and behavior [197]. In complaints management, IPT is especially valuable because it explains how customers mentally process the information they receive throughout the complaint resolution journey. From noticing how their complaint is acknowledged (attention), interpreting the company's response (encoding), storing these experiences (memory), to recalling them when judging satisfaction or trust (retrieval) [87]. IPT helps clarify the cognitive mechanisms that shape customer evaluations. This focus on mental processing is critical in complaints contexts, where effective communication and timely feedback play a key role in influencing customer perceptions and outcomes.

In this study particularly in Study 2, IPT is applied to explore how customers cognitively engage with complaint management practices, especially feedback utilization. Customers first attend to how their feedback is acknowledged (attention), interpret the company's response (encoding), and store these impressions in memory (storage), which are later retrieved when forming judgments about satisfaction and trust (retrieval). This application of IPT directly addresses gaps in extant research, which often treats feedback utilization as a purely operational or transactional process [105]. By framing feedback handling as a cognitive journey for the customer, this study contributes a nuanced understanding of how organizational responses shape customer perceptions over time. Moreover, by integrating IPT with SERVQUAL, the SOR framework, CRM theory, and consumer behavior insights, the study offers a multidimensional lens that captures both cognitive processing and affective responses. This theoretical synergy allows the model to account for customer behavior sensitivity and emotional dynamics areas where traditional IPT applications have struggled thus enhancing its explanatory power in real-world complaint scenarios.

A key challenge in complaints management is understanding how customers interpret messages from social media influencers (SMIs), who are increasingly used to manage brand reputation during service failures [36]. Existing research lacks a clear theoretical explanation of how customers process and internalize these influencer messages in complaint situations [127]. This study applies Information Processing Theory (IPT) to address this gap by conceptualizing SMI utilization as cognitive stimuli that shape how customers perceive a company's sincerity, accountability, and responsiveness. According to IPT, customers first notice influencer content because of the influencer's credibility or relatability, then encode and store these messages alongside other brand experiences. Later, they retrieve these impressions when judging the company's response to their complaint [133]. However, literature on this topic is contradictory: some studies find that SMIs build trust and improve perceptions [134], while others suggest influencer messages can feel scripted or insincere, leading to skepticism [133]. These contradictions reveal that many studies overlook the deeper cognitive and emotional role SMIs play in complaints management. Rather than seeing influencers simply as marketing tools, this study demonstrates that SMI messages actively influence how customers process and evaluate complaint handling. By grounding SMI utilization within IPT, the study provides valuable

insights into how influencer communication affects customer satisfaction and trust through clear, psychologically informed mechanisms.

3.8. Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory (EDT)

Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory (Oliver, 1977) underpins much of service quality research by explaining customer satisfaction as the result of comparing expectations with actual service performance [144]. The SERVQUAL model (Parasuraman et al., 1985) operationalizes this through measuring expectation-perception gaps, reflecting EDT's core assumptions [167]. While EDT offers valuable insights, its direct application in complaints management has often been limited by oversimplified assumptions treating expectations and perceptions as static and uniform across customers [169]. Furthermore, explicit use of EDT rarely accounts for psychological factors like trust or variations in customer sensitivity that significantly influence satisfaction outcomes [67].

In this study, EDT's principles are implicitly integrated rather than explicitly foregrounded, allowing for a richer model that incorporates trust as a mediator and customer behavior sensitivity as a moderator [115]. This approach moves beyond traditional disconfirmation's limitations by addressing dynamic customer responses and contextual factors, which helps resolve contradictions found in prior literature on complaint resolution effectiveness. Thus, the study builds on EDT's foundation while expanding its explanatory power within the Tanzanian telecom context.

3.9. Attribution Theory

Attribution Theory, first introduced by Fritz Heider and later developed by Harold Kelley and Bernard Weiner, explains how individuals seek to understand the causes behind events, particularly why service failures occur [117]. These causal interpretations significantly shape customers' emotional reactions and behaviors during complaint handling, ultimately influencing their satisfaction and trust in the company [185]. Much of the existing complaints management research attempts to explicitly identify and measure customers' causal interpretations of service failures. However, such direct approaches often oversimplify the complex, dynamic, and largely subconscious nature of these cognitive processes [202]. Customers may not always be fully aware of, or able to articulate, the

underlying reasons for their dissatisfaction, which contributes to inconsistent and sometimes contradictory findings in the literature [19].

This study addresses these limitations by incorporating attribution concepts implicitly within broader constructs such as customer trust and behavior sensitivity. Instead of isolating cause perceptions as separate elements, the model recognizes that customers' interpretations are integrated within their overall experience and evolve throughout the complaint process [41]. This implicit approach captures the fluid and multifaceted nature of attribution, better reflecting real-world customer cognition .

By embedding attribution theory in this way, the research overcomes key gaps in prior studies and offers a richer, more realistic understanding of how customers process service failures. This nuanced perspective strengthens the explanatory power of complaint management frameworks and supports the development of more effective, customer-centered recovery strategies.

3.10. Theoretical Review Summary

This study integrates a multifaceted theoretical foundation to capture the complexity of customer complaints management. The Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) framework serves as the main theoretical spine, structuring the progression from organizational actions to customer reactions across all studies. Complementing this, Service Recovery Paradox, Customer Relationship Management (CRM), and Consumer Behavior Theory contribute critical insights into trust-building, behavioral sensitivity, and the potential for post-failure recovery to exceed original expectations. Additionally, supporting theories such as SERVQUAL, Information Processing Theory, Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory (EDT), and Attribution Theory are selectively applied to explain specific constructs or psychological mechanisms within the SOR model. For an overview of each theory's role and application across the studies, refer to Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Theory Review Summary

Theory	Core Role	Manifestation	Study 1	Study 2
Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR)	Guiding framework (main theoretical spine)	Complete framework structuring the studies (Stimulus → Organism → Response).	✓	✓
Service Recovery Paradox	Explains recovery from unexpected service failure	Positive recovery leads to greater satisfaction, influencing customer perception.	✓	✓
Customer Relationship Management (CRM)	Explains trust-building via company–customer interactions	Positions trust as the ‘organism’ in SOR; highlights complaints management as an ongoing process	✓	✓
Consumer Behavior Theory	Provides general behavioral understanding of customers	Provides basis for organism responses during complaints management, including behavioral sensitivity	✓	✓
SERVQUAL	Construct-level support (Service Quality)	Service quality positioned as stimulus in SOR; consistent quality fosters trust (organism) and leads to satisfaction.	✗	✓
Information Processing Theory (IPT)	Explains cognitive processing of recovery information	External communication (stimulus) influences internal perception (organism), affecting satisfaction outcomes.	✗	✓
Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory (EDT)	Explains gap between expectations and outcomes	Incorporated implicitly; informs theoretical framing around satisfaction dynamics.	✓	✓
Attribution Theory	Blame and responsibility affect satisfaction	Incorporated implicitly; provides understanding of responsibility attribution influencing satisfaction.	✓	✓

Chapter 4 Complaints Management Practices influencing Satisfaction - Qualitative Study

Customer satisfaction is critical in the telecom sector, where ineffective complaints management often undermines loyalty and service experience. To address this problem, this chapter presents a qualitative study that investigates how complaints management practices shape customer satisfaction. The study captures insights from both customers and industry experts, allowing key themes such as service quality, influencer engagement, feedback utilization, and organizational culture to emerge from the data. The chapter begins with a brief outline of the problem, then details the methodology, and finally presents and discusses the findings.

4.1. Rationale of the Qualitative Inquiry on Complaints Management and Customer Satisfaction

In the rapidly evolving telecom industry characterized by commoditized service offerings, intense competition, and heightened customer expectations, effectively managing customer complaints has become not only a tactical necessity but a strategic differentiator [1,55,84]. While telecom operators in both developed and developing markets continue to prioritize infrastructure investment and technological innovation, many fall short at a critical point of customer interaction which is the moment of dissatisfaction [94,96]. Poor complaint management exacerbates negative sentiment, accelerates customer churn, and erodes brand trust [30,31,48,96]. Conversely, complaint encounters, if handled with sensitivity and responsiveness, offer a powerful opportunity to restore trust, reinforce loyalty, and gather actionable insights for service improvement as postulated by the service recovery paradox[111,139].

This study explores the practices of complaint management that shape customer satisfaction, particularly within the underexplored context of developing countries' telecom sector. It responds to a persistent problem in the literature: the widespread adoption of predefined constructs and models developed in high-income, service-mature economies without accounting for the cultural, economic, and infrastructural particularities of the Global South [1,5,10,18,131]. Most complaint-handling frameworks, including those grounded in Service Quality and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) theory, are

quantitatively conceived and tested in developed contexts, then exported wholesale into fundamentally different environments with minimal adaptation [55,161]. This practice risks conceptual misalignment and analytical distortion, as it presumes homogeneity in customer expectations, technological literacy, complaint triggers, and service culture.

Frameworks such as SERVQUAL by Parasuraman et al., (1988) have long shaped our understanding of complaint resolution through dimensions like responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. However, when applied uncritically in telecom environments of developing countries, these dimensions often fail to capture the socio-technical realities, such as inconsistent infrastructure, limited customer recourse, and service provider opacity [185,189,191]. Moreover, these models tend to flatten the inherently dynamic, emotionally charged, and interpretive nature of complaints into rigid categories, overlooking the subjective experiences that shape customer perceptions during conflict-laden interactions [30,37,41],180].

Similarly, while Consumer Behavior Theory recognizes the centrality of factors like expectation disconfirmation, perceived justice, and affect regulation in shaping post-complaint satisfaction, most studies reduce these constructs to static survey variables, failing to capture the nuanced interplay of culture, perception, and behavior [36,57]. This is especially problematic in regions where power asymmetries between customers and providers are stark, and complaint encounters carry both relational and transactional significance. Customers in such environments are highly sensitive to cues of fairness, transparency, and authenticity, yet such cues are seldom examined beyond their statistical correlation with satisfaction scores [144].

The CRM literature also falls short in meaningful application. While complaints are recognized as “moments of truth,” CRM in the telecom sector often remains procedural and data-driven, prioritizing resolution speed over emotional engagement [192]. Quantitative studies have reinforced this limitation by reducing the customer voice to ratings and metrics, neglecting the relational and experiential aspects of complaint handling[8,55,86]. This highlights the need for a qualitative approach to uncover deeper insights into how complaints are experienced and managed across stakeholder groups.

The root of the problem is methodological: the current knowledge base is overwhelmingly skewed toward quantitative research that favors generalizability over

contextual fidelity [56, 57, 84, 108]. While statistical models offer useful correlations such as between complaint responsiveness and satisfaction, they leave unanswered the deeper “how” and “why” questions that qualitative inquiry can illuminate [82,83,95]. Few studies critically examine the construction and validity of complaint management constructs themselves, particularly in developing countries, where customer realities are often at odds with imported theoretical assumptions [18,95,130].

To address the prevailing theoretical and empirical imbalance, this study adopts a qualitative methodology to deeply examine complaints management practices and their influence on customer satisfaction within the Tanzanian telecom sector. By engaging customers, customer service representatives (CSRs), and managers through in-depth interviews. The study goes beyond identifying what practices exist, it uncovers how these practices are experienced, interpreted, and recalled by those involved. This approach offers rich, context-specific insights that not only enhance understanding but also lay a stronger conceptual foundation for the development of more meaningful constructs in future quantitative research. Hence, the contribution is threefold: First, it generates empirically grounded insights into complaint management practices from the perspectives of actors embedded within a developing country context. Second, it interrogates the conceptual assumptions underlying commonly used constructs, thereby challenging the uncritical transfer of frameworks across vastly different service ecologies. Third, it addresses the imbalance in the literature, dominated by positivist, metrics-driven approaches, by offering a human-centered, interpretive account of complaint satisfaction. In doing so, the study helps reconcile conflicting findings in the literature and provides a foundational basis for future research that is both methodologically robust and culturally attuned.

4.2. Qualitative Research Design

This qualitative study employs an exploratory research design to investigate the dynamics of customer complaints management within the telecom industry. The study aims to understand the perspectives and experiences of various stakeholders, including customer service representatives, managers, and customers. Through in-depth interviews, the research seeks to uncover the underlying factors influencing effective complaint resolution and the impact of these factors on customer satisfaction.

4.2.1. Sampling Techniques

This study employed purposive sampling to select knowledgeable individuals experienced in customer complaints management within the telecom sector as recommended by literature. This method, ideal for qualitative research, prioritizes depth and richness of information over statistical representativeness[78]. Participants were carefully chosen based on criteria tailored to three groups: Customer Service Representatives (CSRs), Managers, and Customers so as to enhance triangulation.

CSRs needed at least two years of frontline experience handling complaints via various channels, with preference for those formally trained in complaints management. Managers were required to hold middle or senior roles related to customer service or complaints management, with a minimum of three years' experience overseeing policies and strategies. Customers were selected based on having lodged a formal complaint in the last two years, ensuring recent and relevant experiences. Diversity in complaint types, resolution outcomes, and demographic backgrounds was emphasized to capture a broad spectrum of perspectives.

The selection process involved identifying potential participants through professional networks, company referrals, and direct outreach, supplemented by screening interviews to confirm eligibility and willingness. Customers were additionally recruited through snowball sampling, where initial participants referred others with relevant experiences. This combined purposive and snowball sampling approach enhanced participant diversity and the depth of insights collected as recommended by literature [78,83].

A total of 21 in-depth interviews were conducted: two with Managers, six with CSRs, and thirteen with Customers. The six CSRs offered operational insights into day-to-day complaint handling challenges, while the two Managers provided strategic perspectives on organizational policies and resource allocation. The thirteen Customers shared firsthand accounts of complaint experiences, highlighting factors influencing satisfaction and trust. Customers represent the largest and most varied stakeholder group directly affected by complaint management, thus warranting a higher number of interviews to capture a broad range of experiences and attitudes. Conversely, managers operate at a higher strategic level with more uniform responsibilities, which justifies

fewer interviews to gain sufficient insight without redundancy. Similarly, CSRs serve as the critical link between strategy and customer experience, requiring moderate representation to illuminate operational challenges. This sampling approach ensures depth and richness of data from each key group while maintaining practical feasibility and focus, aligning with qualitative research principles that prioritize information relevance over numerical equality. Hence, this distribution was designed to balance perspectives across different organizational levels and the end-user viewpoint.

The sample size was justified by the need to reach data saturation, ensuring no new themes emerged from further interviews. Practical constraints such as time and resources also influenced the scope, with a focus on obtaining high-quality, detailed data over sheer volume. By including diverse respondent groups, the study achieved a comprehensive, multi-dimensional understanding of the complaints management process, addressing both operational realities and customer experiences.

Demographically, the participants were almost evenly split by gender (52% male, 48% female) and spanned a wide age range, with most between 26 and 45 years old. This diversity contributed to the study's robust and nuanced findings regarding telecom complaints management. Table 4.1 provide the demographic characteristics of the participants in the qualitative study

Table 4.1 Demographic characteristics of the participants in the qualitative study

	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	11	52%
	Female	10	48%
Age	21-25 Years	4	18%
	26-35 Years	5	24%
	36-45 Years	10	48%
	46-55 Years	1	5%
	Above 55 Years	1	5%
Group	Manager	2	10%
	CustomerService Representative	6	28%
	Customer of telecom company	13	62%

The sample of 21 interviews was thoughtfully chosen to balance depth and diversity while considering practical constraints. Data saturation was reached during the iterative process of conducting and analyzing interviews, as successive interviews across

customers, managers, and customer service representatives ceased to reveal new themes or insights. This indicated that the range of relevant perspectives had been comprehensively captured[83]. Resource limitations such as time and the complexity of qualitative analysis also influenced the final sample size, ensuring feasibility without compromising data quality [76]. By prioritizing detailed, high-quality insights over sheer quantity, the study secured a thorough understanding of the complaints management process from both operational and strategic angles

4.2.2. Data Collection In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews were chosen as the primary data collection method due to their effectiveness in exploring complex issues and obtaining detailed responses. This method allowed for a deep understanding of the participants' experiences, perceptions, and attitudes towards complaint management practices in the telecom industry [78]. An interview guide is attached in Appendix B.

The three-month duration for interviews was chosen to provide flexibility for participants and to ensure thorough data collection. This time frame allowed for flexibility in scheduling and provided ample opportunity to conduct interviews with a diverse group of respondents, including Customer Service Representatives, Managers, and Customers. Interviews were held in two main formats: In-Person Interviews: For participants who preferred face-to-face interaction or were located within a feasible distance, interviews were conducted in person. This format provided a more personal touch and facilitated a direct exchange of information, allowing for immediate follow-up questions and clarification. Another format was virtual meetings: For participants who preferred or required remote participation, interviews were conducted via virtual meeting platforms via the zoom meeting platform. This option was particularly useful for accommodating participants from various geographic locations and for those who had scheduling constraints. Each interview lasted between 30 to 50 minutes. This duration was carefully chosen to ensure that participants had adequate time to provide detailed and thoughtful responses to the interview questions while keeping the sessions focused and manageable. The time frame allowed for in-depth exploration of the participants' experiences and perspectives on complaint management practices.

To ensure the accuracy and reliability of the data collected, all interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' consent. This step was crucial for capturing the exact wording of participants' responses and for maintaining the integrity of their insights. The recordings provided a comprehensive record of the interviews, which was essential for detailed analysis and verification of the data. The audio recordings were transcribed verbatim, capturing every word spoken during the interviews. This meticulous approach ensured that no nuances or details were lost in the transcription process. Each transcript reflected the exact responses provided by the participants, allowing for an accurate representation of their perspectives. To maintain confidentiality and protect participants' privacy, all identifying information was removed from the transcripts. Each participant was assigned a unique identifier, and any personal details that could reveal their identity were anonymized. This process ensured that the data analysis focused on the content of the responses without compromising participants' anonymity.

The transcribed data, along with the original audio recordings, were securely stored in password-protected files and encrypted storage solutions. Access to the data was restricted to authorized research personnel only. The anonymized transcripts were used for thematic analysis to identify patterns, themes, and insights related to complaints management practices and customer satisfaction. The use of verbatim transcripts allowed for a thorough and accurate analysis of the participants' responses. The total word count for the interview transcripts was approximately 70,000 words, with individual transcripts ranging from 3,200 to 7,800 words, reflecting a substantial depth of discussion across participants. This word count highlights the richness of the qualitative data collected, ensuring comprehensive coverage of the study's key themes and research questions.

4.2.3. Thematic Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to examine the interview data. This approach entails identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within the data to gain a thorough understanding of participants' views on managing customer complaints as recommended by Braun and Clark [82].

The data analysis for the study was conducted through a structured and systematic approach to ensure comprehensive and accurate findings. The first step involved

familiarization with the data. This process entailed reading and re-reading the transcribed interviews to immerse oneself in the content. By revisiting the transcripts multiple times, the researcher developed a deep understanding of the data. Initial notes and observations were made during this stage to capture preliminary impressions, significant statements, and recurring ideas, which would inform subsequent analysis.

Following familiarization, the next step was generating initial codes. Utilizing NVivo software, the researcher systematically coded the transcripts, tagging segments of text with labels that represented significant concepts or recurring themes. This coding process allowed for the organization and retrieval of data, making it easier to manage and analyze. Initial codes were developed based on specific phrases and ideas that emerged from the interviews, setting the foundation for thematic analysis.

The subsequent step involved searching for themes. The initial codes were reviewed to identify patterns and relationships among them. This process involved grouping related codes into broader categories, which helped in developing a coherent thematic structure. By clustering these related codes, the researcher constructed a framework that highlighted the key areas of focus and synthesized the data into meaningful themes.

Once themes were identified, the next phase was reviewing and refining them. The researcher assessed the consistency and distinctiveness of each theme to ensure they accurately represented the data. This involved evaluating the relevance of each theme to the research questions and making necessary adjustments to capture the essence of the participants' responses. This refinement process ensured that the themes were comprehensive and reliably reflected the data.

The defining and naming of themes followed, where each theme was clearly defined to capture its core essence. Detailed descriptions were developed for each theme, outlining its significance and the specific aspects of the data it represented. The themes were then given concise and descriptive names to provide clarity and ensure that they were easily understandable and representative of the underlying data. Finally, the report was produced. The findings were written up in a structured report that linked the identified themes to the research questions and existing literature. This report provided a comprehensive analysis of the data, illustrating how the findings addressed the study's objectives. Direct quotes from participants were incorporated into the

report to provide evidence for the interpretations and to enhance the credibility of the findings. By including these quotes, the report not only demonstrated the themes but also gave voice to the participants, enriching the overall analysis.

4.2.4. Rigor and Trustworthiness

To ensure the rigor and trustworthiness of the qualitative data, several strategies were employed throughout the study. These strategies were essential for enhancing the credibility and validity of the findings, and they included triangulation, member checking, peer debriefing, and reflexivity as suggested by literature[82,83].

Triangulation was achieved by incorporating multiple stakeholder perspectives, including Customer Service Representatives (CSRs), managers, and customers. This approach allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of the complaint management practices by providing diverse viewpoints and experiences. By gathering data from these different groups, the study aimed to minimize bias and provide a more nuanced and holistic view of the complaint management process. The inclusion of varied perspectives helped to cross-verify findings and strengthen the overall validity of the research results.

To ensure the accuracy and credibility of the data, member checking was implemented. Participants were provided with summaries of their interview transcripts and given the opportunity to review and verify the recorded information. This process allowed participants to confirm that their responses were accurately captured and interpreted. By validating the transcripts, the study ensured that the interpretations reflected the participants' intended meanings and experiences, thereby enhancing the reliability of the data.

The analysis process underwent peer debriefing, where a panel of qualitative research experts reviewed the thematic analysis and provided feedback. This external review was crucial for improving the quality of the analysis by offering objective insights and suggestions. The experts' input helped refine the thematic structure, address any potential issues, and ensure that the findings were presented in a coherent and credible manner. Peer debriefing added an additional layer of scrutiny, which bolstered the credibility and reliability of the study's conclusions.

Reflexivity played a critical role in maintaining the study's rigor. Researchers maintained a reflexive journal throughout the study, documenting their reflections, biases, and assumptions. This practice was instrumental in identifying and mitigating any potential biases that could influence the data analysis and interpretation. By continuously reflecting on their own perspectives and how these might impact the research, the researchers were able to approach the data analysis with greater objectivity and awareness. Reflexivity ensured that the interpretations were grounded in the data rather than influenced by personal biases or preconceptions.

These strategies collectively contributed to the rigor and trustworthiness of the qualitative data, ensuring that the findings were both reliable and reflective of the participants' true experiences and perspectives.

4.2.5. Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was a fundamental aspect of the study, ensuring that all participants were fully aware of their involvement and the nature of the research. Before participating, individuals received detailed information about the study's objectives, procedures, potential risks, and benefits. This thorough explanation allowed participants to make an informed decision about their involvement. They were assured that their participation was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without facing any adverse consequences. This process not only respected participants' autonomy but also adhered to ethical standards by ensuring that their consent was based on a clear understanding of the study's scope and purpose[78].

To protect the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants, several measures were implemented throughout the study. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to ensure that their identities were kept confidential. Identifying information was meticulously removed from transcripts and reports, preventing any potential disclosure of personal details. Furthermore, all data, including audio recordings and transcripts, were securely stored on password-protected devices, with access restricted to authorized members of the research team only. This approach safeguarded the data from unauthorized access and maintained the integrity of participants' privacy.

When reporting the findings, careful attention was given to avoid including any information that could potentially identify participants. This involved anonymizing

direct quotes and focusing the report on thematic and conceptual analysis rather than individual details. By adopting these measures, the study upheld high ethical standards, ensuring that participants' confidentiality was rigorously protected while also enhancing the credibility and trustworthiness of the research findings[83].

4.3. Findings of the Qualitative Study

In this study, our qualitative analysis delved into the multifaceted perspectives of customers, Customer Service Representatives (CSRs), and managers within the telecom industry, providing a nuanced understanding of the intricate dynamics at play in customer complaints management. Through in-depth interviews and thematic analysis, we unearthed key insights into the pivotal role of transparency, the strategic utilization of social media influencers, and the significance of internal communication in shaping customer satisfaction and trust. These findings offer a comprehensive view of the varying impacts and perceptions of complaints management practices, highlighting critical areas for enhancement and strategic focus to bolster overall customer experience and organizational efficacy. Appendix D provides a detailed account of how Braun and Clark approach was used in this study and Figure 4.1 provides an overview of the qualitative thematic coding.

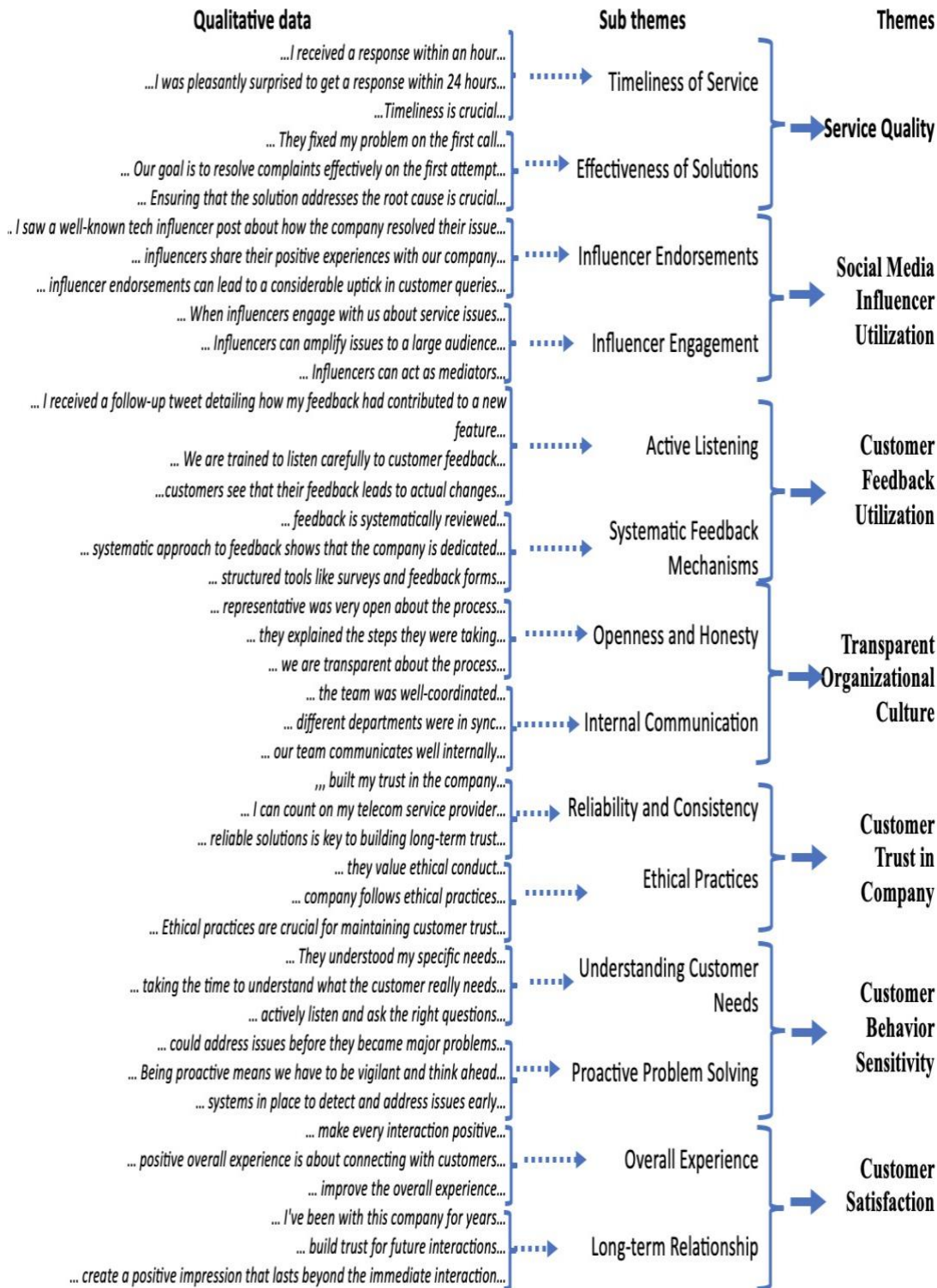


Figure 4.1 Thematic Coding

4.3.1. Theme 1: Service Quality

4.3.1.1. Subtheme A: Timeliness of Service

Customers universally highlighted the importance of timely responses to their complaints, demonstrating a clear consensus on how critical promptness is in the complaint management process. The general sentiment among customers was that receiving a swift response not only alleviated their immediate concerns but also played a significant role in shaping their overall satisfaction with the service provided. One customer recounted their experience, emphasizing the impact of a timely response:

“When I reported my issue via a social media platform , I received a response within an hour. That made me feel valued and reassured...”

This customer's feedback highlights how a prompt reply can enhance the perception of being valued by the service provider. The short response time in this case was not just about addressing the complaint quickly but also about instilling a sense of reassurance and respect. It indicates that the customer's positive experience was largely influenced by the rapid acknowledgment of their issue, which made them feel their concerns were taken seriously and addressed with urgency. The impact of timeliness on customer satisfaction was evident in various customer accounts. Another customer shared,

“I had an issue with my billing that I raised on a weekend. I was pleasantly surprised to get a response within 24 hours, which was much faster than I expected. It made me feel that the company is proactive and cares about resolving issues quickly.”

This statement further underscores the importance of a swift response. The customer's satisfaction was significantly enhanced by the company's ability to address their complaint over a weekend, a time when they may have anticipated delays. The quick response not only exceeded their expectations but also reinforced the perception that the company was proactive and genuinely concerned about resolving issues efficiently. These experiences collectively highlight that timely responses are crucial in preventing escalation of complaints and in fostering a positive relationship between the customer and the service provider. When customers perceive that their issues are being addressed promptly, it contributes to a sense of trust and reliability in the service provider, ultimately influencing their overall satisfaction and loyalty. The emphasis on

timeliness reflects a broader expectation among customers for responsive and attentive service, which can significantly impact their perception of the service quality.

Customer Service Representatives (CSRs) provided valuable insights into the operational aspects of managing timely responses to complaints, shedding light on the practical challenges and strategies involved in meeting customer expectations. One CSR articulated their approach, stating,

“We are trained to acknowledge complaints within a set timeframe. Our goal is to respond to all inquiries within 24 hours, but we often strive to do so much sooner.”

This statement reveals the structured training and operational protocols that guide CSRs in handling complaints. The emphasis on acknowledging complaints within a specific timeframe reflects the organization's commitment to timeliness as a key component of service quality. The goal of responding within 24 hours, with efforts often extending to quicker replies, underscores the proactive stance taken by CSRs to meet and exceed customer expectations. This approach highlights that CSRs are not only aware of the critical importance of timely responses but are also equipped with specific targets designed to enhance efficiency and customer satisfaction. The structured timeframe ensures that customers receive prompt acknowledgment of their issues, which is crucial for maintaining trust and satisfaction. By striving to respond even sooner than the stipulated 24 hours, CSRs demonstrate a commitment to exceptional service, aiming to address customer concerns as swiftly as possible to prevent escalation and mitigate frustration. Another CSR provided further context, stating,

“Timeliness is crucial, especially in high-volume periods. We prioritize complaints based on urgency and aim to address them as quickly as possible to maintain customer satisfaction.”

This comment highlights the operational challenges faced by CSRs, particularly during periods of high complaint volumes. Managing a large number of complaints while ensuring timely responses requires effective prioritization and resource allocation. The CSR's emphasis on prioritizing complaints based on urgency reflects a strategic approach to handling high volumes of inquiries, ensuring that the most critical issues are addressed promptly while still striving to manage all complaints efficiently.

This perspective illustrates the balancing act that CSRs must perform: responding promptly to complaints while also ensuring that each issue is resolved effectively. During high-volume periods, the challenge is not only to maintain timeliness but also to manage the quality of responses and solutions provided. The need to prioritize complaints by urgency demonstrates an adaptive strategy to cope with increased demand, aiming to deliver timely and satisfactory resolutions even under pressure. The insights from CSRs underscore the operational realities of complaint management, where timeliness is a crucial factor in customer satisfaction but must be balanced with the need for effective resolution. The training and protocols in place, along with the adaptive strategies used during high-volume periods, reflect the organization's efforts to ensure that both timeliness and quality are maintained, even when facing operational challenges.

Managers provided a broader and more strategic perspective on the importance of timeliness in managing customer complaints, highlighting how it extends beyond mere speed to encompass broader organizational goals and customer relations. One manager articulated this strategic view, stating,

“Timeliness in addressing complaints is not just about speed but also about managing customer expectations. A quick response can prevent escalation and demonstrates that the company values the customer's time.”

This statement underscores the multifaceted role of timeliness in complaint management. It is not merely about how quickly a response is delivered but also about the strategic management of customer expectations. By addressing complaints promptly, the company can effectively manage and align customer expectations, reducing the likelihood of issues escalating into larger problems. This proactive approach not only helps in resolving individual complaints more efficiently but also contributes to a positive overall customer experience. The quick response is perceived as a sign of the company's respect for the customer's time, reinforcing the value placed on their concerns and enhancing their satisfaction with the service. Additionally, another manager emphasized the operational impact of timeliness on organizational performance, noting,

“We track response times closely as part of our performance metrics. Ensuring timely responses is a priority because it directly affects customer satisfaction and our service reputation.”

This comment reflects the critical role that timeliness plays as a key performance metric within the organization. By monitoring and evaluating response times rigorously, the company ensures that timeliness is not only a priority but also a measurable component of its service quality. This operational focus on response times indicates that timeliness is integral to maintaining high levels of customer satisfaction and preserving the company's service reputation. The emphasis on tracking response times illustrates the organization's commitment to continuously improving its complaint management processes and addressing any gaps that may affect service quality. In essence, the strategic importance of timeliness extends beyond operational efficiency to encompass broader organizational objectives. Managers recognize that swift responses help manage customer expectations, prevent issue escalation, and build a positive service reputation. The rigorous monitoring of response times as a performance metric demonstrates the organization's dedication to upholding high standards of service quality and customer satisfaction. This strategic approach underscores how critical timely responses are in achieving and maintaining overall service excellence and reinforcing customer trust and loyalty.

4.3.1.2. Subtheme B: Effectiveness of Solutions

Customer Perspectives on the effectiveness of the solutions provided was identified as a critical component of service quality, influencing overall customer satisfaction significantly. Customers highly valued resolutions that not only addressed their issues in a timely manner but also resolved them thoroughly and effectively. One customer illustrated this point with their experience, stating,

“They fixed my problem on the first call, which saved me a lot of time and hassle. I didn't have to follow up or explain the issue multiple times.”

This feedback highlights the dual importance of efficiency and effectiveness in resolving complaints. A solution that resolves the problem on the first attempt is highly appreciated by customers because it minimizes their need for repeated interactions. This efficiency in handling the complaint process not only saves time but also reduces

customer frustration. When customers do not have to follow up or repeatedly explain their issue, it enhances their perception of the service provider's competence and responsiveness. The effectiveness of the initial solution contributes significantly to a positive experience, reinforcing the value of thorough and well- executed resolutions. Another customer's feedback further underscores the importance of effective solutions:

"The issue with my internet connection was resolved within three hour, and it was done correctly the first time. This was a huge relief and showed that the company knows what it's doing."

This statement reflects a high level of customer satisfaction resulting from both the speed and the accuracy of the resolution. The customer's experience highlights that prompt resolution, combined with the assurance of correct implementation, greatly contributes to their sense of relief and confidence in the service provider. The correct resolution on the first attempt not only addresses the immediate problem but also demonstrates the company's proficiency and commitment to quality service. It reinforces the customer's perception that the company has the expertise and capability to handle issues effectively, which is crucial for maintaining trust and satisfaction. The feedback from these customers collectively emphasizes that the effectiveness of solutions provided is crucial in shaping their overall satisfaction.

Customers value resolutions that are comprehensive and lasting, as these reduce the need for additional follow-ups and reinforce their confidence in the service provider. An effective solution is one that not only addresses the problem but does so thoroughly and efficiently, ensuring that the customer's issue is resolved in a way that meets or exceeds their expectations. This highlights the broader implications of service quality, where the ability to deliver effective and efficient solutions plays a fundamental role in achieving high levels of customer satisfaction and trust.

Customer Service Representatives (CSRs) also underscored the importance of providing effective solutions as a core aspect of their roles. Their insights reveal the dedication and strategic approach required to resolve complaints efficiently and satisfactorily. One CSR emphasized the goal of resolving complaints effectively on the first attempt, stating

“Our goal is to resolve complaints effectively on the first attempt. We provide solutions based on the information available, and we follow up to ensure the issue is fully addressed.”

This comment illustrates the primary objective of CSRs: to deliver resolutions that are not only quick but also effective from the outset. The commitment to resolving complaints on the first attempt reflects a proactive approach aimed at minimizing customer inconvenience and enhancing satisfaction. By providing solutions based on the available information and following up to ensure that the issue is fully addressed, CSRs demonstrate a thorough and customer-centric approach. This process involves not just a one-time resolution but an ongoing effort to confirm that the customer's problem is comprehensively resolved, thereby reducing the likelihood of recurring issues and reinforcing the effectiveness of the initial solution. Another CSR highlighted the challenges involved in delivering effective solutions, noting,

“Sometimes, even with the best intentions, we may need to escalate issues if they cannot be resolved immediately. Ensuring that the solution addresses the root cause is crucial for customer satisfaction.”

This feedback reveals the complexities of complaint management and the need for escalation procedures when immediate resolution is not feasible. The necessity to escalate issues points to the limitations CSRs may face when dealing with certain complaints, despite their best efforts to resolve them promptly. The emphasis on addressing the root cause of complaints underscores the importance of not just providing a temporary fix but ensuring that the underlying issue is identified and resolved. This approach is essential for achieving long-term customer satisfaction, as solutions that address the root cause are more likely to prevent future problems and enhance the customer's overall experience. Together, these insights from CSRs reflect a comprehensive understanding of the importance of effective solutions in complaint management. The focus on resolving complaints on the first attempt, combined with the readiness to escalate issues when necessary, highlights the balance between immediate resolution and long-term problem-solving. Ensuring that solutions address the root cause demonstrates a commitment to thorough and effective complaint management, which is crucial for maintaining high levels of

customer satisfaction and trust. The challenges faced in this process, along with the strategies employed to overcome them, underscore the critical role of CSRs in delivering quality service and addressing customer concerns effectively.

Managers offered strategic insights into the importance of effective solutions, revealing how their roles and organizational strategies align to ensure high standards of customer satisfaction. One manager provided a nuanced perspective, stating,

“While timeliness is important, the effectiveness of the solution is what ultimately determines customer satisfaction. We invest in training and resources to ensure that our teams are equipped to provide comprehensive solutions”

This statement underscores a strategic approach where the effectiveness of solutions is prioritized alongside the speed of response. The manager highlights that while addressing complaints promptly is essential, the true measure of customer satisfaction lies in how well the solutions resolve the issues. The investment in training and resources reflects a deliberate strategy to enhance the capabilities of the team, ensuring that they are well-prepared to deliver solutions that are not only quick but also thorough and effective. This approach indicates a holistic view of service quality, where the focus extends beyond mere response time to include the quality and comprehensiveness of the resolutions provided. By equipping teams with the necessary skills and resources, the organization aims to address customer issues more effectively, thereby improving overall satisfaction and maintaining a high standard of service. Another manager emphasized the role of feedback in assessing solution effectiveness, noting,

“We monitor feedback to assess whether our solutions meet customer expectations.

Continuous improvement in resolving complaints effectively is a key focus for maintaining high service quality.”

This comment highlights the organization's commitment to continuous improvement through the systematic evaluation of feedback. By actively monitoring customer feedback, the organization can gauge the success of its solutions in meeting customer expectations and identify areas for enhancement. This feedback-driven approach underscores a commitment to not only maintaining but also improving service quality over time. The focus on continuous improvement reflects a strategic priority to adapt and refine complaint management practices based on real-world experiences and

customer input. This proactive stance ensures that the organization remains responsive to customer needs and can make informed adjustments to enhance the effectiveness of its solutions. Together, these insights from managers illustrate a strategic framework where both timeliness and effectiveness are integral to achieving high levels of customer satisfaction. The emphasis on training, resource allocation, and feedback-driven continuous improvement demonstrates a comprehensive approach to managing customer complaints. By focusing on delivering effective solutions and refining practices based on customer feedback, the organization aims to uphold and enhance service quality, ultimately fostering greater customer trust and loyalty.

4.3.2. Theme 2: Social Media Influencer Utilization

Social media influencers have become a significant factor in shaping public perception and influencing customer satisfaction, particularly in the realm of complaint management. This theme explores how influencer utilization impacts customer perceptions, CSR practices, and managerial strategies, focusing on endorsements and engagement.

4.3.2.1. Subtheme A: Influencer Endorsements

Customers consistently highlighted the positive impact of influencer endorsements on their perceptions of the company's responsiveness and service quality. Influencer endorsements act as a powerful form of social proof, leveraging the credibility and reach of well-known figures to reinforce the company's reputation and foster trust among current and potential customers. One participant shared,

“When I saw an influencer talking about how quickly their issue was resolved, it gave me confidence to reach out to the company.”

This feedback underscores the significant effect that seeing a credible influencer publicly acknowledge the effective resolution of their complaint can have on customers. The endorsement not only reassures potential customers that the company is capable of handling complaints effectively but also validates the experiences of current customers. Influencer endorsements serve as a tangible demonstration of the company's commitment to addressing issues promptly, thereby enhancing customer trust and confidence. The visibility of such endorsements on social media platforms

amplifies the message of effective complaint resolution, making it more accessible to a broader audience and encouraging customers to engage with the company. Another customer echoed this sentiment, noting,

“I saw a well-known tech influencer post about how the company resolved their issue quickly and professionally. This positive review made me feel much more comfortable about submitting my own complaint. It was reassuring to see that even influencers, who usually have high expectations, were satisfied with the service.”

This additional feedback highlights how influencer endorsements not only enhance confidence in the company but also reassure customers that their complaints will be handled with a high standard of professionalism. The fact that influencers, known for their discerning and often critical perspectives, are satisfied with the company's service, further reinforces the company's reliability and effectiveness in managing complaints. This kind of social proof can significantly impact customer behavior, motivating them to reach out for support and trust in the resolution process. Therefore, influencer endorsements play a crucial role in shaping customer perceptions of service quality and responsiveness. By providing visible and credible evidence of effective complaint resolution, influencers help build trust and encourage customer engagement. Their endorsements serve as a form of social proof that reinforces the company's reputation and reassures customers about the company's ability to address their concerns effectively.

From the perspective of Customer Service Representatives (CSRs), the impact of influencer endorsements extends beyond mere publicity, creating significant operational challenges. The increased visibility resulting from positive endorsements can lead to a noticeable rise in customer inquiries, placing additional demands on CSRs to manage these interactions effectively. One CSR explained,

“When influencers share their positive experiences with our company, it often triggers a spike in customer inquiries. We have to be ready to handle this increase and ensure that we uphold the high standards of service that the influencers' endorsements imply.”

This highlights how the promotional power of influencers can elevate customer expectations and drive higher engagement, necessitating a prepared and responsive CSR team to meet the surge in demand. Another CSR elaborated,

“The buzz generated by influencer endorsements can lead to a considerable uptick in customer queries, especially during busy periods. It can be challenging to keep up, but it’s crucial for us to maintain the same level of care and professionalism that the positive feedback from influencers suggests.”

This feedback underscores the pressure on CSRs to maintain consistency in service quality amid fluctuating customer demands. The role of influencers in shaping public perception necessitates that CSRs not only handle a higher volume of inquiries but also sustain a high level of service, reflecting the positive image promoted by these endorsements. In summary, while influencer endorsements contribute positively to the company's public image, they also introduce operational challenges for CSRs. The increased customer inquiries driven by influencer activity require CSRs to be adept at managing higher volumes of interactions while consistently delivering high-quality service. This dynamic emphasizes the need for effective strategies and resources to handle the added demand and maintain the positive service standards suggested by influencer endorsements.

Managers view influencer endorsements as a crucial element in shaping brand reputation and fostering customer trust. From their perspective, influencers offer a powerful means of amplifying positive brand messages and addressing any potential issues with credibility and reach. One manager explained,

“Influencers can shape public perception significantly. We actively collaborate with them to ensure that they highlight our strengths and address any issues promptly. Their endorsements can lead to increased customer engagement and positive sentiment towards our brand.”

This statement underscores the strategic role that influencer partnerships play in enhancing the company's public image. By leveraging influencers' extensive reach and established trust with their audiences, companies can effectively showcase their strengths and manage customer perceptions in a favorable light. The proactive approach of working with influencers not only boosts engagement but also helps in crafting a positive narrative around the brand, reinforcing its commitment to high service standards and effective complaint management. Another manager added,

“Influencer endorsements are not just about promoting our products or services; they are a strategic tool for building long-term customer trust. By addressing complaints or highlighting successful resolutions through influencers, we can demonstrate our responsiveness and commitment to customer satisfaction on a broader scale.”

This perspective highlights how strategic influencer collaborations extend beyond immediate promotional benefits. By using influencers to showcase the company's responsiveness and success in handling complaints, managers aim to build sustained trust and reinforce the brand's reputation for reliability. Influencer endorsements thus become a key component of the company's broader strategy to enhance customer loyalty and satisfaction through visible and credible endorsements. Therefore, managers see influencer endorsements as a strategic asset in managing brand reputation and customer trust. By actively engaging with influencers to highlight the company's strengths and address issues, they leverage influencers' credibility to reinforce positive perceptions and boost customer engagement. This strategic approach not only enhances the company's public image but also demonstrates a commitment to effective complaint management and overall customer satisfaction.

4.3.2.2. Subtheme B: Influencer Engagement

Customers valued the involvement of influencers in discussing and resolving service issues, viewing it as a significant factor in promoting transparency and accountability. The presence of influencers talking openly about their experiences and the resolution of problems contributed to a more engaged and informed customer base. One customer remarked,

“Seeing influencers discussing and resolving service issues made me feel that the company is more accountable and transparent. It also helped me feel part of a larger community of customers.”

This feedback highlights how influencer engagement can create a sense of community and build trust. When influencers openly address service issues and share solutions, it not only fosters a sense of accountability but also strengthens the bond between the company and its customers. The visibility of such discussions on social media platforms enables customers to feel more connected and reassured, knowing that their concerns are being addressed in a transparent manner. This openness contributes

to a more inclusive customer experience, reinforcing the notion that the company values customer feedback and actively works to resolve issues. Another customer added,

“When influencers talk about how they resolved their service problems, it makes me feel that the company is genuinely committed to improving its services. It’s reassuring to see that they are willing to engage with public feedback and that issues are addressed in a way that reflects real concern for customers.”

This additional feedback underscores the positive impact of influencers in demonstrating the company’s commitment to service improvement. By engaging with public feedback and showcasing real resolutions, influencers help to build trust and confidence among customers. The transparency in addressing issues publicly not only enhances the company’s reputation but also affirms its dedication to addressing customer concerns effectively. Hence, customers appreciate the role of influencers in facilitating open discussions about service issues and their resolutions. Influencers help create a sense of community and transparency by openly addressing concerns and showcasing the company's efforts to resolve them. This engagement fosters a stronger connection between customers and the company, enhancing trust and satisfaction by demonstrating that the company values and responds to customer feedback in an accountable manner.

Customer service representatives recognize that influencer engagement significantly impacts public perceptions and customer interactions, often adding a layer of complexity to their roles. Influencers' involvement in service issues can generate substantial public attention, placing increased demands on CSRs to manage these interactions effectively. One CSR noted,

“When influencers engage with us about service issues, it can create a lot of public attention. We need to be ready to respond quickly and effectively to maintain our reputation and address any concerns raised.”

This statement underscores the operational challenges that CSRs face when influencers bring service issues into the spotlight. The heightened public scrutiny that follows influencer interactions requires CSRs to be exceptionally responsive and efficient. Their ability to address concerns promptly and effectively is crucial in

preserving the company's reputation and ensuring that any negative perceptions are managed proactively. This dynamic emphasizes the critical role of CSRs in handling high-profile cases with the sensitivity and urgency they demand, thereby supporting the company's public image and service quality. Another CSR elaborated, *“Influencers can amplify issues to a large audience, which means our responses need to be not only fast but also comprehensive. It’s essential that we provide accurate and helpful information to address the concerns raised publicly and demonstrate our commitment to resolving issues.”*

This feedback highlights the need for CSRs to be well-prepared to handle the amplified impact of influencer engagement. The necessity for thorough and well-considered responses reflects the importance of maintaining accuracy and effectiveness in addressing public concerns. The role of CSRs extends beyond just managing individual complaints; it involves ensuring that the company’s responses align with the high standards set by influencer interactions and effectively mitigate any potential negative effects on public perception. Therefore, CSRs understand the significant impact of influencer engagement on public perception and customer interactions. The public attention that influencers generate requires CSRs to respond swiftly and effectively, balancing the need for promptness with the necessity of providing comprehensive and accurate information. This highlights the essential role of CSRs in maintaining the company’s reputation and service quality in the context of high-profile influencer interactions.

Managers viewed influencer engagement as a critical strategic tool for enhancing customer relations and fostering brand loyalty. Influencers, with their substantial reach and credibility, are seen as valuable partners in bridging the gap between companies and their customers. Their role extends beyond mere promotion; they act as intermediaries who can significantly shape public perception and facilitate meaningful interactions between the company and its audience. One manager highlighted this strategic advantage, stating,

“Influencers can act as mediators, amplifying customer voices and ensuring that issues are addressed promptly. Their involvement helps build a sense of community and trust, which is valuable for our brand”.

This statement underscores the pivotal role that influencers play in enhancing the company's customer engagement strategy. By amplifying customer feedback, influencers not only bring attention to individual issues but also demonstrate the company's commitment to addressing concerns effectively. Their involvement helps create a more dynamic and responsive interaction environment, where customers feel their voices are heard and valued. This, in turn, contributes to building a supportive community around the brand, fostering a stronger emotional connection and enhancing overall brand loyalty. Another manager elaborated on this view, noting,

“Engaging with influencers allows us to showcase our commitment to resolving issues transparently and efficiently. Their endorsements and interactions create a ripple effect, influencing broader customer perceptions and reinforcing our reputation for excellent service.”

This perspective highlights the strategic leverage that influencers provide by endorsing and publicly validating the company's service practices. Influencer engagement not only helps in managing immediate customer concerns but also enhances the company's long-term reputation. By showcasing effective complaint resolutions and positive customer experiences through influencers, the company can strengthen its public image, attract new customers, and retain existing ones. Hence, the strategic use of influencer engagement represents a significant opportunity for managers to enhance customer relations and build brand loyalty. Influencers serve as key mediators who amplify customer feedback and help ensure that issues are addressed promptly. Their involvement fosters a sense of community and trust, contributing to a more engaged and loyal customer base. By integrating influencer strategies into their overall complaint management practices, companies can effectively enhance service quality, manage public perception, and strengthen brand reputation.

Therefore, social media influencer utilization plays a significant role in shaping customer perceptions, influencing CSR practices, and guiding managerial strategies. Influencer endorsements enhance customer confidence and drive engagement, while influencer engagement fosters transparency, accountability, and community. These dynamics underscore the importance of integrating influencer strategies into overall complaint management practices to improve service quality and customer satisfaction.

4.3.3. Theme 3: Customer Feedback Utilization

4.3.3.1. Subtheme A: Active Listening

Customers frequently emphasized the significance of active listening in enhancing their satisfaction with the company's service. Active listening involves more than just hearing customer complaints or suggestions; it requires a genuine effort to understand and address their concerns. One customer expressed their appreciation by saying,

“After I provided feedback, the company reached out to let me know they were implementing some of my suggestions. That made me feel heard.”

This feedback highlights the crucial role of acknowledging customer input and demonstrating how it is being utilized. When customers receive confirmation that their suggestions have led to tangible changes, it validates their experiences and fosters a deeper connection with the company. This process not only improves customer satisfaction but also encourages ongoing engagement and loyalty. Another customer shared,

“I was pleasantly surprised when I received a follow-up tweet detailing how my feedback had contributed to a new feature in their app. It showed that the company truly listens to its customers and values their opinions.”

This excerpt emphasizes how proactive communication about the implementation of feedback can significantly enhance customer satisfaction. By providing detailed updates on how customer suggestions are being acted upon, companies reinforce their commitment to listening and improving. This not only demonstrates respect for customer input but also builds trust and strengthens relationships. The ability to turn feedback into meaningful improvements underscores the company's dedication to continuous improvement and highlights the value of actively listening to and engaging with customers.

Customer Service Representatives also recognize the crucial role of active listening in their interactions with customers. One CSR noted,

“We are trained to listen carefully to customer feedback and ensure that it is recorded accurately. It's important for us to show that we value their input and are working to address their concerns.”

This statement underscores the training and practices that CSRs undergo to ensure they are attentive to customer feedback. By meticulously documenting and addressing feedback, CSRs play a pivotal role in demonstrating to customers that their opinions are valued. This attentiveness helps in maintaining customer trust and satisfaction by ensuring that their concerns are acknowledged and acted upon. Effective listening by CSRs not only facilitates immediate problem resolution but also contributes to long-term improvements in service quality. Another CSR shared,

“When customers see that their feedback leads to actual changes, it boosts their confidence in our service. It’s not just about hearing them but showing that we take their suggestions seriously and act on them.”

This excerpt reflects the CSRs' understanding of the importance of not just listening to but also acting on customer feedback. The CSR's observation highlights that seeing tangible outcomes from their input can significantly enhance customer confidence and satisfaction. It demonstrates the direct correlation between active listening and the implementation of improvements, which reinforces the company's commitment to continuously enhancing its service. By translating feedback into meaningful changes, CSRs help to solidify customer trust and underscore the value of their contributions. This proactive approach to addressing customer suggestions is integral to fostering a positive customer experience and maintaining high service standards.

From a managerial perspective, active listening is viewed as an essential component of effective complaint management and service improvement. One manager explained *“Active listening is fundamental to our approach because it allows us to gain a deep understanding of customer needs and pain points. We incorporate it into our training programs to ensure that our staff not only hears but comprehends and acts upon customer feedback. This approach helps us make informed decisions about service enhancements and policy changes.”*

This statement underscores the strategic role that active listening plays in shaping service policies and practices. By integrating active listening into training and operational procedures, managers ensure that feedback from customers directly influences decision-making processes. This commitment to understanding and addressing customer concerns effectively enables the company to refine its service

offerings and adapt to evolving customer expectations. Another manager pointed out that:

“Incorporating customer feedback into our service strategy is more than just a reactive measure; it’s a proactive way to foster customer loyalty and improve our service quality. When we actively listen and make visible changes based on that feedback, it sends a strong message to our customers that their opinions are valued and that we are dedicated to continuous improvement. This process not only enhances our service but also helps in building a stronger, more trustful relationship with our customers.”

This excerpt highlights the managerial focus on using active listening as a strategic tool for reinforcing customer relationships and driving service excellence. By systematically integrating feedback into strategic decisions, managers demonstrate the company's commitment to addressing customer concerns and enhancing overall satisfaction. This proactive engagement with customer feedback helps build a reputation for responsiveness and reliability, which is crucial for maintaining and growing customer loyalty.

4.3.3.2. Subtheme B: Systematic Feedback Mechanisms

Customers appreciated the implementation of systematic feedback mechanisms, which provided structured and reliable methods for sharing their opinions and witnessing tangible improvements. These mechanisms were seen as a critical component in fostering a sense of engagement and accountability between the company and its customers. By establishing clear and consistent processes for gathering feedback, companies were able to create an environment where customers felt their voices were not only heard but also valued and acted upon. This approach helped bridge the gap between customer experiences and service enhancements, ensuring that feedback was systematically reviewed and integrated into ongoing improvements. The predictability and reliability of these mechanisms instilled confidence in customers, reassuring them that their contributions were integral to the company's efforts to elevate service quality. Additionally, the transparent nature of these feedback systems allowed customers to see the direct impact of their input,

further enhancing their trust in the company's commitment to addressing their needs and continuously improving their services. One customer shared,

"The follow-up surveys the company sends after my service interactions are very thorough. They cover various aspects of the service I received, and it's reassuring to know that my feedback is systematically reviewed and used to drive improvements."

This feedback highlights how customers value structured feedback processes that ensure their opinions are not just collected but also thoughtfully considered and acted upon. By systematically reviewing and integrating feedback, companies demonstrate their commitment to continuous improvement, which enhances customer satisfaction and loyalty. Another customer said

"When I received a call from the company to discuss my feedback and how it would help improve their services, it was a positive experience. The representative explained how my suggestions would be implemented, making me feel like my input was truly valued. This systematic approach to feedback shows that the company is dedicated to making meaningful changes based on customer input."

This excerpt illustrates the impact of systematic feedback mechanisms on customer perceptions. Proactive follow-up, such as personalized calls to discuss feedback, reinforces the company's commitment to addressing customer concerns and making improvements. By demonstrating that customer feedback leads to real changes, companies can build stronger relationships with their customers and enhance overall service quality.

Customer Service Representatives (CSRs) see systematic feedback mechanisms as crucial tools for improving service delivery and customer satisfaction. One CSR remarked,

"Using structured tools like surveys and feedback forms helps us identify recurring issues and areas for improvement. It's a valuable part of our process for enhancing service quality."

This statement highlights the operational benefits of systematic feedback mechanisms for CSRs. By utilizing structured feedback tools, CSRs can more effectively address common issues and contribute to overall service improvements. These tools provide a consistent method for capturing customer insights, which in turn

allows CSRs to recognize patterns and prioritize areas that need attention. The ability to systematically gather and analyze feedback enables CSRs to make informed decisions and take targeted actions to resolve issues, thereby enhancing the customer experience. Another CSR noted,

“When we implement feedback mechanisms, it helps us maintain a clear record of customer concerns and the actions taken to address them. This systematic approach ensures that we are consistently improving our service based on actual customer input.”

This excerpt reflects the importance of systematic feedback mechanisms in supporting CSRs' efforts to deliver high-quality service. By providing a structured approach to capturing and acting on feedback, these mechanisms enable CSRs to better meet customer needs and enhance overall service delivery. Having a detailed record of customer feedback and the corresponding actions taken allows CSRs to track progress and ensure that no issues are overlooked. This transparency and accountability in handling feedback foster trust with customers, as they can see that their concerns are being taken seriously and addressed in a structured manner. The systematic use of feedback not only helps in resolving individual issues but also drives continuous improvement across the service spectrum, ultimately leading to higher customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Managers view systematic feedback mechanisms as integral to their strategic approach to service improvement. One manager explained,

“Implementing structured feedback systems allows us to collect and analyze customer opinions systematically. This data-driven approach helps us identify trends, address recurring issues, and make informed decisions about service enhancements.”

This statement underscores the strategic value of systematic feedback mechanisms in guiding service improvements and ensuring that customer concerns are effectively addressed. By systematically collecting and analyzing feedback, managers can gain valuable insights into customer experiences and preferences. This process enables them to detect patterns and recurring issues, which can be addressed proactively to prevent future problems. The ability to make informed, data-driven decisions based on customer feedback ensures that service improvements are aligned with actual customer

needs and expectations, thereby enhancing overall service quality. Another manager highlighted,

“We use feedback data to continually refine our service offerings and operational practices. A systematic approach to feedback ensures that we’re responsive to customer needs and can adapt our strategies based on real insights.”

This excerpt reflects the managerial focus on leveraging systematic feedback mechanisms to drive continuous improvement. By systematically analyzing feedback data, managers can make targeted enhancements to service quality and operational practices, ultimately contributing to greater customer satisfaction and loyalty. The feedback data provides a solid foundation for understanding customer preferences and pain points, enabling managers to implement changes that directly address these areas. This proactive and adaptive approach not only helps in resolving current issues but also in anticipating and mitigating potential future problems. The continuous refinement of services based on systematic feedback ensures that the company remains responsive and agile in meeting customer needs, fostering a culture of excellence and continuous improvement. Moreover, the integration of systematic feedback mechanisms into strategic planning allows managers to set measurable goals and track progress over time. This approach ensures that service improvements are not only implemented effectively but also evaluated for their impact on customer satisfaction and loyalty. The ability to monitor and measure the effectiveness of changes based on real customer feedback ensures that resources are allocated efficiently and that the company's efforts are focused on areas that will yield the greatest benefit. This strategic use of feedback data underscores the importance of a customer-centric approach in service management, where customer insights are at the heart of decision-making processes. By continuously adapting and refining their strategies based on systematic feedback, managers can ensure that their company remains competitive and responsive to evolving customer expectations.

4.3.4. Theme 4: Transparent Organizational Culture

4.3.4.1. Subtheme A: Openness and Honesty

Customers highly valued transparency in how their complaints were handled. One participant mentioned,

“The representative was very open about the process and what to expect. That honesty made me trust them more.”

This feedback emphasizes the importance of clear and honest communication in building trust with customers. When representatives provide detailed information about the complaint resolution process, it reassures customers that their concerns are being taken seriously and handled with integrity. Transparency in customer service is a critical factor that can influence customer perceptions and satisfaction. When customers feel that they are being kept in the loop and that the representatives are being honest about the process, it builds a foundation of trust. This trust is crucial because it not only helps in resolving the current issue but also enhances the overall relationship between the customer and the company. A transparent approach ensures that customers are aware of what steps are being taken to address their concerns and what they can expect in terms of resolution timelines. Another customer shared, *“When they explained the steps they were taking to resolve my issue and gave me a realistic timeline, it made me feel confident that they were genuinely working on it.”*

Transparency in communication is crucial for enhancing customer confidence and satisfaction. By openly discussing the complaint resolution process and setting clear expectations, companies can build a stronger sense of trust and reliability. When customers are informed about how their issues will be addressed and what to expect, they feel valued and reassured, which fosters a positive perception of the brand. This openness not only alleviates frustration but also strengthens emotional connections, leading to increased customer loyalty and a better overall reputation for the company.

Customer Service Representatives (CSRs) also recognize the importance of transparency in their roles. One CSR remarked,

“Being upfront with customers about what’s happening with their complaints helps build trust. We make sure to explain every step of the process and any potential delays.”

This statement highlights the operational role that transparency plays in customer interactions. By being honest and forthcoming, CSRs can manage customer expectations more effectively and reduce frustration. Another CSR shared,

“When we are transparent about the process, it helps de-escalate situations. Customers appreciate knowing exactly what is being done to resolve their issue.”

This excerpt reflects the practical benefits of transparency in complaint management. Clear communication can help defuse potentially tense situations by providing customers with a clear understanding of the resolution process, thus improving overall customer satisfaction.

From a managerial perspective, promoting transparency is viewed as an essential component of effective complaint management and service improvement. One manager explained,

“We emphasize the importance of transparency in our training programs because it’s critical for understanding customer needs and making informed decisions about service improvements.”

This statement underscores the strategic role that transparency plays in shaping service policies and practices. By prioritizing transparency, managers ensure that customer feedback informs decision-making and drives continuous improvement. Another manager said:

“Integrating transparency into our service strategy not only improves our offerings but also demonstrates to customers that their voices matter. This approach builds trust and strengthens our relationship with them.”

This excerpt highlights the managerial focus on using transparency as a tool for building stronger customer relationships and enhancing service quality. By actively incorporating transparent practices into strategic decisions, managers reinforce the company's commitment to customer satisfaction and service excellence.

4.3.4.2. Subtheme B: Internal Communication

Effective internal communication within an organization is a cornerstone of efficient complaint resolution. Customers consistently highlighted that the ability of internal teams to communicate and coordinate effectively is crucial for addressing their

concerns swiftly and accurately. When employees across various departments work together seamlessly, it reflects a well-organized system that can manage complaints efficiently. One customer noted,

“I could tell that the team was well-coordinated and informed about my issue, which made the resolution process smooth and quick.”

This feedback highlights the importance of fostering a transparent and communicative internal culture. When internal teams share information effectively, it not only accelerates the resolution process but also demonstrates to customers that their concerns are being handled competently. Customers frequently emphasized how seamless internal communication contributed to a positive service experience. Another customer mentioned,

“Knowing that different departments were in sync and aware of my issue reassured me that my complaint was being taken seriously.”

This insight underscores the significance of internal communication in ensuring that customer complaints are handled efficiently and professionally. Furthermore, customers reported that a well-coordinated internal communication strategy helped prevent unnecessary delays and minimizes misunderstandings. By reducing the need for repeated explanations and addressing issues promptly, organizations can significantly enhance the overall customer experience. In summary, robust internal communication is not only essential for swift complaint resolution but also plays a critical role in building trust and satisfaction among customers.

Customer Service Representatives also recognize the significant value of effective internal communication in their roles. From their perspective, clear and structured communication within the organization is crucial for maintaining high service standards. One Customer Service Representative articulated this by stating,

“Clear internal communication ensures that we are all on the same page and can provide accurate updates to customers. It’s essential for maintaining a high level of service.”

This statement underscores how well-coordinated internal communication is fundamental in supporting the efficiency and precision of customer service operations. When Customer Service Representatives are informed and aligned with their

colleagues, they can deliver more consistent and reliable service, which directly impacts the quality of the customer experience. Moreover, another Customer Service Representative elaborated on the benefits of internal communication by saying,

“When our team communicates well internally, it reflects positively on our ability to resolve customer issues quickly. Customers notice when we are well-coordinated.”

This observation highlights how effective internal communication not only improves operational efficiency but also enhances customer perceptions of service quality. When Customer Service Representatives work together seamlessly and are in sync with internal processes, it results in faster and more effective problem resolution. Customers are keenly aware of the organization's internal coordination, and their positive experiences are often a reflection of how well internal teams communicate and collaborate.

Managers view systematic internal communication as integral to their strategic approach to service improvement. One manager explained,

“Implementing structured communication systems allows us to coordinate efforts across departments effectively. This ensures that customer issues are addressed promptly and accurately.”

This statement underscores the strategic value of internal communication in guiding service improvements and ensuring that customer concerns are effectively addressed. Another manager highlighted,

“We use internal communication tools to continually refine our processes and ensure that all team members are informed and aligned. A systematic approach to communication ensures that we're responsive to customer needs and can adapt our strategies based on real insights.”

This excerpt reflects the managerial focus on leveraging internal communication mechanisms to drive continuous improvement. By systematically coordinating efforts and sharing information, managers can make targeted enhancements to service quality and operational practices, ultimately contributing to greater customer satisfaction and loyalty.

4.3.5. Theme 5: Customer Trust in Company

4.3.5.1. Subtheme A: Reliability and Consistency

Reliability and consistency are critical components in building customer trust. Customers value a company's ability to deliver dependable service and maintain a consistent standard over time. One customer reflected on their experience with the company, saying,

"I've had several issues over the years, but my telecom company always resolve them efficiently, which has built my trust in the company."

This comment highlights how a history of reliable and effective issue resolution contributes to the customer's trust. Consistent positive experiences reinforce the customer's confidence in the company's ability to handle problems efficiently. Another customer added,

"Whenever I've had a problem, I know I can count on my telecom service provider to handle it swiftly and professionally. This consistency has made me a loyal customer."

This feedback emphasizes that consistent service delivery, marked by swift and professional handling of issues, enhances customer loyalty. The predictability of service quality and the assurance of timely resolution are crucial in reinforcing trust and ensuring long-term customer relationships.

Customer Service Representatives also pointed out that reliability and consistency are crucial in maintaining customer trust. One CSR explained,

"Our ability to consistently address customer issues and provide reliable solutions is key to building long-term trust. Customers notice when we are dependable."

This perspective highlights that CSRs' consistent performance in managing customer issues and delivering solutions is essential for fostering trust. Their reliability in handling interactions directly affects the customer's perception of the company's dependability. Another CSR noted,

"We strive to ensure that every customer interaction is handled with the same level of efficiency and care. This consistency helps build trust with our customers."

This statement underscores the importance of internal consistency in service delivery. By maintaining high standards of efficiency and care in every interaction,

CSRs contribute to a consistent and reliable customer experience, which strengthens overall trust.

Managers play a pivotal role in establishing and maintaining systems that ensure reliability and consistency in service delivery. One manager remarked, *“Our focus on maintaining consistent service quality across all customer interactions is fundamental to earning and retaining trust. We measure our success based on how reliably we handle customer issues.”*

This emphasis on consistency underscores the strategic importance managers place on delivering uniform service quality. To achieve this, managers develop and enforce comprehensive service standards and guidelines, which include standardized procedures for handling customer issues and training programs for staff. This systematic approach helps eliminate variability in service delivery, ensuring that customers receive a reliable and predictable experience. Managers also implement performance metrics and key performance indicators (KPIs) to monitor compliance with these standards, such as tracking average resolution times and customer satisfaction scores. By regularly reviewing these metrics, managers can identify areas for improvement and make necessary adjustments to maintain high service quality, reinforcing the company's commitment to reliability. In addition to implementing and monitoring service standards, managers play a crucial role in fostering a culture of consistency and reliability within the organization. Another manager added, *“Consistency in service and addressing customer concerns effectively are key metrics we use to evaluate our performance. Reliable service helps in strengthening our customer relationships.”*

This feedback highlights how managers use performance metrics to assess and enhance service reliability, thereby strengthening customer relationships. Managers ensure that service delivery aligns with customer expectations by analyzing data on service performance and customer feedback. They also work to create a supportive environment where high standards of service are valued and rewarded. This includes setting clear performance expectations, providing ongoing training, and recognizing staff who excel in delivering consistent and reliable service. By embedding these principles into the organizational culture, managers contribute to a robust foundation

of customer trust, ensuring that the company consistently meets and exceeds customer expectations.

4.3.5.2. Subtheme B: Ethical Practices

Ethical practices are central to building and sustaining customer trust. For customers, ethical behavior includes fairness, transparency, and honesty. One customer emphasized,

“I trust this company because they are transparent about their billing practices and always communicate honestly. It’s clear they value ethical conduct.”

This feedback highlights how transparency in billing and honest communication contribute to the customer’s trust. Ethical practices in financial transactions and communication reassure customers of fair and respectful treatment. Another customer shared,

“Knowing that the company follows ethical practices in all their dealings makes me feel secure and valued as a customer.”

This statement reflects the crucial role that ethical behavior plays in fostering a sense of security and value among customers. When customers perceive that a company adheres to high ethical standards, it significantly enhances their overall trust and confidence in the company’s commitment to fair and transparent treatment. Ethical practices, such as fair billing, honest communication, and transparent policies, contribute to a positive customer experience by reassuring customers that they are being treated fairly and with respect. This perception of ethical integrity not only builds trust but also creates a secure environment where customers feel valued and respected. Moreover, this sense of security and trust is directly linked to customer satisfaction with complaint resolution. When a company is perceived as ethical, customers are more likely to believe that their complaints will be handled fairly and with due consideration.

Customer Service Representatives (CSRs) are instrumental in upholding ethical practices in customer interactions. One CSR shared,

“Ethical practices are crucial for maintaining customer trust. When we handle customer interactions with honesty and fairness, it strengthens our relationship with them.”

This feedback underscores the critical role CSRs play in ensuring ethical behavior in every customer interaction. By adhering to principles of honesty and fairness, CSRs not only address customer concerns effectively but also build a foundation of trust. This ethical approach is essential for creating a positive customer experience, as it reassures customers that they are being treated with integrity and respect. Moreover, adherence to ethical standards in service delivery is key to maintaining and enhancing customer trust. When customers feel that their issues are being handled transparently and justly, they are more likely to develop a sense of loyalty towards the company. This trust is further reinforced when CSRs consistently apply ethical practices, demonstrating the company's commitment to fair treatment. For instance, if a customer has a complaint about a billing discrepancy and the CSR resolves it honestly and fairly, the customer is more likely to feel satisfied with the resolution. This satisfaction is rooted in the customer's confidence that the company values their concerns and is dedicated to ethical principles. Another CSR noted,

“We are trained to uphold ethical standards in all customer interactions. This commitment is essential for building trust and ensuring that customers feel respected and valued.”

This statement highlights the importance of ethical training and adherence among CSRs. Training programs that emphasize ethical standards equip CSRs with the knowledge and skills needed to handle customer interactions with integrity. This preparation is vital for fostering a culture of ethics within the organization and ensuring that all customer interactions are conducted with a high level of moral responsibility. By applying ethical practices consistently, CSRs help foster a positive perception of the company and strengthen customer relationships. Customers who perceive that the company operates ethically are more likely to trust its services and remain loyal. This positive perception is crucial for customer retention and satisfaction, as it encourages customers to feel confident in the company's commitment to their well-being. Furthermore, ethical behavior in resolving customer complaints enhances

the overall satisfaction with the resolution process. When customers believe that their issues are addressed fairly and transparently, they are more likely to be satisfied with the outcome, thereby strengthening their trust in the company.

Managers are responsible for creating and enforcing ethical policies within the organization. One manager remarked,

“Maintaining ethical standards in all aspects of our business is essential for building and sustaining customer trust. We ensure that our policies and practices reflect our commitment to ethical conduct.”

This insight emphasizes the strategic importance of ethical practices. Managers are tasked with ensuring that the company's policies align with high ethical standards, which is crucial for sustaining customer trust. By embedding ethical principles into the core operational framework, managers create an environment where ethical behavior is not only encouraged but expected. This proactive approach to ethical management helps establish a culture of integrity, which is essential for building long-term trust with customers. Furthermore, managers play a pivotal role in integrating ethical considerations into every facet of the business. They ensure that ethical guidelines are clearly communicated to all employees and that these standards are consistently applied in all customer interactions. This comprehensive approach to ethics management involves regular training and updates to keep the workforce informed about best practices and emerging ethical issues. By fostering a strong

ethical culture, managers help create a trustworthy and reliable service environment that resonates with customers, thereby enhancing their overall experience and satisfaction. Another manager added,

“We monitor and evaluate our ethical practices regularly to ensure that we meet the highest standards of integrity. This focus on ethics helps in strengthening our customer relationships and trust.”

This feedback reflects the managerial commitment to the ongoing evaluation of ethical practices. By continuously assessing and reinforcing ethical standards, managers contribute to maintaining a solid foundation of trust with customers. Regular audits and reviews of ethical practices help identify areas for improvement and ensure that the organization remains aligned with its ethical commitments. This continuous

improvement process is vital for adapting to new challenges and maintaining the highest levels of integrity in customer interactions.

In addition to regular monitoring, managers also implement feedback mechanisms to capture customer perceptions of the company's ethical conduct. This customer-centric approach allows managers to gain valuable insights into how their ethical policies are perceived and to make necessary adjustments to meet customer expectations better. By actively seeking and incorporating customer feedback, managers demonstrate their commitment to transparency and accountability, further strengthening trust and loyalty. The connection between ethical management and customer satisfaction with complaint resolution is evident. When managers uphold and reinforce ethical standards, it sets the tone for how customer service representatives handle complaints. Ethical conduct in complaint resolution ensures that customers feel their issues are addressed fairly and justly, which is crucial for their satisfaction. For example, if a customer feels that their complaint about a service failure is resolved with integrity and fairness, they are more likely to be satisfied with the outcome and trust the company more.

4.3.6. Theme 6: Customer Behavior Sensitivity

4.3.6.1. Subtheme A: Understanding Customer Needs

Sensitivity to customer needs and behaviors was highlighted as a key factor in effective complaint management. One customer shared,

“They understood my specific needs and provided a tailored solution”

Emphasizing the importance of personalized service. This feedback underscores how crucial it is for companies to not only recognize but also respond to the unique needs of each customer. When companies demonstrate an understanding of individual preferences and requirements, it significantly enhances customer satisfaction and trust. Another customer noted,

“I felt like they really listened to my concerns and addressed them specifically, rather than giving a generic response.”

This statement highlights the value customers place on being heard and receiving individualized attention. Personalized service not only meets the immediate needs of

customers but also builds a stronger, more personal connection between the customer and the company.

Customer Service Representatives (CSRs) also recognized the importance of understanding customer needs. One CSR explained,

“By taking the time to understand what the customer really needs, we can provide better, more effective solutions.”

This perspective reflects the proactive approach CSRs take to ensure that their service is relevant and beneficial to each customer. Understanding the customer's perspective allows CSRs to offer solutions that are not only efficient but also satisfying to the customer. Another CSR added,

“We try to gather as much information as possible about the customer's issue before proposing a solution. This helps us address the root cause of the problem and not just the symptoms.”

This approach demonstrates a deep commitment to resolving issues thoroughly and effectively. By focusing on understanding and addressing the underlying needs, CSRs can provide more comprehensive and lasting solutions.

Managers play a critical role in fostering a culture that prioritizes understanding customer needs. One manager remarked,

“We train our staff to actively listen and ask the right questions to fully understand the customer's situation. This is crucial for providing tailored solutions that truly meet their needs.”

This statement underscores the strategic importance of training and development in enhancing customer service. Managers ensure that staff have the skills and tools necessary to understand and address customer needs effectively. Another manager noted,

“Our customer feedback system is designed to capture detailed insights about customer preferences and pain points. This information helps us continuously improve our service offerings to better align with customer needs.”

This feedback highlights the importance of leveraging customer insights to drive service improvements. By systematically collecting and analyzing customer feedback,

managers can identify trends and areas for enhancement, ensuring that the company remains responsive to evolving customer needs.

4.3.6.2. Subtheme B: Proactive Problem Solving

Proactive problem-solving approaches, where companies anticipated issues before they escalated, were highly appreciated by customers. One customer noted,

“My telecom company texted to inform me about a potential issue before I even noticed it,”

Highlighting the value of proactive customer service. This proactive approach not only prevents problems from escalating but also demonstrates a company's commitment to customer care and attentiveness. Another customer shared,

“It was reassuring to know that they were monitoring my account and could address issues before they became major problems.”

This feedback reflects the peace of mind that proactive service provides to customers. By anticipating and addressing potential issues early, companies can enhance customer satisfaction and trust.

Customer Service Representatives (CSRs) are at the forefront of proactive problem-solving. One CSR stated,

“We are encouraged to look for potential issues and address them before the customer even has to contact us.”

This proactive mindset helps CSRs provide a higher level of service and prevents issues from escalating. By taking the initiative, CSRs can resolve problems quickly and efficiently, which is appreciated by customers. Another CSR mentioned,

“Being proactive means we have to be vigilant and think ahead. It's about predicting what might go wrong and fixing it before it affects the customer.”

This approach requires a high level of attentiveness and foresight. By staying ahead of potential problems, CSRs can maintain smooth and positive customer experiences, thereby enhancing trust and satisfaction.

Managers also emphasize the importance of proactive problem-solving. One manager explained,

“We have systems in place to detect and address issues early. This helps us maintain high service standards and avoid customer dissatisfaction.”

This statement highlights the strategic role of systems and processes in enabling proactive service. Managers ensure that the organization is equipped to identify and resolve issues promptly. Another manager added,

“Our goal is to be one step ahead of potential problems. We train our staff to anticipate customer needs and address them proactively.”

This feedback underscores the importance of training and a forward-thinking approach in customer service. By instilling a proactive mindset in their teams, managers help create a culture of anticipation and readiness, which is crucial for maintaining high levels of customer satisfaction and trust.

4.3.7. Theme 7: Customer Satisfaction

4.3.7.1. Subtheme A: Overall Experience

The overall experience, encompassing all the above factors, ultimately influenced customer satisfaction in profound ways. One customer explained,

“It wasn't just about solving my issue; it was about how they made me feel valued throughout the process.”

This feedback highlights that customer satisfaction is not solely dependent on the resolution of a problem but also significantly influenced by the emotional and psychological journey the customer undergoes during the resolution process. A holistic approach to customer service, where customers feel valued and respected, can turn a potentially negative experience into a positive one. Another customer shared,

“From the moment I contacted them to the follow-up after my issue was resolved, every interaction was professional and courteous. It made a huge difference in how I perceived the company.”

This statement emphasizes the importance of every touchpoint in the customer journey. Consistent professionalism and courtesy across all interactions not only resolve issues but also reinforce a positive perception of the company. This comprehensive and consistent approach is crucial for fostering trust and satisfaction among customers.

Customer Service Representatives (CSRs) play a pivotal role in shaping the overall customer experience. One CSR remarked,

“We strive to make every interaction positive, regardless of the nature of the customer's issue. Our goal is to ensure they feel heard and respected throughout the process.”

This perspective underscores the CSR's commitment to providing a high-quality experience that goes beyond mere problem-solving. By focusing on the overall experience, CSRs help build a more positive and enduring relationship with customers. Another CSR added,

“It's important to us that customers leave the interaction feeling better than when they first contacted us. This means we not only solve their problems but also uplift their spirits.”

This approach reflects a deeper understanding of customer service, where the emotional well-being of the customer is as important as the technical resolution of their issue. By prioritizing the customer's emotional journey, CSRs contribute to a more holistic and satisfying customer experience.

Managers are also instrumental in ensuring a positive overall customer experience. One manager noted,

“We emphasize the importance of empathy and emotional intelligence in our training programs. A positive overall experience is about connecting with customers on a human level.”

This insight highlights the strategic importance managers place on empathy and emotional intelligence. By fostering these qualities in their teams, managers ensure that the customer experience is not only efficient but also compassionate and empathetic. Another manager remarked,

“Our feedback systems are designed to capture the entire customer journey, not just the resolution. This helps us understand and improve the overall experience”.

This feedback illustrates the comprehensive approach managers take in evaluating customer service. By focusing on the entire customer journey, managers can identify areas for improvement and ensure that every aspect of the customer experience meets high standards of quality and satisfaction.

4.3.7.2. Subtheme B: Long-term Relationship

Long-term customer relationships were built on consistently positive experiences, creating a foundation of trust and loyalty. One customer remarked,

“I've been with this company for years because they always handle my complaints well”

Underscoring the importance of sustained satisfaction. This feedback highlights that consistency in service quality and complaint resolution is crucial for retaining customers over the long term. A company that consistently meets or exceeds customer expectations fosters loyalty and long-term relationships. Another customer shared,

“I stay with them because I know I can rely on their service. Every time I have an issue, they handle it efficiently and courteously.”

This statement emphasizes the importance of reliability and courteous service in building long-term customer relationships. When customers know they can depend on a company to handle their issues with care and efficiency, they are more likely to remain loyal and continue their relationship with the company.

Customer Service Representatives (CSRs) understand the importance of building long-term relationships with customers. One CSR explained,

“Our goal is to not just resolve the current issue but to build trust for future interactions. We want customers to feel confident that they can count on us anytime.”

This perspective reflects the proactive approach CSRs take in fostering long-term relationships. By focusing on trust and reliability, CSRs help ensure that customers return to the company whenever they need assistance. Another CSR noted,

“We aim to create a positive impression that lasts beyond the immediate interaction. Building long-term relationships means being consistent in our service quality.”

This feedback highlights the ongoing effort required to maintain high service standards. By consistently delivering quality service, CSRs contribute to the development of enduring customer relationships.

Managers play a crucial role in supporting long-term customer relationships. One manager stated,

“We prioritize customer retention by ensuring our service quality remains high and consistent. Long-term relationships are built on trust and reliability.”

This insight underscores the strategic importance managers place on consistency and reliability in service delivery. By maintaining high standards, managers help build a solid foundation for long-term customer relationships. Another manager added, *“Our retention strategies focus on understanding customer needs and exceeding their expectations consistently. This approach helps us build lasting relationships.”*

This statement highlights the importance of exceeding customer expectations regularly. By consistently going above and beyond, managers ensure that customers remain satisfied and loyal to the company over the long term.

4.4. Discussions, Implications and Conclusions

This section presents a concise discussion summary, reflecting the nature of qualitative research where findings are often intertwined with discussion to enhance clarity and interpretive value. Rather than separating results and analysis rigidly, the study integrates both to provide a richer understanding of the issues under investigation. This approach ensures that the insights emerging from participants’ views are immediately contextualized, interpreted, and linked to broader themes and literature. As such, the findings already presented contain the majority of the discussion, with the section below serving only as a short summary to consolidate the key points.

4.4.1. Discussion

The findings of this study offer crucial context to the mixed and sometimes contradictory results found in existing complaints management literature. While prior quantitative studies frequently identify responsiveness and service quality as key drivers of satisfaction [1,30,84], our findings reveal the deeper emotional and social processes underpinning these dimensions such as feeling valued through timeliness and reassured by correct, first-time solutions. This helps explain why some studies report inconsistent effects: without capturing these experiential nuances, purely numerical metrics may miss how satisfaction is actually constructed in customer interactions.

The prominent role of social media influencers in shaping perceptions of accountability and transparency provides a novel lens rarely accounted for in mainstream models. Existing frameworks, developed largely in Western, service-mature contexts, do not incorporate these socially embedded influences, which appear especially powerful in developing

country settings where trust deficits and communal networks shape consumer behavior [55,139]. This insight helps clarify why traditional complaint management constructs sometimes fail to predict satisfaction reliably in similar environments.

Our findings highlight that active listening, openness, and coordinated internal communication play a critical role in shaping how complaints are managed. Unlike many quantitative studies that tend to simplify or collapse these dimensions into a single construct such as “responsiveness” [84,88], our qualitative evidence shows that each of these elements carries its own weight while also working together to reinforce one another. Active listening ensures that customer concerns are genuinely understood, openness builds credibility and transparency, and coordinated communication aligns internal efforts to deliver consistent responses. When combined, these factors create a foundation of trust that enhances the overall effectiveness of complaint handling. This more nuanced perspective sheds light on why existing research has produced conflicting findings about the influence of organizational transparency and feedback utilization [125,128]. The complexity we identify suggests that these factors should not be treated as isolated variables, but rather as interconnected processes that collectively determine customer perceptions and outcomes [192].

By contextualizing these themes in the lived realities of customers, CSRs, and managers, this study lays the groundwork for developing culturally and contextually valid constructs suitable for emerging economies. Quantitative research that operationalizes these nuanced dimensions can move beyond generic measures to more accurately assess their relative influence and interactions. Such an approach is essential to reconcile contradictory findings and enhance predictive power, ultimately leading to more effective, locally attuned complaint management strategies.

4.4.2. Theoretical Implication

The qualitative findings of this study offer several significant theoretical contributions to the literature on complaints management and customer satisfaction. By systematically analyzing verbatim transcripts from managers, customer service representatives, and customers, this research uncovers novel dimensions that enrich and extend traditional theoretical frameworks in this field.

Firstly, the identification of Social Media Influencer Utilization and Customer Behavior Sensitivity introduces critical yet underexplored factors in complaints management theory. While classic models such as the SERVQUAL framework by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, (1988) and traditional complaint resolution theories by Davidow (2003) emphasize service quality and direct company-customer interactions, these themes highlight the growing importance of indirect digital influences and individual perceptual differences in shaping customer satisfaction. This aligns with recent advances in digital marketing and CRM literature which recognize social media as a powerful arena for shaping consumer perceptions and behaviors[99,121,136]. Incorporating these dimensions challenges existing models to evolve beyond face-to-face or call center interactions by integrating the dynamic, networked nature of social media engagement and customer psychological traits as core theoretical constructs.

Secondly, the emergence of Transparent Organizational Culture as a distinct and influential factor reinforces organizational transparency and ethical communication as pivotal in cultivating customer trust and effectively managing complaints. This finding extends foundational trust theories in service management by operationalizing transparency not merely as a normative ideal but as an actionable organizational characteristic with direct effects on customer satisfaction[113]. It highlights how transparent communication practices enhance perceptions of organizational integrity, thereby reducing customer uncertainty and improving complaint outcomes. This nuance adds depth to the theoretical discourse on trust-building mechanisms within service recovery literature [138,139].

Furthermore, the study's rigorous mixed-methods approach grounding quantitative constructs in rich qualitative data through systematic coding provides a methodological contribution by demonstrating how theoretical models can be rooted in authentic customer and practitioner experiences. This approach improves the ecological validity of complaints management theories, particularly in the telecom sector where the complexity of multichannel interactions demands nuanced measurement. It supports calls from scholars Creswell & Plano Clark, (2011) for methodological pluralism in service research to better capture the multifaceted realities of customer-company relationships.

Collectively, Our findings refine theoretical understanding of complaints management by showing that responsiveness is multi-dimensional, encompassing active listening,

openness, and coordinated internal communication. Through CRM theory, these processes collectively build trust: listening conveys empathy, openness signals credibility, and coordination ensures consistent responses. Using the SOR framework, they act as stimuli shaping customer perceptions, which drive satisfaction with complaint resolution. This perspective challenges prior simplifications, highlighting that trust formation is dynamic and that complaint-handling effectiveness arises from the interplay of these interdependent processes, particularly in service-intensive contexts like telecommunications.

4.4.3. Conclusions

The qualitative analysis provided valuable insights into the critical factors influencing customer satisfaction within complaints management practices. Through in-depth interviews with managers, customer service representatives, and customers, several key themes emerged, including service quality, social media influencer engagement, customer feedback utilization, transparent organizational culture, trust in the company, and customer behavior sensitivity. These themes reflect the multifaceted nature of complaint handling and highlight the importance of speed, consistency, personalized interactions, and ethical transparency in fostering customer trust and satisfaction.

By systematically coding and refining these themes, a robust framework was developed to understand how these elements interact to shape customer perceptions and satisfaction. Importantly, these qualitative findings guided the development of measurable constructs for subsequent quantitative analysis, ensuring the study's comprehensive exploration of complaints management. Ultimately, this integrated approach advances our understanding of effective complaint management strategies and their impact on enhancing customer satisfaction. The Table 4.2 shows the summary of themes that were developed in this qualitative and how they are useful in the quantitative study that follows

Table 4.2 Emerging themes from Qualitative Analysis used for Quantitative Study

Emerging Themes From Qualitative Study	Constructs Developed for Quantitative Study
• Speed of Issue Resolution • Consistency and Reliability of Service • Personalization of Customer Interactions	Service Quality
• Engagement with Influencers • Impact of Influencers on Brand Perception	Social Media Influencer Utilization
• Integration of Customer Feedback • Actionable Steps from Feedback	Perceived Customer Feedback Utilization
• Openness in Communication • Adherence to Ethical Standards	Transparent Organization Culture
• Trust in Service Delivery • Trust in Ethical Conduct	Customer Trust in Company
• Sensitivity to Changes in Service Quality • Response to Service Recovery Efforts	Customer Behavior Sensitivity
• Overall Satisfaction with Service • Satisfaction with Complaint Resolution	Customer Satisfaction

Chapter 5 The Role of Trust and Consumer Sensitivity in Complaints Management and Satisfaction

This chapter addresses the challenge of managing customer complaints in the telecom sector and builds on prior qualitative findings to develop relevant quantitative variables. Using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with Partial Least Squares (PLS), the study examined how complaints management practices affect customer satisfaction, with consumer trust as a mediator and customer behavior sensitivity as a moderator. Robustness checks ensured reliability and validity. Results show that different practices influence satisfaction both directly and indirectly through trust, while accounting for variations in customer sensitivity, providing actionable insights for improving complaint handling.

5.1. Foundations of the Quantitative Study

Study 1 conducted a qualitative investigation into complaints management practices affecting customer satisfaction, addressing the scarcity of recent research in this area. Study 2 built on these insights by converting the emergent themes into quantitative constructs, aiming to enrich the analysis and strengthen ecological validity. This approach involved introducing mediating and moderating variables as potential explanations for the inconsistencies observed in previous studies on complaints management

Over the years, complaints management literature has evolved from focusing solely on service recovery tactics such as apologies, compensation and corrective action to incorporating broader constructs like customer satisfaction, loyalty, and even emotional outcomes [145,169]. Scholars have examined various organizational responses to complaints and how these influence customer perceptions, using diverse theoretical lenses and models [103,189]. Many of these studies, however, remain grounded in linear, unidirectional frameworks that assume a straightforward relationship between firm action and customer satisfaction[102]. These models often regard outcomes like trust and emotional reactivity as peripheral or static, rather than dynamic variables central to the complaints experience[127,131,132].

One notable advancement in literature has been the exploration of trust as an outcome of successful service recovery [67,88]. While prior research recognizes trust's role in post-complaint evaluations, it is commonly treated as a resultant variable, the end product of

satisfactory complaint handling [114]. This perspective neglects the interpretive role of trust in shaping how customers perceive the company's actions during the complaint process[127]. Few studies have framed trust as a mediating mechanism that explains how and why complaint-handling practices influence customer satisfaction [135]. This is a significant gap, as trust is a psychological filter through which customers assess a firm's sincerity, accountability, and competence, factors critical in service failure contexts [168,172]. The underdeveloped theorization of trust in this mediating capacity thus leaves a crucial explanatory void in our understanding of complaint resolution dynamics [67,88,190]. Moreover, existing studies conflict on whether trust primarily emerges after resolution or actively shapes customer responses throughout the complaint process, making it essential to clarify trust's role to design more effective complaint management strategies that genuinely rebuild customer relationships[67,88,114].

Moreover, the literature has been largely silent on the role of individual-level psychological differences, particularly in terms of consumer behavior sensitivity[98,106,144]. Despite the widespread recognition in psychology and consumer behavior research that individuals differ in their emotional responsiveness, attention to detail, and sensitivity to interpersonal treatment, complaints management studies rarely account for such variations [106]. This omission has led to the widespread application of standardized service recovery strategies, assuming that all customers will respond similarly to uniform organizational practices[119,123]. In reality, some customers are more likely to be influenced by tone, timing, and transparency, while others may be less reactive[142,143]. The absence of consumer behavior sensitivity as a moderating variable has created a blind spot in understanding why the same complaints management strategy yields positive outcomes in some cases but fails in others.

Inconsistencies also exist in empirical findings. While some studies report strong relationships between specific recovery tactics (speedy response, empathy) and customer satisfaction[102, 129,130], others show weak or even negative effects [143,166]. These contradictions may be attributable to contextual and psychological variables that have not been sufficiently modeled such as trust and sensitivity[183]. For example, a highly sensitive customer might interpret a delayed but genuine response as inadequate, whereas a low-

sensitivity customer might find it acceptable. Without integrating these psychological filters, findings remain fragmented and difficult to generalize.

Despite the growing recognition of trust and individual psychological differences in complaints management, existing research largely overlooks how trust functions as a mediating mechanism shaping customer satisfaction, and how consumer behavior sensitivity moderates these effects [67, 88, 135, 168]. Moreover, the dominance of studies conducted in developed economies, coupled with a heavy reliance on quantitative methods, limits our understanding of complaint dynamics in emerging markets such as Tanzania's telecom sector where cultural, infrastructural, and service delivery contexts differ markedly [1, 5, 7, 16, 55]. This gap presents a critical need to investigate complaint management practices through a lens that integrates trust as a dynamic mediator and consumer sensitivity as a moderating variable within a contextually grounded framework [98, 106, 127]. Addressing these gaps not only advances theoretical development but also informs practical strategies to enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty in under-researched, culturally distinct settings [183, 190]. Therefore, this study aims to fill these voids by employing a sequential mixed-methods approach to explore and quantify these relationships within Tanzania's telecom industry

5.1.1. Adoption of Themes from Qualitative into the Quantitative Study

In this study, the transition from qualitative findings to quantitative constructs involves a systematic process where key themes identified in the qualitative research phase were transformed into measurable constructs in the quantitative study. The qualitative research highlighted various aspects of customer experiences in complaints management, such as service quality, social media influencer utilization, transparency and customer trust. These insights were calibrated with extant literature appropriately and then used to define constructs that could be measured through survey instruments in the quantitative phase.

The themes were not only grounded in qualitative data but also reviewed against existing literature to ensure their relevance and consistency with established frameworks. This review allowed for the refinement and operationalization of the constructs as proposed by literature [77, 80]. This process of translating qualitative themes into quantitative constructs ensures that the constructs are not only conceptually aligned with customer experiences but also capable of being measured accurately. By doing so, the study maintains a strong

connection between the in-depth, narrative-rich data from the qualitative phase and the structured, numerical data needed for hypothesis testing in the quantitative phase. Table 5.1 presents a summary

Table 5.1 Emergence of Quantitative Constructs from Themes

Theme	Sub themes	Customer Respondent Excerpts	Constructs for Quantitative Study
Service Quality	Timeliness of Service	<i>When I reported my issue via a social media platform , I received a response within an hour. That made me feel valued and reassured.</i>	Service Quality
	Effectiveness of Solutions	<i>The issue with my internet connection was resolved within three hour, and it was done correctly the first time. This was a huge relief and showed that the company knows what it's doing.</i>	
Social Media Influencer Utilization	Influencer Endorsements	<i>When I saw an influencer talking about how quickly their issue was resolved, it gave me confidence to reach out to the company.</i>	Social Media Influencer Utilization
	Influencer Engagement	<i>Seeing influencers discussing and resolving service issues made me feel that the company is more accountable and transparent. It also helped me feel part of a larger community of customers</i>	
Customer Feedback Utilization	Active Listening	<i>After I provided feedback, the company reached out to let me know they were implementing some of my suggestions. That made me feel heard.</i>	Customer Feedback Utilization
	Systematic Feedback Mechanisms	<i>When I received a call from the company to discuss my feedback and how it would help improve their services, it was a positive experience. The representative explained how my suggestions would be implemented, making me feel like my input was truly valued. This systematic approach to feedback shows that the company is dedicated to making meaningful changes based on customer input.</i>	
Transparent Organizational Culture	Openness and Honesty	<i>The representative was very open about the process and what to expect. That honesty made me trust them more.</i>	Transparent Organizational Culture
	Internal Communication	<i>Knowing that different departments were in sync and aware of my issue reassured me that my complaint was being taken seriously.</i>	
Customer Trust in Company	Reliability and Consistency	<i>I've had several issues over the years, but my telecom company always resolve them efficiently, which has built my trust in the company.</i>	Customer Trust in Company
	Ethical Practices	<i>I trust this company because they are transparent about their billing practices and always communicate honestly. It's</i>	

The development of the survey instrument was a critical step in this research, ensuring that the constructs were measured accurately and reliably. The process involved selecting established scales from the literature to ensure validity and reliability, adapting them to fit the context of customer complaints management in the telecom industry, and pre-testing the instrument to refine the items as recommended by literature[81]. Each construct was carefully chosen based on its relevance to the study objectives and its previous use in related research. The constructs include Service Quality in Complaints (SQC), Social Media Influencer Utilization (SMI), Perceived Customer Feedback Utilization (CFU), Transparent Organization Culture (OCC), Customer Trust in Company (TRC), and Customer Behavior Sensitivity (CBS). The selected scales were adapted from reputable sources to maintain the integrity and applicability of the measurement.

A 5- point Likert scale was employed for all items, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), to capture the respondents' perceptions and attitudes accurately. Pre-testing involved a small sample from the target population to identify any ambiguities or issues with the wording of the items, ensuring clarity and comprehensibility.

The table 5.2 summarizes the details of the research instrument, including the constructs, their short forms, the variable types, the scale references, and the number of items for each construct. The questionnaires are found in the appendix

Table 5.2 Research Constructs

Construct	Shortform	Variable	Scale and reference	items
Service Quality in complaints	SQC	Independent	[84]	12
Social Media Influencer Utilization	SMI	Independent	[85]	10
Perceived Customer Feedback Utilization	CFU	Independent	[86]	10
Transparent Organization Culture	OCC	Independent	[87]	10
Customer Trust in Company	TRC	Mediator	[88]	9
Customer Behavior Sensitivity	CBS	Moderator	[89]	7
Customer Satisfaction with resolution	CSR	Dependent	[90]	4

5.1.2. Operationalization of Constructs

The conceptual model integrates key constructs identified through both a qualitative study and a comprehensive literature review on complaints management and customer

satisfaction. In social science, constructs represent abstract concepts that require clear operational definitions to be measured empirically. These definitions specify how each construct is quantified and observed, ensuring clarity, validity, and replicability of the research. Table 5.3 summarizes the operational definitions used in this study.

Table 5.3 Operational Definition of Constructs

Construct	Definition	Source
Service Quality	The extent to which a service provider effectively, reliably, and empathetically resolves customer complaints, meeting or exceeding expectations.	[85]
Social Media Influencer Utilization	The strategic use of influencers to address complaints, share information, and improve the company’s complaint resolution process.	[86]
Perceived Customer Feedback Utilization	Customers’ perception of how well a company listens to, values, and uses their feedback to improve complaint handling and service quality.	[87]
Transparent Organization Culture	The degree of openness, honesty, and clarity in how a company communicates and acts when handling customer complaints.	[88]
Customer Trust in Company	The belief that a company is capable and willing to resolve complaints and meet customer expectations.	[89]
Customer Behavior Sensitivity	The degree to which customers react intensely—emotionally or behaviorally—to both positive and negative service experiences.	[90]
Customer Satisfaction	The overall customer evaluation of their experience with the company’s complaint handling.	[91]

5.1.3.Complaints Management Theoretical Underppinings

The complexity of complaint management in contemporary telecom services demands an integrated theoretical approach that transcends traditional boundaries. This study critically engages five foundational theories: Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) Framework, Service Quality Model (SERVQUAL), Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Theory, Information Processing Theory (IPT), and Consumer Behavior Theory (CBT) to address conceptual and contextual limitations pervasive in existing research [36]. While Chapter 2 provides an in-depth discussion of these theories, and their related gaps in literature, the current section offers a concise preview to contextualize their application in this study.

The SOR framework, despite its longstanding influence in explaining how external stimuli shape internal states leading to behavioral outcomes, remains underutilized in complaint management research beyond simplistic trust-centered models [116,117]. Prevailing studies narrowly construe the organism as trust alone, ignoring the nuanced role of customer behavioral sensitivity which is a critical moderator that captures differential consumer responses to complaint handling [120]. Furthermore, the dominance of Western-

centric applications limits the framework's explanatory power in emerging markets characterized by distinct cultural and technological realities [119]. By expanding the organism to integrate behavioral sensitivity and applying the SOR framework within Tanzania's telecom sector, this study addresses a profound theoretical gap, situating complaint responses within culturally resonant and socially mediated stimuli such as those situations where social media influencers are used in. shaping customer perceptions regarding complaints resolution. This reframing challenges and enriches SOR's classical paradigm by foregrounding context-specific customer dynamics often overlooked in extant models. Hence, this study uses SOR as a guiding theory in this study.

Similarly, SERVQUAL model served as a foundational framework for connecting the service dimensions of complaints management practices with the broader theoretical foundations of this study. Although SERVQUAL is a key model in service quality research, it is criticized for its conceptual rigidity and its static method of measuring customer expectations, which limits its effectiveness in capturing the dynamic and intangible characteristics of digital telecom services [130,183]. Its inability to accommodate evolving, technology-driven interactions has led to inconsistent findings regarding its ability to predict customer satisfaction in complaint contexts [164]. This research addresses these shortcomings by redefining service quality in complaint management through an integrative approach that links SERVQUAL's dimensions with aspects of trust and customer behavioral sensitivity. This combined perspective allows for a more adaptive understanding of quality gaps as they emerge during real-time complaint handling, highlighting the evolving expectations influenced by digital platforms and social media.

CRM theory's evolution from transactional to relational focus particularly with the emergence of social CRM has brought personalized communication and trust to the forefront of customer management[99]. Yet, its effectiveness wanes when addressing the emotional complexity and immediacy inherent in particularly in social media complaints, where standardized processes often undermine authentic engagement [121]. The literature reveals a critical tension: CRM's emphasis on systematization conflicts with the need for sensitivity to individual customer emotional states in complaint contexts [8,86]. This study advances CRM theory by positioning trust as a mediating mechanism and customer behavior sensitivity as a moderator, thus integrating emotional nuance and social media

dynamics often neglected in mainstream CRM research. In doing so, this study reconceptualizes transparent organizational culture a (key CRM value) viewing it not only as openness in communication and information flow but also as the ability of an organization to be emotionally transparent and responsive, thereby fostering trust and authenticity in complaint handling[136].

Information Processing Theory (IPT) offers valuable insights into cognitive processes underpinning complaint evaluations, yet its traditional rationalist and linear framing inadequately captures the affective and social dimensions central to complaint experiences, particularly within digital ecosystems [194]. Real-time social media feedback loops introduce complexities that exceed IPT's cognitive scope, necessitating an expanded model that incorporates trust and emotional engagement alongside information processing [138]. As a result, the customer feedback utilization process which is a central tenet in IPT tends to operate in isolation from critical variables such as customer behavior sensitivity, trust in the company, and overall customer satisfaction with complaint resolution[131]. Consequently, customer feedback utilization risks becoming a procedural exercise divorced from the relational context that ultimately shapes complaint outcomes, thereby limiting its effectiveness in driving meaningful improvements in trust and satisfaction. This study seek to integrate customer feedback utilization as a fundamental aspect of IPT with customer behavior sensitivity, trust in the company, and consumer satisfaction, creating a holistic framework that addresses the multifaceted nature of complaint management.

This study also advances Consumer Behavior Theory (CBT) by linking it with CRM, the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) framework, and IPT to offer a more integrated understanding of consumer behavior in the context of complaints management. While CBT traditionally focuses on internal cognitive and emotional processes, it has rarely addressed how external influences such as social media influencers shape consumer perceptions and complaint responses[57]. By positioning influencer utilization as a key stimulus within the SOR model, framing trust and feedback responsiveness as organismic states, and drawing on IPT to explain how companies manage impressions via feedback utilization, the study creates a multidimensional theoretical approach. In doing so, CBT provides strategic insight into how consumers behave in digitally mediated complaint scenarios. This integration is particularly relevant in the Tanzanian telecom sector, where cultural factors and trust

dynamics further complicate consumer behavior. Notably, the combined application of CBT with CRM, SOR, and IPT in this context remains underexplored in existing literature, marking a significant theoretical contribution of the study[36,61,67,110].

Collectively, these theories reveal critical shortcomings when applied in isolation—overemphasis on trust without behavioral nuance, static measurement of quality, neglect of emotional and social complexity, and insufficient cultural contextualization. This study’s synthetic theoretical approach transcends these limitations by weaving cognitive, affective, behavioral, and contextual threads into a coherent framework that better captures the multifaceted nature of complaint management in the digital age. It thereby makes a substantive theoretical contribution that not only extends existing models but also offers actionable insights tailored to the unique challenges of telecom complaint management in an emerging market. The figure 5.1 show how the theories are integrated.

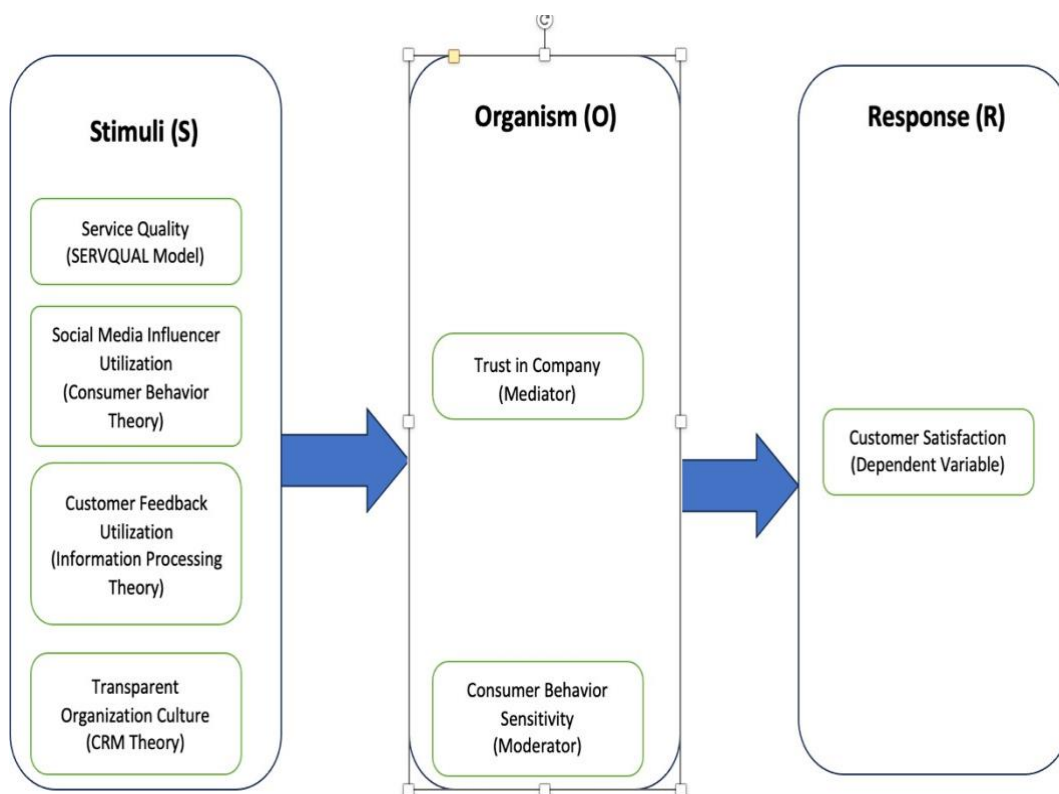


Figure 5.1 Theoretical integration

5.2. Research Model Constructs and Indicators Development

This section presents the development of the key constructs and corresponding indicators that form the foundation of the research model. The constructs were identified based on

findings of the qualitative study, an extensive review of relevant literature and aligned with the study’s theoretical framework. Each construct is operationalized through specific measurable indicators designed to capture the underlying dimensions accurately. The careful development of these constructs and indicators is critical to ensuring the validity and reliability of the research findings. The constructs are explained as follows:

5.2.1. Service Quality in Complaints Management (SQC)

Previous studies have widely recognized service quality as a critical component of customer complaints management and a key stimulus in the SOR framework, influencing customer perceptions and behaviors during complaint resolution processes [103,122,123]. Typically assessed through dimensions such as reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles [109], high service quality has been linked to increased satisfaction and loyalty [31]. However, much of the existing literature tends to treat service quality in isolation, overlooking how it interacts with other organizational practices in complex, real-world complaint scenarios, especially in developing market contexts where institutional trust and digital engagement differ markedly from mature markets [36,67,86]. To address this gap, our study integrates service quality within a broader complaints management strategy, positioning it alongside elements such as transparent organizational culture and social media engagement. By reconceptualizing service quality as a multidimensional yet unified construct measured by twelve indicators adapted from literature [85], we provide a more holistic and context-sensitive framework for understanding how service quality functions as a stimulus that triggers trust, behavioral sensitivity and satisfaction, offering a more comprehensive solution than prior fragmented models. Table 5.4 presents the constructs and their indicators, adapted and modified from validated scales reported in the literature [85].

Table 5.4 Service Quality Indicators

Indicators	Construct
When your telecom company promises to resolve your issue by a certain time, it fulfills this promise. When you have a problem, your telecom company shows a sincere interest in solving it. Your telecom company keeps you informed about the progress and timeline of the resolution. Employees at your telecom company provide prompt service during complaint resolution. Employees at your telecom company are always available to respond to your requests promptly. The behavior of employees at your telecom company instills confidence in their ability to resolve your complaint. You feel secure in your interactions with your telecom company during the complaint resolution process. Employees at your telecom company possess the knowledge needed to answer your questions effectively. Employees at your telecom company give you individual attention when handling your complaint. Your telecom company acts in your best interests when resolving your complaint. Your telecom company uses modern-looking equipment to facilitate complaint resolution. The physical facilities of your telecom company are visually appealing and conducive to resolving complaints.	Service Quality in Complaints Management [85]

5.2.2. Social Media Influencer Utilization Practice (SMI)

Recent literature has begun to explore the integration of social media influencers (SMIs) into customer complaints management, recognizing their dual role as brand promoters and facilitators of complaint resolution [109,133]. With their broad reach and perceived authenticity, SMIs can amplify brand responsiveness, humanize service recovery and foster trust by transforming negative experiences into relatable narratives that resonate with audiences. However, while this approach shows promise, the research remains limited and largely conceptual, with little empirical evidence on how influencers contribute to effective complaint management particularly in emerging markets like Tanzania, where digital engagement and influencer culture are rapidly evolving [134]. Moreover, critical issues such as influencer credibility, alignment with brand values, and their impact on long-term customer trust are yet to be fully examined by literature[36]. This study responds to this gap by investigating the strategic role of SMIs in enhancing customer trust and satisfaction within complaint management practices, offering fresh insights into a digitally driven, customer-centric approach to service recovery. The use of SMI construct is especially

relevant in emerging markets like Tanzania, where digital engagement is increasing and the influencer culture is still developing[26]. Drawing from the literature, we conceptualize SMI utilization based on the source credibility model, which emphasizes three key dimensions: trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness [86]. The dimensions were considered and wholistically measured by 10 indicators as shown by table 5.5.

Table 5.5 Social Media Influencer Utilization Indicators

Indicators	Construct
• The social media influencers used by telecom companies are dependable in highlighting the company's efforts to address customer complaints. • The social media influencers used by telecom companies are honest about the company's initiatives to resolve complaints. • The social media influencers used by telecom companies provide reliable information about the company's complaint resolution strategies. • The social media influencers used by telecom companies are sincere in their endorsements of the company's efforts. • The social media influencers used by telecom companies are trustworthy in their communications regarding complaint resolution. • The social media influencers used by telecom companies are knowledgeable about the company's complaint resolution procedures. • The social media influencers used by telecom companies have relevant experience in addressing telecom-related issues. • The social media influencers used by telecom companies can effectively communicate the company's expertise in resolving complaints. • The social media influencers used by telecom companies are capable of explaining the company's strategies for complaint resolution. • The social media influencers used by telecom companies are skilled in promoting the company's complaint management efforts. • The social media influencers used by telecom companies are engaging and appealing when discussing the company's complaint management efforts.	Social Media Influencer Utilization Practice [86]

5.2.3. Perceived Customer Feedback Utilization (CFU)

Although prior studies have widely explored customer perceptions of feedback utilization in complaints management, often positioning it as a key stimulus within the SOR framework [49], there is still disagreement over which specific aspects most strongly influence customer outcomes. Some scholars argue that customers’ belief in the value and actionability of their feedback significantly enhances satisfaction and loyalty by reinforcing

perceptions of responsiveness and organizational commitment [104]. Others suggest that the mere presence of feedback mechanisms, regardless of follow-up action, is sufficient to demonstrate a customer-oriented approach [105]. In contrast, critical voices in the literature question whether feedback utilization consistently delivers positive outcomes, citing organizational inertia, superficial engagement, and lack of transparency as common pitfalls that erode customer trust [127]. Nonetheless, a broad consensus acknowledges that when feedback is transparently and effectively acted upon, it can transform negative experiences into drivers of continuous improvement, leading to increased customer satisfaction, loyalty, and advocacy [73,113]. However, persistent challenges such as delayed responsiveness and the fragmented integration of customer feedback into decision-making highlight the need for deeper inquiry [136,137]. Addressing these inconsistencies, the present study incorporates a nuanced conceptualization of customer feedback utilization, grounded in the literature [87], and operationalized through ten indicators representing key dimensions: information reciprocity, capture, integration, access. The dimensions are unified together to represent customer feedback utilization construct as shown in Table 5.6. This comprehensive approach seeks to clarify feedback's role as a stimulus within the SOR framework and to offer empirical insights where the literature remains inconclusive.

Table 5.6 Perceived Customer Feedback Utilization Indicators

Indicators	Construct
Your telecom company provides channels that allow you to express your concerns and complaints in ways that feel familiar and culturally comfortable. Your telecom company provides multiple ways for you to contact them about your issues and complaints in a culture friendly manner Your telecom company actively seeks your input on complaints, considering community and cultural expectations.. Your telecom company updates your complaint information quickly, honoring the cultural value of showing respect through prompt attention Your telecom company brings together feedback from different departments, reflecting a community-oriented approach to resolving complaints. Your telecom company merges feedback from different channels, demonstrating cultural sensitivity in handling complaints. Employees at your telecom company find it easy to access the information you provide about your complaints demonstrating respect for timely and culturally sensitive handling Your telecom company allows staff to consult your complaints from different locations, reflecting cultural norms of consistent and responsible care. Your telecom company develops detailed customer profiles from your feedback, ensuring culturally sensitive understanding of your needs Your telecom company uses your feedback to tailor offers and services in ways that respect local needs and preferences.	Perceived Customer Feedback Utilization [87]

5.2.4. Organizational Transparency Culture (OCC)

Organizational transparency culture (OCC) has been widely acknowledged in the literature for its pivotal role in effective complaints management, primarily due to its influence on customer perceptions and responses [21,124]. While existing studies have emphasized that organizations with a transparent and customer-centric culture are more likely to adopt practices such as prompt complaint responses, clear communication, and a commitment to fair resolution, much of this research has tended to view transparency as a procedural attribute rather than a deeply embedded organizational value system[121136,184]. From the perspective of the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) framework, transparent organizational culture functions as a critical stimulus that shapes how customers perceive the fairness, empathy, and responsiveness of a company, factors that subsequently affect their emotional reactions and behavioral outcomes, such as satisfaction [124]. However, few studies have systematically examined OCC as a multidimensional variable encompassing shared values, norms, and long-term strategic orientation merged into one construct within the context of complaints management. This

study addresses that gap by conceptualizing ‘Transparent Organizational Culture Practices’ through the indicators which encompass care for clients, adaptability, and strategic direction, as drawn from the literature [125], and empirically investigates their impact in the underexplored context of Tanzania’s telecom sector. In doing so, the study advances both theoretical and practical understanding of how OCC shapes customer satisfaction and reinforces the strategic value of embedding transparency at the cultural level. Table 5.7 shows the indicators

Table 5.7 Transparent Organization Culture Indicators

Indicators	Construct
• Your telecom company transparently invests in improving product/service quality based on customer complaints. • Your telecom company always transparently addresses customer dissatisfaction resulting from complaints. • Your telecom company offers solutions based on what they believe is better, while transparently explaining why it might differ from what customers desire in their complaints. • Your telecom company seeks customer opinions about products/services and transparently considers their feedback for improvements when managing complaints. • Your telecom company transparently responds to changes in the external environment when managing complaints. • Work at your telecom company is performed diligently and transparently when serious problems arise from complaints. • Employees and managers at your telecom company transparently address problems arising from complaints, ensuring they are not ignored or left unresolved. • Your telecom company has a transparent long-term strategy, plans, and goals for handling complaints. • Goals and plans related to complaints management at your telecom company are achieved purposefully and communicated transparently. • Work related to complaints management is planned at your telecom company so that everybody knows what and how to do their job, with transparency in communication.	Transparent Organization Culture [125]

5.2.5. Mediating Role of Customer Trust in the Company

Customer trust in the company has been recognized as an integral construct in explaining the effectiveness of complaint management within the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) framework [126,114,112]. However, existing empirical evidence remains

fragmented and theoretically inconclusive. While some studies demonstrate that fair, responsive, and transparent complaint handling strengthens trust and enhances satisfaction [129,130,143], other findings show weak or insignificant effects, particularly in contexts characterized by repeated service failures and entrenched dissatisfaction [145,162]. This inconsistency suggests a deeper theoretical limitation: complaint management outcomes cannot be fully explained without accounting for the psychological mechanism through which customers reinterpret firm credibility after service failure. This implies that: customers do not directly translate complaint handling practices into satisfaction judgments; instead, they first evaluate whether the firm's actions are credible and reliable. This evaluation is captured by trust, which then determines satisfaction outcomes.

Although trust has been extensively examined in psychology as a general relational construct [53], its role in service recovery remains conceptually underdeveloped in business research, particularly in situations where trust has already been damaged and must be rebuilt rather than formed [137]. Most prior studies treat trust as an outcome of service quality rather than a recovery-based cognitive reconstruction process that determines whether organizational corrective actions are accepted as credible by customers. This creates a gap in explaining how complaint handling translates into satisfaction under conditions of service breakdown. Therefore, despite its theoretical relevance, limited studies have empirically modeled trust as a mediating mechanism within complaint management, with most treating it as a direct outcome rather than an explanatory pathway.

Accordingly, this study positions trust as a dynamic mediating mechanism of service recovery, through which customers reassess fairness, reliability, and credibility following complaint resolution efforts. In this sense, trust does not merely reflect a stable attitude but functions as the critical interpretive filter that determines whether complaint management practices are converted into satisfaction outcomes[96]. This reconceptualization is particularly relevant in the telecom sector, where frequent service disruptions and high switching costs intensify the importance of trust reconstruction in shaping post-recovery evaluations.

Furthermore, by synthesizing trust into a multidimensional construct capturing credibility and benevolence, this study addresses the oversimplification in prior literature that treats trust as unidimensional [31]. This refined conceptualization enables a more

precise examination of how different dimensions of trust respond to specific complaint management practices, thereby strengthening explanatory power in high-friction service environments such as Tanzania’s telecom industry(see table 5.8).

Table 5.8 Trust in Company Indicators

Indicators	Construct
• I believe that my telecom company is honest with me regarding my complaints. • I think my telecom company is trustworthy in handling my complaints. • My telecom company is very thoughtful about my well-being when managing my complaints. • In critical situations, I can rely on my telecom company to address my complaints. • I believe that my telecom company will point out the best alternatives for me at any time when handling my complaints. • My telecom company is capable of satisfying my needs regarding complaints management. • My telecom company knows its business when it comes to handling complaints. • My telecom company can solve my problems effectively when I file complaints. • In critical situations, I feel well-advised by my telecom company regarding my complaints.	Trust in Company [88]

5.2.6. Moderating Role of Customer Behavior Sensitivity

Customer Behavior Sensitivity (CBS) is widely acknowledged as a critical factor influencing how customers respond to complaint management efforts, yet the literature remains fragmented and inconsistent in its conceptualization and measurement [144]. Some studies define CBS as a relatively stable psychological trait reflecting heightened emotional and cognitive responsiveness to service failures [132], while others treat it narrowly as a moderating variable that conditions the link between complaint handling and customer outcomes [106]. This conceptual ambiguity has led to conflicting findings: some research shows that highly sensitive customers amplify reactions to fairness and responsiveness in complaint resolution [123], whereas others report weak or context-dependent moderating effects [147]. Similarly, many prior investigations also treat CBS in isolation, neglecting its interaction with broader complaint management practices such as organizational transparency, social media influencer engagement, and customer feedback utilization, which constrains its practical relevance [138]. To address these shortcomings, this study

adopts seven carefully selected and context-specific CBS indicators, adapted from validated scales but refined to reflect the unique sensitivities of telecom customers [89]. These indicators capture both emotional reactivity and behavioral tendencies specific to complaint situations, thereby offering a more nuanced and reliable operationalization. Table 5.9 shows the consumer behavior indicators

Table 5.9 Customer Behavior sensitivity Indicators

Indicators	Construct
I would advise my family, neighbors, and close community members not to use this telecom company if my complaint is ignored or poorly handled. I would openly discuss my dissatisfaction with this telecom company in community gatherings, local forums, or social groups if my complaint is unresolved I would seek a replacement or alternative solution if my complaint about the telecom service is not addressed. I am likely to practice “kuzira” (swahili cultural way of boycotting) by not using this telecom company's services if my complaint is ignored. I might wait for guidance from respected community members before escalating my complaint I would escalate my complaint to the media if the telecom company does not address it satisfactorily. I would complain to the relevant regulatory authorities if the telecom company does not handle my complaint properly.	Customer Behavior sensitivity [89]

5.2.7. Customer Satisfaction with Complaints Resolution

Customer Satisfaction with Complaints Resolution (CSR) has been widely employed in prior studies as a key outcome variable in assessing the effectiveness of complaint management strategies; however, the literature reveals notable inconsistencies in its conceptual clarity, dimensional focus, and sectoral applicability. While some scholars define CSR in terms of customers’ perceptions of procedural fairness, responsiveness, and the adequacy of redress [91], others narrow it to post-resolution emotional contentment or transactional satisfaction, often ignoring deeper relational dynamics such as restored trust or perceived organizational empathy [112, 129]. This fragmented understanding has led to uneven empirical results, with some studies emphasizing CSR as a strong predictor of loyalty and word-of-mouth [130], while others report weak or context-dependent associations due to conceptual ambiguities and measurement limitations [127]. Additionally, the construct is frequently operationalized using overly generic scales, failing to account for contextual nuances, where customer expectations are shaped by recurring service interactions, contract dependencies, and digital complaint channels [115]. Such

oversights undermine the practical utility of CSR as a diagnostic tool for service improvement.

This study addresses these gaps by adopting a mixed-methods research design that ensures the factors influencing Customer Satisfaction with Complaints Resolution (CSR) reflect the unique characteristics of telecom customers. Specifically, the qualitative phase was first employed to explore the lived experiences of customers, Customer Service Representatives, and managers, revealing context-specific drivers of satisfaction such as network reliability issues, timeliness of response, transparency in communication, dependence on uninterrupted service, and the increasing role of digital and social media complaint channels. These findings highlight that, in the telecom sector, satisfaction extends beyond simple resolution outcomes to include service continuity and perceived responsiveness in highly interactive and public environments. The insights generated from this qualitative phase were then systematically incorporated into the quantitative study, where CSR was operationalized using indicators grounded in these telecom-specific realities. By integrating extensive literature, qualitative exploration with quantitative validation, the study ensures that the determinants of satisfaction are not generic, but instead accurately reflect the operational and experiential complexities of telecom services, thereby enhancing both the contextual relevance and explanatory power of the model.

Furthermore, the study employed four context-specific indicators derived from both theoretical models and validated empirical scales, adapted to capture dimensions of complaint satisfaction; such as clarity of resolution, responsiveness to digital complaints, perceived fairness, and emotional closure [91]. This refined operationalization not only enhances construct validity but also offers a more actionable framework for evaluating complaint management effectiveness in service environments where customer satisfaction hinges on both resolution outcomes and the perceived sincerity of organizational responses. These construct indicators are modified from validated scale from literature[91], and are presented in table 5.10.

Table 5.10 Customer Satisfaction Indicators

Indicator	Construct
I am satisfied with the way the telecom company handled my technical complaint issue. I had a positive experience when my billing complaint was handled by the telecom company. I am very satisfied with the speed of the complaint resolution process of this telecom company. In my opinion, the telecom company has provided me with a satisfactory resolution to my problem on this specific occasion.	Customer Satisfaction [91]

5.3. Hypothesis Development and Conceptual Framework

5.3.1. Direct Hypothesis

The study hypothesize that complaints management practices influence customer satisfaction. The conceptual model considers complaints management practices such as Service Quality, Social Media Influencer Utilization, Perceived Customer Feedback Utilization, and Transparent Organizational Culture. The hypotheses designed to test the influence of these practices on customer satisfaction are H1(a) for Service Quality, H1(b) for Social Media Influencer Utilization, H1(c) for Perceived Customer Feedback Utilization, and H1(d) for Transparent Organizational Culture. See Table 5.11

Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction relationship is a widely accepted relationship in literature. Service quality in complaints management is widely acknowledged as a decisive factor in shaping customer satisfaction, as responsiveness, empathy, and effective resolution can restore confidence and improve customer perceptions [104,164,183]. Yet, despite this recognition, research findings remain inconsistent and fragmented. While some scholars confirm that high-quality complaint handling fosters trust and enhances satisfaction [73], others argue that such efforts may fail when customer expectations are severely breached or when transparency is absent [105]. These inconsistencies are further compounded by differences in how service quality is defined and measured, creating ambiguity about its actual influence. The issue is particularly critical in industries like telecommunications, where frequent service failures heighten customer frustrations and amplify the importance of effective complaint management [104].

From a theoretical standpoint, both the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) framework and CRM theory suggest that service quality should play a central role in improving

satisfaction: as a stimulus that nurtures trust (SOR) and as a reflection of a firm's commitment to customer-centered values (CRM) [185,187,192]. However, the bulk of evidence comes from developed markets, leaving a gap in understanding whether these assumptions apply in emerging economies, where infrastructural limitations, regulatory weaknesses, and higher customer sensitivity may reshape the service quality–satisfaction relationship. Tanzania's telecom sector epitomizes this challenge, as persistent network disruptions and billing disputes fuel high volumes of complaints, making the effectiveness of service quality in complaint handling both urgent and uncertain. The core debate is whether service quality reliably drives higher satisfaction, or whether its influence is diminished by contextual conditions and unmet expectations. Resolving this ambiguity is crucial to establish whether service quality can serve as a dependable determinant of satisfaction in emerging markets. On this basis, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis H1(a): Complaints management service quality positively and significantly influence customer satisfaction

Social Media Influencer Utilization and Customer Satisfaction relationship is beginning to gain ground in literature. The use of social media influencers in complaints management has attracted growing attention from companies, yet the literature offers a fragmented and often contradictory picture of their effectiveness in driving customer satisfaction [34,36,54]. On one hand, studies emphasize influencers' ability to humanize brands, foster trust, and deliver personalized, emotionally resonant communication, factors theoretically linked to improved complaint resolution and higher satisfaction [35]. On the other hand, evidence points to highly variable outcomes, shaped by factors such as influencer credibility, audience alignment, and the contextual nature of specific complaints. In some cases, influencer involvement has even worsened dissatisfaction and heightened negative customer perceptions [36]. This divergence underscores the absence of a clear framework for understanding how influencer-driven communication operates within the complaint journey and affects customers' psychological responses.

Theoretically, the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) model positions influencer engagement as an external stimulus capable of shaping customers' cognitive and affective states, ultimately fostering satisfaction. However, empirical studies confirming this process

in complaint management remain scarce and inconclusive [185]. Similarly, Customer Relationship Management (CRM) theory identifies influencers as tools for advancing customer-centric strategies, yet fails to provide rigorous evidence linking their involvement to measurable improvements in complaint resolution outcomes [55]. This theoretical promise, juxtaposed with weak and inconsistent empirical support, creates a central contention: while influencers are strategically positioned to improve satisfaction, their actual effectiveness in complaint contexts is uncertain and highly context-dependent. Clarifying this tension is critical to determine whether influencer engagement can be a reliable lever for enhancing satisfaction in complaint resolution. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis H1(b): Social media influencers utilization in complaints management practice positively and significantly influence customer satisfaction

Perceived customer feedback utilization in complaints management is often regarded as a vital driver of customer satisfaction, since customers tend to respond positively when they feel their input is valued and contributes to service improvements [47,128]. Within the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) framework, this perception functions as a stimulus that positively shapes customers' internal evaluations [49], while CRM theory interprets it as an expression of customer-centric practices that build trust and satisfaction [106]. In theory, therefore, the act of acknowledging and utilizing feedback should strengthen satisfaction.

Yet, empirical evidence presents a more complicated and contradictory picture. Some studies affirm that satisfaction increases when customers believe their feedback has been considered and applied [105]. Conversely, other findings reveal that the effect is limited, inconsistent, or only evident under certain circumstances; such as when companies communicate feedback usage clearly [104], ensure transparency throughout the process [127], or maintain a history of positive service experiences [138]. This inconsistency underscores an important contention: while some evidence portrays feedback utilization as a powerful driver of satisfaction, other findings suggest its effect may be conditional on factors such as communication, transparency, and prior customer experience. What remains unresolved is whether, despite these variations, perceived feedback utilization can

be considered a significant and consistent contributor to satisfaction in complaint management. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis H1(c): Perceived customer feedback utilization in complaints management significantly influence customer satisfaction

The influence of transparent organizational culture on customer satisfaction in complaints management remains inconsistent and fragmented in the literature [125]. Transparency defined as open communication, honesty, and accountability is widely recognized as a practice that can make customers feel valued and foster trust [35]. However, some studies suggest that transparency alone may not consistently improve satisfaction unless paired with timely complaint resolution, culturally appropriate responses, or alignment with customer expectations [41,145]. Additionally, there is limited understanding of how transparency functions across diverse complaint contexts and customer segments, creating a significant gap in knowledge [19,41].

From the perspective of Consumer Behavior Theory, transparency is expected to reduce uncertainty, build trust, and enhance satisfaction [88,34,129]. Yet, empirical evidence remains scattered, with some studies emphasizing its direct effect on satisfaction and others highlighting the need for complementary practices or the mediating role of trust [41,145]. Addressing these gaps is critical for both theory and practice, particularly in underexplored African organizational contexts. Guided by CRM and Consumer Behavior Theory, this study adopts a mixed-methods approach to examine how transparent organizational culture affects customer satisfaction, considering trust as a mediating mechanism. By examining the direct effect of transparency alongside its broader influence through trust, this hypothesis addresses a critical uncertainty in the literature and underscores the practical and theoretical importance of understanding how transparency shapes customer satisfaction. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis H1(d): Transparent organizational culture in complaints management positively and significantly influence customer satisfaction

Table 5.11 Direct Hypothesis for Customer Satisfaction

SN	Path	Hypothesis	Logic	Studies
H1(a)	SQC→ CSR	Complaints management service quality positively and significantly influence customer satisfaction	High service quality in complaint management leads to greater customer satisfaction and vice versa as supported by SERVQUAL model	[73,114]
H1(b)	SMI→ CSR	Social media influencers utilization in complaints management practice positively and significantly influence customer satisfaction	An increase in the utilization of social media influencers in complaint management practices will lead to a significant increase in customer satisfaction as postulated by CRM model	[127,35]
H1(c)	CFU→ CSR	Perceived customer feedback utilization in complaints management significantly influences customer satisfaction	The way customer feedback is perceived to be utilized in complaints management has a significant impact on customer satisfaction as predicted by the IPT	[128,49,106]
H1(d)	OCC→ CSR	Transparent organizational culture in complaints management positively and significantly influence customer satisfaction	An increase in the transparency of organizational culture in complaints management will positively and significantly increase customer satisfaction as per the consumer behavior theory	[88,34,129]

Prior research generally agrees that effective complaints management practices influence customer trust. However, the literature remains fragmented and inconsistent regarding which specific practices matter most and under what conditions [102,131,141]. Some studies highlight service quality in handling complaints as critical for building trust through efficiency, fairness, and timely resolution [99], while others emphasize the growing role of social media influencers in adding credibility and relatability to corporate messaging [36]. Yet, few studies integrate these diverse practices into a cohesive model, leaving unresolved questions about their relative importance and mechanisms of influence.

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) theory suggests that effective complaint resolution fosters trust by demonstrating a company’s commitment to addressing customer concerns and valuing feedback [130,133]. However, it does not specify which particular practices drive that effect. Similarly, the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) framework posits that complaint-handling strategies (stimuli) shape customer perceptions and trust-related responses (organism) [140], but prior applications often overlook the differentiated impact of distinct practices. Further complicating the picture, perceived customer feedback utilization may strengthen trust by making customers feel heard [127], yet some studies warn that such efforts can backfire if perceived as superficial or insincere [105]. Likewise,

transparent organizational culture, though associated with integrity, is often treated as a passive background factor rather than an active driver of trust in complaints management [170].

These inconsistencies create a clear theoretical and empirical dilemma: while evidence supports the general link between complaints management and trust, it is unclear which practices are truly most influential, and why their effects vary across contexts. To address this gap and generate actionable insights, this study develops and tests an integrated model examining how four key complaints management practices—Service Quality, Social Media Influencer Utilization, Perceived Customer Feedback Utilization, and Transparent Organizational Culture influence customer trust as shown by table 5.12. This approach aims to clarify conflicting findings, deepens understanding of trust-building mechanisms, and is particularly relevant for emerging markets where empirical evidence remains scarce. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis H2(a): Complaints management service quality positively and significantly influence customer trust in company

Hypothesis H2(b): Social media influencers utilization in complaints management practice positively and significantly influence customer trust in company

Hypothesis H2(c): Perceived customer feedback utilization in complaints management significantly influence customer trust in company

Hypothesis H2(d): transparent organizational culture in complaints management positively and significantly influence customer trust in company

Table 5.12 Complaints management Practice influence trust in company Hypothesis

SN	Path	Hypothesis	Logic	Studies
H2(a)	SQC→TR C	Complaints management service quality positively and significantly influence customer trust in Company	High-quality service during complaints management enhances customer trust in the company as per the SERVQUAL model	[130–132]
H2(b)	SMI→TRC	Social media influencers utilization in complaints management practice positively and significantly influence customer trust in company	The more social media influencers are incorporated into complaint management practices the more the customer trust in the company as postulated by CRM model	[133,134,135]
H2(c)	CFU→TR C	Perceived customer feedback utilization in complaints management significantly influences customer trust in company	The customers belief that their feedback is actively utilized in the complaints management process influence their trust in the company as predicted by the IPT	[104,136,137]
H2(d)	OCC→TR C	Transparent organizational culture in complaints management positively and significantly influence customer trust in company	As organizational transparency culture in handling complaints increases then the customer trust in the company also increases as per the consumer behavior theory	[140–142]

Customer trust in a company is widely recognized as a key driver of customer satisfaction in complaint management [143,144,145]. However, a dilemma emerges: while trust is assumed to improve satisfaction, existing studies largely treat it as a straightforward, direct factor, without examining the complex emotional and cognitive processes through which trust actually shapes customer perceptions and responses [112]. In particular, the unique dynamics of Tanzania’s telecom sector; such as high competition, evolving service expectations, and cultural influences may alter the ways trust translates into satisfaction, yet this context remains underexplored. This raises a critical question: does trust alone guarantee higher satisfaction, or does its effect depend on how customers cognitively and emotionally process complaint handling in a specific context? By applying the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) framework [75] alongside Customer Relationship Management (CRM) [80] and Information Processing Theory (IPT) [83], this study addresses this dilemma, offering a deeper understanding of how trust influences customer evaluations and satisfaction outcomes. Accordingly, it is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis H3: *Customer trust in company positively and significantly influence customer satisfaction*

5.3.2. Mediation Hypotheses

In complaints management, companies face a dilemma: even well-designed practices may fail to satisfy customers if trust is lacking [113]. Customer trust shapes perceptions of competence, fairness, and commitment, mediating how service quality, feedback use, and transparency translate into actual satisfaction. Understanding this mechanism is crucial for effective complaint resolution. See Table 5.13 as it provides a summative overview.

Effective service recovery relies heavily on service quality, encompassing promptness, fairness, empathy, and competence [42,65]. While prior studies emphasize that high-quality complaint handling can enhance customer satisfaction, much of the literature treats service quality and trust as separate, linear factors rather than examining how they interact [67,103]. This approach overlooks a critical issue: even objectively excellent service may fail to satisfy customers if trust is weak, yet the mechanisms through which service quality fosters trust remain underexplored. Some studies assume that technical or procedural excellence is sufficient for satisfaction, ignoring the psychological evaluation that customers perform during recovery [88]. Others focus on trust but provide limited empirical insight into how it mediates the effects of service quality in specific contexts, such as dynamic and culturally nuanced markets like Tanzania's telecom sector. This gap presents a critical theoretical and practical dilemma: even when companies deliver high-quality service, failure to account for how trust shapes customer perceptions may prevent these efforts from translating into meaningful satisfaction. By positioning trust as a mediating mechanism, this hypothesis investigates the overlooked pathway through which service quality influences customers' emotional and evaluative responses, offering insights that are both conceptually significant and practically actionable. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis H4(a): *Customer trust in the company mediates the relationship between complaints management service quality and customer satisfaction.*

Research on the role of social media influencers in customer complaint management has yielded mixed and sometimes conflicting findings regarding their effectiveness in improving

complaint resolution and enhancing customer satisfaction [36,125,126,147]. Although influencers are often credited with strengthening brand image and engaging customers, their actual impact on complaint outcomes remains uncertain, largely due to complex emotional responses and trust dynamics [147]. Many studies focus solely on the direct effects of influencer engagement on satisfaction, overlooking the psychological mechanisms that shape this relationship, which contributes to inconsistent and inconclusive results [86]. This study addresses these gaps by applying the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) framework, conceptualizing ‘social media influencer involvement’ as a stimulus that influences customers’ internal states particularly their ‘trust in the company’ which subsequently affects satisfaction [147]. By positioning trust as a mediating factor, the research clarifies how influencer efforts translate into meaningful customer outcomes, thus addressing inconsistencies observed in prior studies [128,132,134]. Specifically, it addresses the critical question of why influencer engagement sometimes fails to improve satisfaction despite enhancing brand awareness and shows how trust explains these divergent outcomes. Based on this rationale, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis H4(b): *Customer trust mediates the relationship between social media influencer utilization and customer satisfaction.*

Empirical studies suggest that utilizing customer feedback in complaint management can enhance trust and satisfaction [104]. Yet findings remain inconsistent, as some organizations implement feedback mechanisms without achieving meaningful improvements in customer satisfaction[105]. The unresolved issue lies in how customers interpret feedback-driven actions: while such efforts can signal sincerity, responsiveness, and customer orientation[49], they may also be dismissed as superficial or procedural if not accompanied by a deeper relational element [106]. This points to trust as the missing mechanism[134]. From the perspective of Information Processing Theory (IPT), customers cognitively process feedback utilization as a signal of competence and willingness to resolve problems[128]. When this interpretation builds trust, uncertainty is reduced and customers are more likely to translate feedback-driven actions into satisfaction [49]. Without trust, however, the same actions may fail to deliver the intended outcomes. This reveals a critical gap in explaining why ‘feedback utilization’ does not consistently lead to satisfaction, underscoring the need to test trust as the mediating mechanism

that transforms feedback-driven actions into meaningful customer outcomes. Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis H4(c): Customer trust mediates the relationship between Perceived Customer Feedback Utilization and customer satisfaction.

Empirical studies widely recognize the role of transparent organizational culture in fostering trust and enhancing customer satisfaction[125]. Maxham and Netemeyer (2022) emphasize that open communication during complaint resolution heightens perceptions of fairness and reliability, ultimately boosting trust and satisfaction. Likewise, literature illustrates that organizations embedding transparency in their complaint-handling culture strengthen customer relationships by mitigating negative emotions and reducing uncertainty[129]. Cheng et al. (2020) further demonstrate that openness about complaint-handling processes and outcomes tends to build customer trust, which subsequently enhances satisfaction. However, the assumption of a straightforward transparency-satisfaction link is problematic. Transparency alone does not guarantee positive outcomes; it may expose organizational shortcomings, unmet expectations, or even amplify dissatisfaction if customers do not trust the company's motives.[171] What customers interpret as genuine openness may be dismissed as strategic self-protection or empty signaling in the absence of trust. This indicates that transparency is not a sufficient condition for satisfaction but rather a contextual trigger whose value depends on whether it cultivates trust[172]. In other words, it is trust that transforms transparency from a procedural gesture into a meaningful driver of satisfaction. This unresolved tension underscores the importance of positioning trust as the mediating mechanism through which transparent organizational culture influences customer satisfaction. Without acknowledging this mediating process, the explanatory power of transparency remains incomplete and potentially misleading. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed;

Hypothesis H4(d): Consumer trust mediates the relationship between Transparent Organizational Culture and customer satisfaction.

Table 5.13 Mediation Hypothesis

SN	Path	Hypothesis	Logic
H4(a)	SQC→TRC→ CSR	Customer trust in the company mediates the relationship between complaints management service quality and customer satisfaction	High service quality in complaint management improves customer trust, and this trust, in turn, results to customer satisfaction with service as per SERVQUAL model.
H4(b)	SMI→ TRC →CSR	Customer trust mediates the relationship between social media influencer utilization and customer satisfaction.	The more a company uses social media influencers to address complaints, the more trust is built with customers, which ultimately leads to higher customer satisfaction as per CRM model.
H4(c)	CFU→TRC →CSR	Consumer trust mediates the relationship between Perceived Customer Feedback Utilization and customer satisfaction	The more a company effectively utilizes customer feedback, the more it builds consumer trust, which, in turn, leads to higher customer satisfaction as per IPT.
H4(d)	OCC→ TRC →CSR	Consumer trust mediates the relationship between Transparent Organizational Culture and customer satisfaction.	The more transparent a company's culture is in handling complaints, the more customers trust the company. This trust, in turn, leads to greater customer satisfaction as per consumer behavior theory

5.3.3. Moderation Hypothesis

Customer complaints management practices do not always lead to consistent satisfaction, as customers differ in their sensitivity to service quality[145]. This creates a critical problem: without understanding customer behavior sensitivity (CBS), organizations cannot reliably predict or optimize the impact of their complaint-handling strategies. The detailed explanations and a summary presented in Table 5.14 further unpack this phenomenon:

Service quality has consistently been identified as a critical driver of customer satisfaction in complaints management as popularized by Parasuraman et al., (1988). Theoretical frameworks such as the SOR model and CRM theory emphasize service quality as a key stimulus that evokes positive customer responses, fostering satisfaction. However, empirical studies by Smith & Bolton (2020) and Huang & Wang, (2021) reveal that this relationship is not uniform, with individual differences in Customer Behavior Sensitivity

(CBS) influencing the strength of the service quality-satisfaction link. Drawing on Consumer Behavior and Information Processing Theories, customers with high CBS are found to process service-related stimuli more deeply, amplifying the impact of both positive and negative service experiences as postulated by Zhang et al., (2019). Thus, incorporating CBS as a moderator is essential to understanding how nuanced variations in customer traits moderate service outcomes, contributing to both theoretical refinement and practical improvements in complaints management strategies. Thus, it is hypothesized that ***Hypothesis H5(a): Customer behavior sensitivity moderates the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction.***

The integration of social media influencers (SMIs) into complaints management represents an innovative strategy aligned with CRM theory, leveraging influencers' credibility to foster trust and improve customer satisfaction [32]. The SOR model and Information Processing Theory suggest that influencers act as external stimuli, shaping customer perceptions and emotional responses to complaint resolutions. However, the effectiveness of SMIs in this context is not universal, as individual differences in Customer Behavior Sensitivity (CBS) significantly affect outcomes [32,93]. Customers with high CBS, who are more attuned to behavioral and communicative cues, are likely to perceive influencer interventions as more authentic and credible, amplifying their positive responses. This underscores the need to include CBS as a moderating variable to better understand how customers interpret and respond to influencer-driven complaints management strategies, enhancing both theoretical insights and practical applications. Therefore, it is hypothesized that;

Hypothesis H5(b): Customer behavior sensitivity moderates the relationship between social media influencers utilization and customer satisfaction.

Perceived Customer Feedback Utilization (PCFU) refers to customers' belief that their feedback is heard, valued, and acted upon [138]. This is recognized as a key driver of satisfaction in service contexts [187]. Yet empirical findings on its effect are inconsistent: some studies show strong positive links between PCFU and satisfaction [106, 188], while others report weak or non-significant relationships [113, 189]. This inconsistency highlights a critical problem because identical feedback practices can result in very different

levels of customer satisfaction depending on individual differences in Customer Behavior Sensitivity (CBS), which is the degree to which customers notice, interpret, and emotionally respond to service actions [26,44,53,57]. High-CBS customers perceive feedback responsiveness as meaningful recognition, amplifying satisfaction, whereas low-CBS customers may overlook or undervalue the same efforts, reducing their impact [106,113,190]. Ignoring CBS risks misjudging the effectiveness of feedback utilization strategies. Incorporating CBS as a moderator therefore provides a theoretically grounded and practically essential lens to explain variability in PCFU's effect on satisfaction [136,186,191]. Hence, it is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis H5(c): *Customer behavior sensitivity moderates the relationship between perceived customer feedback utilization and customer satisfaction.*

A transparent organizational culture in complaints management characterized by openness, honesty, and accountability has been linked to higher customer trust and satisfaction [21,192]. The CRM framework positions transparency as essential for building long-term, trust-based relationships, while the SOR model frames it as an environmental stimulus that shapes customers' emotional and evaluative responses [186]. Consumer Behavior and Information Processing theories further suggest that customers actively interpret organizational cues such as transparency as signals of reliability, fairness, and customer orientation, which can enhance satisfaction [194]. Yet empirical evidence shows inconsistent effects, indicating that transparency does not uniformly improve satisfaction for all customers [124,125]. This inconsistency highlights the need to consider individual-level differences, with Customer Behavior Sensitivity (CBS) emerging as a theoretically and practically relevant moderator [144]. High-CBS customers are more likely to perceive and value transparent practices as authentic and accountable, amplifying satisfaction [51], whereas low-CBS customers may overlook or undervalue these signals, weakening the effect [110]. Incorporating CBS as a moderator therefore addresses a critical gap in understanding when and for whom transparency effectively drives satisfaction. Hence, it is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis H5(d): *Customer behavior sensitivity moderates the relationship between transparent organizational culture and customer satisfaction.*

Table 5.14 Consumer Behavior sensitivity Moderation Hypothesis

SN	Path	Hypothesis	Logic
H5(a)	CBS x SQC → CSR	Customer behavior sensitivity moderates the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction.	The impact of service quality on customer satisfaction is stronger for customers with high behavior sensitivity and weaker for those with low behavior sensitivity as per the SERVQUAL model
H5(b)	CBS x SMI → CSR	Customer behavior sensitivity moderates the relationship between social media influencers utilization and customer satisfaction.	The impact of utilizing social media influencers on customer satisfaction is stronger for customers with high behavior sensitivity and weaker for those with low behavior sensitivity as per CRM model.
H5(c)	CBS x CFU → CSR	Customer behavior sensitivity moderates the relationship between perceived customer feedback utilization and customer satisfaction.	The impact of perceived customer feedback utilization on customer satisfaction is stronger for customers with high behavior sensitivity and weaker for those with low behavior sensitivity as per IPT
H5(d)	CBS x OCC → CSR	Customer behavior sensitivity moderates the relationship between transparent organizational culture and customer satisfaction.	The impact of transparent organizational culture on customer satisfaction is stronger for customers with high behavior sensitivity and weaker for those with low behavior sensitivity as per consumer behavior theory

5.3.4. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study integrates key constructs from established theories SOR, SERVQUAL, Customer Relationship Management (CRM), Information Processing Theory (IPT), and Consumer Behavior Theory to examine how various complaints management practices influence customer satisfaction (see figure 5.2). It posits that four core complaints management practices: Service Quality Control (SQC), Social Media Influencer (SMI) utilization, Customer Feedback Utilization (CFU), and Organizational Culture of Transparency (OCC) directly affect Customer Satisfaction with Complaint Resolution (CSR) (H1 series), and also influence Trust in the Company (TRC) (H2 series), which in turn mediates the relationship between these practices and CSR (H4 series). Furthermore, the model incorporates Customer Behavior Sensitivity (CBS) as a moderating variable (H5 series), proposing that the impact of these practices on CSR varies depending on how sensitive customers are to service interactions. This integrated framework allows for a nuanced understanding of not only the direct and indirect pathways

to customer satisfaction but also how individual differences in customer behavior shape these relationships, offering both theoretical and practical insights for effective complaints management in service industries.

The originality of this study lies in its integrated and context-sensitive conceptualization of customer satisfaction in telecom service recovery, addressing critical gaps in prior research. Fundamentally, this study departs from traditional linear service recovery models by demonstrating that complaint management practices do not directly translate into customer satisfaction. Instead, their influence operates through psychological (trust) and behavioral (customer sensitivity) mechanisms. This reconceptualization challenges the dominant assumption of a direct effect between service recovery efforts and satisfaction, and advances a more process-oriented understanding in which internal customer states shape final evaluations.

While previous studies have examined complaint management practices or customer satisfaction in isolation[78], rarely have models simultaneously accommodated complaint resolution, customer trust, and customer behavior sensitivity within a unified framework. By integrating these elements, the study shows that the effectiveness of complaint management is contingent rather than uniform; it is mediated by the level of trust a customer places in the company and moderated by their sensitivity to service interactions. This provides a deeper explanation of how and why similar recovery efforts can produce different satisfaction outcomes across customers.

A second distinctive contribution is the explicit focus on social media influencer utilization in complaints management. Prior research seldom considers the publicity-oriented role of influencers, who not only amplify complaints but also shape customer perceptions and alter the dynamics of organizational response [136]. By incorporating influencers as strategic actors, this model reflects the modern, public, and socially networked nature of service recovery, highlighting how customer reactions are influenced by both direct firm–customer interactions and broader social narratives.

Therefore the proposed model is inherently telecom-specific because it captures the unique structural and experiential conditions under which complaints occur and are evaluated in the industry, and it is rigorously grounded in qualitative exploration (from a qualitative study), theoretical foundations, and prior literature. Unlike transactional sectors,

telecom services involve continuous, subscription-based usage, where service failures such as network disruptions, data loss, or billing errors shape cumulative and forward-looking satisfaction judgments rather than isolated evaluations. The model was initially inductively derived from qualitative findings, which revealed context-specific themes that are not adequately captured in generalized service models. These empirically grounded insights were then systematically integrated with established theoretical perspectives, particularly the stimulus–organism–response framework, alongside existing literature on complaint management and service recovery. Furthermore, the telecom context is characterized by high switching barriers, intensifying the role of trust as a central psychological mechanism[146]. The switching barrier strongly cement the mediation role and acts as a significant difference with other sectors like retail or logistics whereas switching from one provider to another is not a problem. Furthermore, the increasing migration of complaints to social media platforms also introduces visibility, virality, and influencer-mediated dynamics, justifying the inclusion of social media influencer utilization as a context-driven construct. Combined with customer behavior sensitivity, which reflects the amplified personal impact of telecom service failures, the model represents a theoretically informed and empirically grounded configuration that is deeply embedded in the telecom environment. Therefore, although some constructs may appear transferable at a superficial level, their selection, integration, and explanatory power are rooted in qualitative evidence, theory, and literature specific to telecom, limiting direct generalization and reinforcing the model's unique sector-specific contribution.

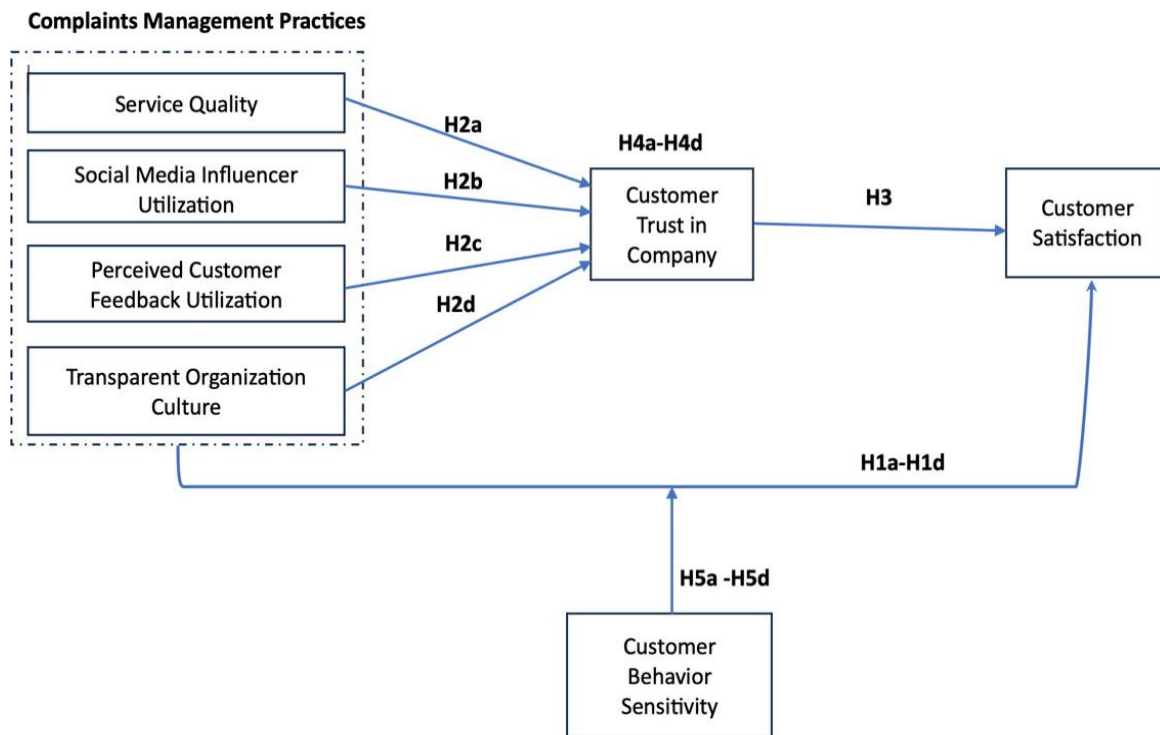


Figure 5.2 Conceptual Framework (study 2)

The model posits that complaint management practices: which are service recovery responsiveness conceptualized as ‘service quality’; influencer supported complaints communication conceptualized as ‘social media influencer utilization’; feedback utilization procedures conceptualized as ‘perceived customer feedback’; and transparent organizational attitudes conceptualized as ‘transparent organization culture’, shape customer satisfaction during complaints resolution. This effect operates through ‘customer trust in company’ and its intensity is governed by ‘customer behavior sensitivity’

The alignment of study 2 quantitative research objectives and hypotheses is crucial for ensuring that the study's focus is clearly defined and that the relationships between key variables are systematically tested as shown in the conceptual framework in figure 5.2. This alignment ensures that the research questions are addressed through specific, testable predictions, facilitating a structured investigation into the relationships between constructs. By clearly mapping objectives to hypotheses, the study enhances its coherence, providing

a clear roadmap for data collection and analysis. See Table 5.15 showing the objective alignment with the hypothesis

Table 5.15 Alignment of Research Objectives and Hypotheses

Objectives	Hypothesis
Objective 2: To study the influence of complaints management practices on customer satisfaction	• H1(a): Complaints management service quality positively and significantly influence customer satisfaction • H1(b): Social media influencers utilization positively and significantly influence customer satisfaction • H1(c): Perceived customer feedback utilization significantly influence customer satisfaction • H1(d): Transparent organizational culture positively and significantly influence customer satisfaction
Objective 3: To study the influence of complaints management practices on customer trust in company	• H2(a): Complaints management service quality positively and significantly influence customer trust in company • H2(b): Social media influencers utilization positively and significantly influence customer trust in company • H2(c): Perceived customer feedback utilization significantly influences customer trust in company • H2(d): Transparent organizational positively and significantly influence customer trust in company
Objective 4: To study the influence of trust in company on customer satisfaction	• H3: Customer trust in company positively and significantly influence customer satisfaction
Objective 5: To investigate the mediating role of 'trust in the company' between customer complaints management practices and customer satisfaction	• H4(a): Customer trust in the company mediates the relationship between complaints management service quality and customer satisfaction. • H4(b): Customer trust mediates the relationship between social media influencer utilization and customer satisfaction. • H4(c): Customer trust mediates the relationship between Perceived Customer Feedback Utilization and customer satisfaction. • H4(d): Consumer trust mediates the relationship between Transparent Organizational Culture and customer satisfaction.
Objective 6: To examine the moderating effect of 'customer behavior sensitivity' on the relationship between customer complaints management practices and customer satisfaction	• Hypothesis H5(a): Customer behavior sensitivity moderates the relationship between service quality and customer satisfaction. • Hypothesis H5(b): Customer behavior sensitivity moderates the relationship between social media influencers utilization and customer satisfaction. • Hypothesis H5(c): Customer behavior sensitivity moderates the relationship between perceived customer feedback utilization and customer satisfaction. • Hypothesis H5(d): Customer behavior sensitivity moderates the relationship between transparent organizational culture and customer satisfaction.

5.4. Methodology

Study 2 adopted a quantitative research design to examine the relationships between complaint management practices, customer trust, and satisfaction in Tanzania's telecommunications sector. While a broader justification of the methodology is provided in Chapter One, this section outlines the specific procedures employed. The approach was suitable for testing causal relationships among latent constructs using statistical methods [77].

5.4.1. Sampling, Data Collection, Analysis and Ethical Concerns

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to 562 telecom customers (simcard subscribers) in Dar es Salaam, Dodoma, and Morogoro across the urban, peri urban and rural areas. These cities were purposively selected to reflect diverse regional characteristics. Respondents were selected using a combination of purposive and snowball sampling techniques, targeting individuals who had lodged complaints and received resolutions [78]. While this ensured relevance to the research objectives, it also introduced potential limitations such as selection bias and reduced generalizability. However, to mitigate the sampling limitations, a diverse pool of respondents across different cities and service contexts was targeted to reflect a range of consumer experiences and limit bias and enhance generalization.

The sample size was determined through a priori power analysis using G*Power software (detailed in chapter 1-Figure 1.5), exceeding thresholds for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) [149]. PLS-SEM was chosen in analysis due to its suitability for complex models, latent variables, and non-normal data [148,149]. Data analysis was conducted using SmartPLS 4, assessing both measurement and structural models, including mediation and moderation effects.

The questionnaire which is included in the appendix B, drew on validated scales from prior studies covering constructs such as service quality control [84], transparent organizational culture [85], customer feedback utilization [86], social media influencer engagement [87], customer trust [88], satisfaction with complaint resolution [89], and customer behavior sensitivity [90]. Items were measured using a 5 point Likert scale. A pilot study was initially conducted to refine the research instruments (detailed in chapter

1). Thereafter, final data were collected for a period of three months (March - May 2023) using an online survey questionnaire yielding a 68% response rate.

The study was conducted with strict adherence to ethical standards. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Institutional Review Board in Tanzania, ensuring that all procedures met recognized research integrity requirements. Participants provided informed consent and were fully assured of confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation throughout the process. No personal identifiers were collected, and all data were stored securely in line with recommended data protection protocols. These measures reinforced the credibility of the research and safeguarded the rights and welfare of participants.

5.4.2. Robustness Checks and Validation of Results

To ensure the robustness and credibility of the results, several additional analyses were conducted. First, endogeneity was assessed using the Gaussian copula approach, which allows for detecting and correcting potential bias arising from reverse causality or omitted variables as proposed by Hamilton and Nickerson (2003). Second, linearity was examined through quadratic effect testing, ensuring that the assumed linear relationships among constructs were valid and that any nonlinear patterns were appropriately accounted for as recommended by Hair et al. (2017). Third, unobserved heterogeneity was addressed using the FIMIX-PLS procedure, which identifies latent subpopulations within the data that may influence the relationships of interest, enhancing the generalizability of the findings as recommended by Henseler & Chin (2010). Sensitivity analysis was performed by incorporating relevant control variables, confirming that the observed effects were not artifacts of omitted confounders and reinforcing the stability of the results across alternative model specifications. Finally, CB-SEM was employed as a complementary method to validate the PLS-SEM findings, providing further evidence of model robustness and ensuring that the results hold under both variance-based and covariance-based structural equation modeling approaches as recommended by Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt (2011). Collectively, these robustness checks strengthen confidence in the findings by addressing potential biases, model misspecification, and hidden data structures, thereby ensuring that the conclusions are both reliable and practically meaningful.

5.4.3. Common Method Bias (CMB)

Common Method Bias (CMB) is a measurement error that occurs when the data collection method artificially inflates relationships between variables. This bias affects the validity of a study by causing misleading or exaggerated correlations, leading to incorrect conclusions about the true relationships. At the procedural level, this study employed a time-lagged data collection design, where data for predictor and criterion variables were collected at different points in time. This temporal separation reduced respondents' ability to use prior answers to inform subsequent responses, thereby minimizing consistency motifs as recommended by Philip M. Podsakoff. In addition, several statistical techniques were applied to assess the presence of CMB. These methods include: Harman's Single Factor Test (SPSS), collinearity diagnostics (SMART PLS4) using Variance Inflation Factors (VIF), as recommended in the literature and also the use marker variable technique as recommended by recent studies[136,146]

Harman's Single Factor Test was conducted through unrotated Principal Component Analysis (PCA), where the results showed that the first factor accounted for only 31.658% of the total variance, which is substantially below the critical threshold of 50% suggested by Harman (1967) as shown in Table 5.18. This indicates that the data is not predominantly influenced by a single factor, and thus, CMB is unlikely to pose a significant threat.

Additionally, collinearity assessment was used as a complementary method for detecting CMB through the evaluation of inner Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values for the key dependent constructs: Customer Satisfaction with Complaint Resolution (CSR) and Trust in the Company (TRC). The VIF values were all below the conservative threshold of 3.33, as recommended by literature[136], suggesting no serious issues of multicollinearity or bias due to common method variance. The VIF values are shown in Table 5.23.

Furthermore, The marker variable technique was employed to assess the presence of common method bias (CMB), and the results indicate no significant concern. As shown in the table 5.16, the relationships between the marker variable (MV) and the key constructs (CSR, SQC, SMI, CFU, and OCC) are weak and statistically insignificant,

with path coefficients ranging from -0.072 to 0.074 , t-values below the threshold of 1.96, and p-values exceeding 0.05.

Table 5.16. Marker Variable Table

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics	P values
MV 1 -> CSR	0.065	0.069	0.038	1.718	0.086
MV 2 -> SQC	-0.049	-0.062	0.057	0.856	0.392
MV 3 -> SMI	0.074	0.085	0.058	1.285	0.199
MV4 -> CFU	-0.055	-0.057	0.07	0.784	0.433
MV5 -> OCC	-0.072	-0.084	0.062	1.172	0.241

These findings suggest that the marker variable does not account for substantial variance in the model constructs. Consistent with established guidelines, the absence of significant relationships implies that common method variance is unlikely to distort the study's results, thereby supporting the robustness and validity of the structural model. Taken together, the convergence of evidence from these complementary approaches provides strong assurance that common method bias is not a serious concern in this study.

5.5. Preliminary Data Analysis

The preliminary data analysis process implemented a rigorous and systematic analytical framework, integrating descriptive statistics, exploratory factor analysis, and thorough reliability and validity assessments. Each stage was carefully designed to uphold methodological rigor, including the use of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) statistic to confirm sampling adequacy and targeted checks for common method bias. This comprehensive approach not only ensures the accuracy and consistency of the measurements but also strengthens the credibility, robustness, and generalizability of the study's findings.

5.5.1. Descriptive Statistics of Quantitative Data

This study involved 562 respondents, with a gender distribution of 64% male and 36% female, indicating a male-dominated sample which may reflect telecom usage trends or interest in the subject matter. In terms of residence, a majority (70.5%) were

from urban areas, potentially indicating better access to telecom services compared to rural participants (29.5%).

The age range was broad, with most respondents aged between 18–54 years (68.7%), highlighting a youthful and middle-aged consumer base. Educationally, 63% had attained at least a bachelor's degree, suggesting a well-educated sample likely familiar with digital platforms and telecom services.

Occupational status varied: students (34.5%) and formally employed individuals (33.3%) dominated the sample, while self-employed, retired, and unemployed individuals made up the rest. In terms of marital status, the majority were single (43.6%), followed by married individuals (31.9%), and smaller percentages of divorced, separated, or widowed respondents.

Regarding usage experience, nearly half (47%) had used telecom services for 1–5 years, with a significant portion (31.5%) using them for 6–10 years, and 21.5% for over a decade suggesting a well-informed customer base with varying levels of brand experience. Telecom affiliation revealed Vodacom as the most used provider (41%), followed by Tigo (21%), Airtel (19%), Halotel (10%), and TTCL (9%), illustrating Vodacom's market leadership.

When asked about preferred complaint channels, 35% favored call centers, followed by social media (32%), physical visits (21%), and other channels like email or apps (12%). This indicates a growing shift toward digital platforms while maintaining a strong preference for direct interaction.

The nature of complaints centered primarily on service issues (217 cases), with technical (163), internet-related (102), billing (43), and miscellaneous concerns (37) following. These figures highlight service delivery as the most pressing issue, with implications for quality improvement strategies.

5.5.2. Assessment of Normality and Justification for SEM PLS

To ensure the rigor of the statistical analyses, normality tests were conducted for all key variables using both the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) and Shapiro-Wilk (S-W) tests. As shown in Appendix C1, all variables had p-values below 0.001, indicating significant deviations from normality and thus violating a key assumption of many parametric techniques [148]. In response, Structural Equation Modeling with the Partial Least

Squares (PLS) approach was employed, as it is robust to non-normal data and well-suited for modeling complex relationships involving latent constructs, mediating, and moderating variables. This distribution-free estimation method ensures reliable and valid results despite non-normality, thereby strengthening the analytical rigor and appropriateness of the study’s methodology.

5.5.3. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

5.5.3.1. KMO and Bartlett's Test

The factor analysis results provide strong evidence for the suitability of the data and the robustness of the study’s constructs. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy is exceptionally high at 0.957, which, according to Kaiser (1974), falls within the ‘excellent’ range, indicating that the sample size is more than sufficient and that the variables have a strong potential to form coherent factors. Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity further supports this, with an approximate Chi-Square value of 2,685.988 and a p-value of 0.001, confirming that the correlation matrix is not an identity matrix and that the variables are sufficiently interrelated (Hair et al., 2010). These results not only justify the application of factor analysis but also reinforce the construct validity of the measured variables, suggesting that each latent construct is reliably represented by its indicators. Collectively, this evidence strengthens the reliability and interpretability of the study’s measurement model, as summarized in Table 5.17

Table 5.17 KMO and Bartlett's Test

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.957
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	2685.988
	df	1891
	Sig.	<.001

5.5.3.2. Total Variance Explained

Table 5.18 presents the Total Variance Explained, providing insights into the proportion of variance captured by the extracted factors. The analysis employed Principal Component Analysis (PCA) as the extraction method, with Varimax rotation applied to achieve a more interpretable factor structure. Initially, the eigenvalues indicate that six factors have values

greater than 1.0, a commonly used threshold for factor retention (Kaiser, 1960; Hair et al., 2019). The first five of these factors together explain approximately 57.539% of the total variance, which represents a substantial portion of the dataset. Specifically, the first factor alone accounts for 30.559% of the variance, while the subsequent factors contribute progressively smaller amounts. After rotation, the variance is redistributed more evenly across the factors, improving interpretability: the first factor contributes 12.745%, the second 11.286%, the third 12.782%, the fourth 10.889%, and the fifth 13.563% of the total variance. This redistribution highlights that the rotation process clarified the distinct dimensions present in the data, while maintaining the overall explanatory power of the model.

Table 5.18 Total Variance Explained

Total Variance Explained							
Factor	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings ^a
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total
1	19.628	31.658	31.658	18.946	30.559	30.559	12.745
2	5.910	9.532	41.190	4.942	7.970	38.529	11.286
3	5.022	8.100	49.290	5.418	8.739	47.268	12.782
4	3.594	5.797	55.088	3.256	5.252	52.520	10.889
5	3.456	5.574	60.662	3.112	5.019	57.539	13.563
6	2.504	4.039	64.701	2.155	3.475	61.014	5.662
7	.903	1.456	66.156	.562	.906	61.920	11.806

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

5.5.3.3. Pattern Matrix

The pattern matrix obtained from the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) using Maximum Likelihood extraction and Promax rotation provides a clear representation of the measurement structure. Promax, an oblique rotation method, was suitable given the theoretical expectation of correlations among constructs. The rotation converged in seven iterations, indicating a stable and well-defined factor solution.

As presented in Table 5.19, all items loaded strongly on their respective constructs, with coefficients largely exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.60 [148]. Service Quality, Consumer Behavior Sensitivity, Social Media Influencer Utilization, Transparent Organizational Culture, Trust in Company, and Customer Feedback Utilization were all well-represented by their indicators, confirming coherent clustering

of items under intended factors. Customer Satisfaction with Complaint Resolution also demonstrated acceptable loadings, supporting its inclusion within the model.

The adequacy of the data for factor analysis was confirmed by the high Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value and significant Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. Moreover, the extracted factors explained a substantial proportion of the cumulative variance, surpassing conventional benchmarks for EFA. These results collectively affirm the construct validity of the measurement model and provide a reliable foundation for subsequent steps of data analysis.

Table 5.19 Pattern Matrix

Pattern Matrix ^a							
Indicators	Factors						
	Service Quality	Consumer Behavior Sensitivity	Social Media Influencer Utilization	Transparent Organization Culture	Trust in Company	Customer Feedback Utilization	Customer Satisfaction
SQC 1	0.837						
SQC 2	0.842						
SQC 3	0.857						
SQC 4	0.735						
SQC 5	0.844						
SQC 6	0.651						
SQC 7	0.795						
SQC 8	0.694						
SQC 9	0.752						
SQC 10	0.738						
SQC 11	0.721						
SQC 12	0.762						
CBS 1		0.840					
CBS 2		0.840					
CBS 3		0.829					
CBS 4		0.857					
CBS 5		0.812					
CBS 6		0.879					
CBS 7		0.897					
SMI 1			0.793				
SMI 2			0.741				
SMI 3			0.790				
SMI 4			0.882				

SMI 5	0.757		
SMI 6	0.841		
SMI 7	0.700		
SMI 8	0.732		
SMI 9	0.712		
SMI 10	0.531		
OCC 1		0.746	
OCC 2		0.724	
OCC 3		0.717	
OCC 4		0.727	
OCC 5		0.706	
OCC 6		0.717	
OCC 7		0.735	
OCC 8		0.734	
OCC 9		0.691	
OCC 10		0.723	
TRC 1			0.757
TRC 2			0.799
TRC 3			0.765
TRC 4			0.773
TRC 5			0.781
TRC 6			0.813
TRC 7			0.734
TRC 8			0.806
TRC 9			0.698
CFU 1			0.747
CFU 2			0.720
CFU 3			0.692
CFU 4			0.752
CFU 5			0.720
CFU 6			0.730
CFU 7			0.769
CFU 8			0.767
CFU 9			0.733
CFU 10			0.726
CSR 1			0.635
CSR 2			0.605
CSR 3			0.593

CSR 4	0.517

Extraction Method: Maximum Likelihood.

Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 7 iterations.

5.6. Reliability and Validity of the Measurement Model

The measurement model through PLS SEM in Smart PLS was assessed to meet quality criteria before moving on to the structural model evaluation. During the "measurement model assessment," the "reliability" and "validity" of the indicators and constructs were tested using the PLS algorithm.

5.6.1. Indicator Loadings

Appendix C2 presents the indicator loadings, which reflect the strength of the relationship between each item and its corresponding factor or construct. These loadings indicate the extent to which each item contributes to explaining the variance in the underlying construct. Ideally, loading values should exceed 0.7 [151]. As shown in the appendix C2, most items meet this threshold, with the exception of three: CFU7 (0.696) under the "Customer Feedback Utilization" construct. Nevertheless, the item were retained, as their values exceed the commonly accepted minimum threshold of 0.6, as suggested by literature[154]. Furthermore, other measurement indicators such as Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) remain within acceptable limits even with these items included.

5.6.2. Reliability and Convergent Validity

Scale reliability refers to the extent to which the results of a study can be consistently replicated under similar conditions using the same scale. Essentially, it assesses the scale's consistency. To evaluate internal consistency reliability, "Cronbach's alpha" and "composite reliability" of the constructs were measured, indicating how closely related a set of items within a construct are. Both "Cronbach's alpha" and "composite reliability" serve as measures of scale reliability.

Table 5.20 presents the reliability and convergent validity metrics for the seven key constructs included in the study: Service Quality Control (SQC), Social Media Influencer utilization (SMI), Customer Feedback Utilization (CFU), Organizational Culture Transparency (OCC), Trust in the Company (TRC), Customer Behavior Sensitivity (CBS), and Customer Satisfaction with Complaint Resolution (CSR).

All constructs demonstrated excellent internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.912 to 0.957, surpassing the widely accepted threshold of 0.70 proposed by Nunnally & Bernstein (1994). Similarly, Composite Reliability (ρ_c) values were strong, ranging between 0.931 and 0.965, indicating high construct reliability proposed by Hair et al., (2019).

Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for all constructs were above the recommended minimum of 0.50 proposed by Fornell & Larcker, (1981), ranging from 0.573 to 0.796. This supports the convergent validity of the constructs, confirming that the indicators adequately represent their respective latent variables[150,151].

Table 5.20 PLS SEM Internal consistency reliability and Validity

Constructs	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (ρ_c)	AVE
SQC	0.948	0.955	0.636
SMI	0.937	0.947	0.641
CFU	0.921	0.931	0.573
OCC	0.919	0.932	0.579
TRC	0.936	0.946	0.661
CBS	0.957	0.965	0.796
CSR	0.912	0.938	0.792

5.6.3. Validity

5.6.3.1. Convergent Validity Test- Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Validity refers to the extent to which a construct accurately measures what it is intended to measure. Convergent validity is used to assess the validity of constructs in a study. Convergent validity was evaluated using the "average variance extracted" (AVE). The AVE for reflective constructs is determined by calculating the average of the reliabilities of their indicators. It measures the variance explained by these indicators. An acceptable AVE value should exceed 0.5 [152,151], indicating that the construct's indicators explain at least half (50%) of the variance [152].

Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for all constructs were above the recommended minimum of 0.50 proposed by Fornell & Larcker, (1981), ranging from 0.573 to 0.796, as shown in Table 5.20. This supports the convergent validity of the constructs, confirming that the indicators adequately represent their respective latent variables[150,151].

5.6.3.2. Discriminant Validity Assessment Using Cross Loadings

Cross loadings are used to assess discriminant validity ^[152]. In a properly specified model, the indicator loadings should be high on their intended constructs. Conversely, if the indicators load higher on a different construct than their intended one, the model's validity is compromised. Therefore, to establish discriminant validity, indicators should load highly on their proposed constructs (shown as bold diagonal values) and comparatively lower on other constructs ^[152]. Table for cross loadings is at the Appendix C3 and it shows that the items for each construct do not load higher on other constructs, thus confirming discriminant validity.

5.6.3.3. Discriminant Validity With the Fornell-Larcker Criterion

In the "Fornell-Larcker discriminant validity criterion," the square roots of the AVE of the constructs are considered. Discriminant validity is established if the square root of a construct's AVE is greater than its correlation with any other construct [152]. This indicates that a construct shares more variance with its own indicators than with other constructs in the model. In Table 5.21, the bold values in the diagonal cells represent the "square roots of AVE of the constructs," while the correlation values are shown below them. The table clearly demonstrates that the square root of AVE for each construct exceeds its correlations with other constructs, confirming discriminant validity.

Table 5.21 PLS SEM Fornell-Larcker criterion

Construct	CBS	CFU	CSR	OCC	SMI	SQC	TRC
CBS	0.892						
CFU	-0.102	0.757					
CSR	0.486	-0.153	0.890				
OCC	0.344	-0.072	0.463	0.761			
SMI	0.427	-0.103	0.445	0.461	0.800		
SQC	0.327	-0.085	0.440	0.459	0.468	0.798	
TRC	0.482	-0.012	0.606	0.451	0.584	0.515	0.813

5.6.3.4. Discriminant Validity with HTMT

While cross-loadings and the Fornell-Larcker criterion are commonly applied to assess discriminant validity, they are not without limitations. To address these, the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio introduced by Henseler [153] was utilized as a more rigorous approach for evaluating discriminant validity in PLS-SEM. According to the recommended

threshold, HTMT values should not exceed 0.85 [153]. As shown in Table 5.22, all HTMT values fall below this benchmark, thereby confirming that discriminant validity is satisfactorily established.

Table 5.22 PLS SEM Heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations

Construct	CBS	CFU	CSR	OCC	SMI	SQC
CBS						
CFU	0.084					
CSR	0.839	0.135				
OCC	0.355	0.079	0.496			
SMI	0.447	0.102	0.585	0.487		
SQC	0.338	0.061	0.466	0.486	0.495	
TRC	0.507	0.046	0.653	0.472	0.621	0.542

5.6.4. Multicollinearity Assessment

Multicollinearity among indicators can inflate standard errors and distort parameter estimates in Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), potentially undermining the measurement model's validity. The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) is the standard diagnostic measure for detecting multicollinearity. Following Hair et al. (2021), VIF values below 5.0 indicate acceptable levels of collinearity that do not threaten the model's integrity.

In this study, the VIF values for all indicators ranged from 1.75 to 4.51, with the majority of values falling between 2.0 and 3.0. Only a few indicators reached values above 4.0 namely 4.151, 4.513, 4.072, and 4.355 yet these remain below the critical cutoff of 5.0, signifying no severe multicollinearity concerns. The concentration of most VIF values in the moderate range suggests that indicators share some variance but remain sufficiently distinct, preserving construct validity and measurement reliability (Kock, 2015).

A detailed summary of all VIF statistics for each indicator is provided in Appendix C2. This comprehensive assessment confirms that multicollinearity is not problematic in this study, ensuring robust and unbiased estimation in the structural model.

5.7. Structural Model Analysis

This table 5.23 summarizes the results for R^2 , Q^2 , effect sizes (F^2), and collinearity (VIFs) for the constructs. Blank entries (—) indicate values that are not applicable. The

table offers an overview of the model's explanatory power, predictive relevance, and potential collinearity issues. Detailed interpretations and discussion of these results are provided in the sections following this table

(NB: VIF discussion is provided in section 5.4.3 for common method bias)

Table 5.23 PLS SEM Structural Model Analysis Summary Table

Constructs	R ²	Q ²	F ² (→ TRC)	F ² (→ CSR)	VIF (TRC)	VIF (CSR)
SQC	—	—	0.095	0.009	1.418	1.594
SMI	—	—	0.232	0.020	1.427	1.781
CFU	—	—	0.009	0.041	1.013	1.189
OCC	—	—	0.028	0.080	1.406	1.802
CBS	—	—	—	1.130	—	1.637
TRC	0.481	0.421	—	0.115	—	2.002
CSR	0.822	0.696	—	—	—	—

Notes:

SQC = Service Quality Control (Independent Variable)

SMI = Social Media Influencers (Independent Variable)

CFU = Customer Feedback Utilization (Independent Variable)

OCC = Transparent Organizational Culture (Independent Variable)

CBS = Customer Behavior Sensitivity (Moderator)

TRC = Trust in the Company (Mediator)

CSR = Customer Satisfaction with Complaint Resolution (Dependent Variable)

R² = Coefficient of Determination;

Q² = Predictive Relevance;

F² = Effect Size;

VIF = Variance Inflation Factor (indicator of collinearity).

5.7.1. Coefficient of Determination of Dependent Constructs (R²)

The coefficient of determination (R²) for endogenous constructs was evaluated to assess the model's explanatory power, also referred to as in-sample predictive power [155, 156]. Following Boubker and Douayri [157] and Riou [158], R² values less than 0.19 indicate a very weak level of determination; values between 0.19 and 0.33 indicate weak determination; between 0.33 and 0.67 indicate moderate; and values above 0.67 indicate substantial determination. In behavioral sciences, values above 0.20 are often considered acceptable, though this varies by context [159]. In this study, the R² values for 'Customer Satisfaction with Resolution' (CSR) and 'Trust in Company' (TRC) were 0.822 and 0.481, respectively. This indicates that the model explains 82.2% of the variance in CSR and

48.1% of the variance in TRC, reflecting substantial and moderate explanatory power, respectively (see Table 5.23).

5.7.2. Effect Size - (F^2)

The F-square (f^2) analysis reveals varying degrees of influence among factors affecting customer satisfaction with complaint resolution (CSR) and trust in the company (TRC), interpreted using Cohen's (1988) guidelines where f^2 values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 indicate small, medium, and large effects, respectively. Consumer behavior sensitivity (CBS) stands out with a large effect on CSR (1.13), far exceeding Cohen's large effect threshold, highlighting the critical role that customers' behavioral responsiveness plays in shaping satisfaction during complaint handling. This underscores the necessity for complaint management strategies to be tailored to diverse customer behaviors to optimize outcomes, consistent with prior research advocating customer segmentation and personalized service [111,131].

In contrast, customer feedback utilization (CFU) shows only minimal effects on both CSR (0.041, small effect) and TRC (0.009, small effect), suggesting current feedback mechanisms may be inadequate or poorly implemented, echoing concerns in service management literature about the gap between feedback collection and actionable responses [136,138]. Similarly, organizational culture centered on transparency (OCC) exerts a small effect on CSR (0.08) and an even smaller effect on TRC (0.028), indicating that transparency alone may be insufficient to significantly enhance satisfaction or trust without complementary improvements.

The influence of social media influencers (SMI) is negligible to small on CSR (0.02) but shows a moderate effect on TRC (0.232), implying that influencers contribute more to building brand trust than to immediate complaint satisfaction, aligning with perspectives that view influencer marketing primarily as a reputational tool [36]. Unexpectedly, service quality control (SQC) shows almost no effect on CSR (0.009) or a small effect on TRC (0.095), contradicting traditional service quality theories by Parasuraman et al., (1988) and suggesting that quality improvements have yet to translate into perceptible benefits in complaint contexts.

Importantly, trust in the company (TRC) exhibits a small to moderate effect on CSR (0.115), reinforcing its pivotal mediating role in enhancing customers' positive evaluation

of complaint resolution, in line with established frameworks emphasizing trust's centrality [132,133,183]. Taken together, these findings identify CBS,TRC and SMI as key drivers of customer satisfaction in complaint resolution (see Table 5.23).

5.7.3. Predictive Relevance (Q^2)

The Q-square (Q^2) value, also known as Stone-Geisser's Q^2 , is a key indicator used to assess the predictive relevance of a structural model, particularly within the context of Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). It is calculated through a blindfolding procedure that systematically omits data points and estimates them using the model's parameters. According to literature, Q^2 value greater than zero indicates that the model has predictive relevance for a particular endogenous construct. According to literature values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 can be interpreted as small, medium, and large predictive relevance, respectively[146].

Table 5.23 reports Q^2 values for two key constructs: Customer Satisfaction with Complaint Resolution (CSR) and Trust in the Company (TRC). The Q^2 value for CSR is 0.696, which surpasses the threshold for strong predictive relevance. This suggests that the model demonstrates a high level of accuracy in predicting CSR outcomes based on the exogenous variables, including SQC,SMI,CFU and OCC. Such a result indicates that the model not only fits the data well but also possesses substantial explanatory power for CSR, an essential outcome in the context of complaint management effectiveness.

The Q^2 value for TRC is 0.421, indicating a strong predictive relevance. While this value is slightly lower than that of CSR, it still reflects a respectable degree of predictive accuracy. The comparatively lower Q^2 for TRC may be attributed to the more abstract and attitudinal nature of trust, which is often influenced by a broader range of experiences and perceptions beyond immediate service recovery efforts. Nonetheless, the model demonstrates sufficient capability in predicting customers' trust in the company, supporting the hypothesized relationships among complaint management practices and trust.

Overall, these Q^2 values affirm the model's predictive strength. The particularly high Q^2 for CSR highlights the model's ability to inform practical interventions aimed at improving customer satisfaction following complaint resolution. The moderately strong Q^2 for TRC further validates the inclusion of trust as a mediating construct, reinforcing its conceptual relevance within the broader theoretical framework of the study.

5.7.4. Model Fit Analysis

The goodness of fit of the model is evaluated using several key indicators: SRMR, Chi-square, and NFI. Here's a comment on each of these measures for the estimated model: The SRMR value for the estimated model is 0.049. An SRMR value below 0.08 is considered a good fit, indicating that the model has a satisfactory fit with the data[155]. In this case, an SRMR of 0.049 suggests that the model fits the data well, with a small residual error. The Chi-square value for the model is 3841.619. In structural equation modeling, a lower Chi-square value indicates a better fit. However, Chi-square is sensitive to sample size, and with large samples, even small discrepancies can lead to a significant Chi-square value. Therefore, Chi-square should be interpreted in conjunction with other fit indices. The NFI value is 0.862. NFI values range from 0 to 1, with values closer to 1 indicating a better fit. An NFI value above 0.90 is generally considered acceptable, though some researchers accept values above 0.80 as an indication of a reasonably good fit. In this case, an NFI of 0.862 suggests that the model has an acceptable fit but could potentially be improved. Therefore, the model shows a good fit based on the SRMR value (0.049), which is well below the threshold of 0.08. The NFI value (0.862) suggests a reasonably good fit, though slightly below the ideal threshold of 0.90. The Chi-square value (3841.619) should be interpreted with caution due to its sensitivity to sample size. Combining these indicators, the model appears to have a satisfactory fit with the data.

5.8. Hypotheses Testing Results

5.8.1. Direct Hypothesis Results

The hypotheses were tested using bootstrapping with 10,000 sub-samples to estimate the path coefficients (β), t-values, p-values, and sample means (M) [161]. A significance level of 5% ($\alpha = 0.05$) was adopted, which is standard in marketing research. For a two-tailed test, the critical t-value is approximately ± 1.96 , indicating that t-values ≥ 1.96 or ≤ -1.96 are statistically significant. P-values below 0.05 denote significant effects. The detailed results for all hypotheses, including confidence intervals, are presented in Table 5.24.

The key findings are:

- H1(a): Service Quality Control (SQC) has a positive and significant effect on Customer Satisfaction with Complaint Resolution (CSR) ($\beta = 0.055$, $t = 2.034$, $p = 0.042$).

- H1(b): Social Media Influencers (SMI) positively and significantly affect CSR ($\beta = 0.092$, $t = 2.677$, $p = 0.007$).
- H1(c): Customer Feedback Utilization (CFU) has a negative and highly significant effect on CSR ($\beta = -0.088$, $t = 3.823$, $p < 0.001$).
- H1(d): Transparent Organizational Culture (OCC) positively and significantly impacts CSR ($\beta = 0.146$, $t = 3.437$, $p = 0.001$).
- H2(a): SQC positively and highly significantly affects Trust in the Company (TRC) ($\beta = 0.265$, $t = 5.947$, $p < 0.001$).
- H2(b): SMI positively and highly significantly affects TRC ($\beta = 0.397$, $t = 8.869$, $p < 0.001$).
- H2(c): CFU's positive effect on TRC is not significant ($\beta = 0.062$, $t = 1.389$, $p = 0.165$) since the t-value is below 1.96.
- H2(d): OCC positively and significantly affects TRC ($\beta = 0.150$, $t = 3.296$, $p = 0.001$).
- H3: TRC positively and highly significantly impacts CSR ($\beta = 0.196$, $t = 4.940$, $p < 0.001$).

All hypotheses are supported except H2(c), as its P value is not below 0.05, its confidence interval includes zero and its t-value is below the critical threshold. The absence of a significant relationship between Customer Feedback Utilization (CFU) and Trust in the Company (TRC) may suggest that customers perceive feedback mechanisms as ineffective, lacking transparency or are not culturally appropriate as the CFU indicators were contextualized to accommodate the cultural aspect in feedback utilization. It is plausible that customers feel their feedback is collected more as a formality rather than being genuinely considered or acted upon, which limits its ability to build trust. These interpretations are supported by existing literature emphasizing that trust develops not simply through feedback collection but through visible, meaningful responses and communication [138,182]. Furthermore, other studies caution that poorly managed feedback processes can damage trust if customers feel ignored or undervalued [105,135]. Whereas other literature suggests that cultural norms and expectations significantly shape how customers interpret feedback processes, influencing whether they view such mechanisms as trustworthy or tokenistic. In contexts where communal values, respect for hierarchy, or face-saving practices are strong as in many African settings, feedback that appears impersonal or non-responsive may be perceived as dismissive, further undermining trust in the company [92,147]

Table 5.24 PLS SEM Hypothesis Testing - Direct Relationship

Hypothesis	Path	Beta coefficient	T Values	P values	Sample mean (M)	Confidence Interval CI		Significant
						Lower Limit	Upper limit	
H1(a)	SQC-> CSR	0.055	2.034	0.042	0.056	0.004	0.110	Yes
H1(b)	SMI->CSR	0.092	2.677	0.007	0.090	0.025	0.159	Yes
H1(c)	CFU->CSR	-0.088	3.823	0.000	-0.093	-0.138	-0.049	Yes
H1(d)	OCC->CSR	0.146	3.437	0.001	0.143	0.060	0.227	Yes
H2(a)	SQC->TRC	0.265	5.947	0.000	0.266	0.180	0.356	Yes
H2(b)	SMI->TRC	0.397	8.869	0.000	0.395	0.307	0.480	Yes
H2(c)	CFU->TRC	0.062	1.389	0.165	0.058	-0.023	0.151	No
H2(d)	OCC->TRC	0.150	3.296	0.001	0.151	0.066	0.244	Yes
H3	TRC->CSR	0.196	4.940	0.000	0.196	0.121	0.276	Yes

Overall, these results provide strong evidence that complaint management practices significantly influence both customer satisfaction and trust, with trust serving as a key mediator in enhancing satisfaction.

5.8.2. Mediation Analysis Results

This section presents the results of the mediation analysis, examining whether ‘Trust in the Company’ mediates the relationship between various complaints management practices and ‘Customer Satisfaction with Complaint Resolution (CSR)’. The mediating effects were assessed using a bootstrapping procedure with 10,000 resamples, which provides bias-corrected confidence intervals for indirect effects. The analysis follows the framework proposed by Zhao et al. (2010), distinguishing between complementary partial mediation, full mediation, and no mediation.

Hypothesis H4a posits that ‘Trust in the Company’ mediates the relationship between SQC and CSR. The direct effect of SQC on CSR is statistically significant, with a beta coefficient of 0.052, a T-value of 4.154, and a P-value of 0.000. The 95% confidence interval (CI) of [0.030, 0.078] does not include zero, confirming the significance of this path. The mediation analysis further reveals that Trust in the Company partially mediates this relationship, indicating that while SQC independently contributes to CSR, its impact is strengthened when trust is established. This aligns with existing literature suggesting that consistent service quality enhances credibility and reliability, thereby nurturing customer trust, which in turn improves satisfaction with complaint outcomes[130,131]. The presence

of complementary partial mediation suggests that trust acts as a reinforcing mechanism rather than replacing the direct effect.

Hypothesis H4b examines whether Trust in the Company mediates the effect of SMI on CSR. The analysis yields a significant direct effect, with a beta coefficient of 0.078, a T-value of 3.739, and a P-value of 0.000. The 95% CI of [0.042, 0.124] confirms this result. The mediation analysis shows partial mediation by Trust in the Company, suggesting that influencer engagement not only directly enhances customer satisfaction but also does so indirectly by strengthening trust in the organization. This finding is theoretically consistent with branding and endorsement theories, which argue that third-party validation from influencers can enhance perceived organizational integrity, leading to higher satisfaction when complaints are resolved[132,156]. Again, according to Zhao this is a case of complementary partial mediation. See Table 5.25.

Hypothesis H4c investigates the mediating role of trust in the relationship between CFU and CSR. The results indicate a non-significant relationship, with a beta coefficient of 0.012, a T-value of 1.326, and a P-value of 0.185. The p value is above 0.05 showing that it is not significant, the 95% CI of [-0.004, 0.032] crosses zero, confirming the absence of a significant effect. Consequently, there is no evidence of mediation in this case. This suggests that while feedback mechanisms may be in place, customers likely do not perceive them as meaningful or effective unless they lead to visible, tangible service improvements. The lack of trust mediation may stem from a failure to close the feedback loop as customers are not informed about how their input influences organizational change, which reduces credibility and undermines trust. Additionally, in contexts like the Tanzanian telecom sector, where customer expectations for responsiveness may be low due to historical service gaps, feedback systems may be viewed with skepticism. Thus, the result underscores that for feedback utilization to foster trust and satisfaction, organizations must actively communicate outcomes, demonstrate responsiveness, and embed transparency in the entire feedback process.

Hypothesis H4d tests whether Trust in the Company mediates the effect of a OCC on CSR. The findings show a significant positive direct relationship, with a beta coefficient of 0.029, a T-value of 2.679, and a P-value of 0.007. The 95% CI [0.011, 0.054] affirms the reliability of the estimate. The mediation analysis supports partial mediation by trust,

suggesting that transparency within the organization such as openness in communication, clarity in procedures, and consistent messaging both directly and indirectly improves CSR. This reinforces the argument that a transparent culture fosters trust by reducing ambiguity and signaling accountability, which are critical during complaint resolution. In line with Zhao et al. (2010), this finding represents complementary partial mediation, with trust enhancing but not substituting the direct influence of OCC on satisfaction (see Table 5.25)

Table 5.25 PLS SEM Hypothesis Testing (mediating hypothesis)

Hypothesis	Relationship	Beta coefficient	T Values	P values	Sample mean (M)	Confidence Interval		Significant	Mediation
						Lower Limit	Upper Limit		
H4a	SQC -> TRC -> CSR	0.052	4.154	0.000	0.052	0.03	0.078	Yes	Complementary Partial mediation
H4b	SMI -> TRC -> CSR	0.078	3.739	0.000	0.078	0.042	0.124	Yes	Complementary Partial mediation
H4c	CFU -> TRC -> CSR	0.012	1.326	0.185	0.011	-0.004	0.032	No	No Mediation
H4d	OCC -> TRC -> CSR	0.029	2.679	0.007	0.03	0.011	0.054	Yes	Complementary Partial mediation

In summary, complementary partial mediation by Trust in the Company is evident in the relationships involving SQC, SMI, and OCC, supporting the assertion that trust plays a reinforcing role in enhancing satisfaction with complaint resolution. In contrast, the absence of mediation in the case of CFU underscores the need for organizations to better communicate how customer feedback leads to meaningful change. These findings emphasize that trust is not merely a passive by-product of service interactions but an active mechanism through which complaint management practices affect satisfaction outcomes

5.8.3. Moderation Analysis

Hypothesis H5a assessed whether 'Customer Behavior Sensitivity' (CBS) moderates the relationship between 'Service Quality Control' (SQC) and 'Customer Satisfaction with Complaint Resolution' (CSR). The analysis yielded a beta coefficient of 0.029, a T-value of 1.089, and a P-value of 0.276. These results indicate that the moderating effect is not statistically significant. Thus, variations in CBS do not appear to influence how service quality control affects customer satisfaction in the context of complaint resolution. This may suggest that the impact of service quality on satisfaction is robust across different

sensitivity levels, likely due to the universal expectation of quality service regardless of individual behavioral traits.

In contrast, Hypothesis H5b explored the moderating role of CBS on the relationship between the use of Social Media Influencers (SMIs) in complaints management and CSR. The beta coefficient of -0.114, T-value of 3.354, and P-value of 0.001 indicate a statistically significant negative moderation effect. This suggests that higher levels of customer sensitivity diminish the positive impact of influencer involvement on satisfaction with complaint resolution. One plausible explanation is that highly sensitive customers may perceive influencer interventions as performative or lacking authenticity, thereby undermining their effectiveness. This finding underscores the nuanced role of customer psychology in shaping responses to influencer-based engagement during service recovery.

Hypothesis H5c examined whether CBS moderates the relationship between perceived Customer Feedback Utilization (CFU) and CSR. The beta coefficient of 0.034, T-value of 1.020, and P-value of 0.308 indicate no statistically significant moderation effect. This implies that the perceived use of customer feedback contributes similarly to satisfaction across varying levels of customer sensitivity. It is possible that feedback utilization is interpreted more as a procedural or back-end function by customers, and less as a visible or emotionally resonant act that would interact meaningfully with sensitivity levels.

Finally, Hypothesis H5d investigated the moderating role of CBS on the relationship between Transparent Organizational Culture (OCC) and CSR. Results reveal a significant positive moderation effect, with a beta coefficient of 0.093, T-value of 3.405, and P-value of 0.001. This suggests that as customer sensitivity increases, the positive impact of organizational transparency on complaint satisfaction also increases. Highly sensitive customers may place greater value on openness, clarity, and honesty during the resolution process, which helps reduce uncertainty and enhances perceived fairness. This finding aligns with stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) theory, highlighting that individual differences in customer responsiveness (organism) shape how environmental cues (transparency) influence satisfaction outcomes (response).

In summary, CBS significantly moderates two of the four examined relationships: it weakens the positive effect of SMIs and strengthens the positive effect of OCC on CSR. It does not significantly moderate the influence of SQC or CFU on CSR. These results suggest

that customer behavior sensitivity is especially relevant in contexts where emotional or perceptual cues such as influencer messaging or transparency are involved. In contrast, more procedural or operational elements like service quality control and feedback utilization may exert their effects uniformly, regardless of customer behavioral traits. These moderation hypotheses are summarized in Table 5.26.

Table 5.26 PLS SEM Hypothesis testing (moderating hypothesis)

Hypothesis	Path	Beta coefficient	T Value	P values	Sample mean (M)	Significant
H5a	CBS x SQC -> CSR	0.029	1.089	0.276	0.029	No
H5b	CBS x SMI -> CSR	-0.114	3.354	0.001	-0.115	Yes
H5c	CBS x CFU -> CSR	0.034	1.020	0.308	0.042	No
H5d	CBS x OCC -> CSR	0.093	3.405	0.001	0.093	Yes

5.9. Robustness Checks

This section presents post hoc and robustness analyses undertaken to enhance the credibility and depth of the study's findings. While the primary model addressed the hypothesized relationships, additional analyses were performed to test the stability of the results, examine key assumptions, and uncover further insights that were not part of the initial hypothesis development. Robustness tests were conducted to assess endogeneity, linearity, and unobserved heterogeneity. Endogeneity was examined using the Gaussian copula method, linearity through quadratic effect analysis, and unobserved heterogeneity via the FIMIX-PLS procedure. These tests confirmed the model's reliability. Additional robustness tests were also conducted and are reported hereunder.

5.9.1. Linearity Assumption with Quadratic Effect

A linearity robustness check was conducted using the quadratic effects method to determine whether the relationships between latent constructs adhered to the assumption of linearity, which is essential for accurate estimation in PLS-SEM. According to Hair (2021), testing for quadratic effects helps identify potential non-linear relationships that could compromise model validity if ignored. Similarly, Sarstedt et al. (2022) emphasize the importance of confirming linearity to ensure the structural paths are correctly specified. The results of bootstrapping with 10,000 samples are presented in Table 5.27, all tested paths showed non-significant quadratic effects ($p > 0.05$), indicating that linear modeling is

appropriate for this study. These results affirm the reliability of the estimation procedure, as recommended by Hair, Sarstedt, and their collaborators (2022).

Table 5.27 Linearity Assumption with Quadratic Effect

Path	T statistic	P Value	Linearity Assumption Met
QE (SQC) -> CSR	0.215	0.621	Yes
QE (SQC) -> TRC	0.332	0.740	Yes
QE (SMI) -> CSR	0.465	0.253	Yes
QE (SMI) -> TRC	0.387	0.342	Yes
QE (CFU) -> CSR	0.348	0.961	Yes
QE (CFU) -> TRC	0.305	0.996	Yes
QE (OCC) -> CSR	0.318	0.751	Yes
QE (OCC) -> TRC	0.499	0.618	Yes
QE (TRC) -> CSR	0.398	0.304	Yes

5.9.2. Endogeneity with Gaussian Copula

To evaluate the possibility of endogeneity within the structural model, the Gaussian copula method was applied. This approach tests whether the error terms in the model are correlated with the predictors, which would indicate potential bias in the path estimates. According to Hair et al. (2021), addressing endogeneity is critical in PLS-SEM to ensure the accuracy and reliability of causal inferences. In this study, the results of the Gaussian copula tests revealed that none of the copula coefficients were statistically significant ($p > 0.05$), suggesting that endogeneity is not a concern in the tested paths. As Zhao et al. (2020) explain, the Gaussian copula method is particularly useful in identifying non-linear dependencies that might not be captured through traditional techniques. A detailed presentation of the test results is available in Appendix C5.

5.9.3. Unobserved Heterogeneity with FIMIX Procedure

Unobserved heterogeneity was assessed as part of the robustness checks to ensure the stability of the SEM results. Unobserved heterogeneity refers to differences among individuals or groups in a dataset that are not captured by the observed variables but still influence the outcomes. Recognizing the influence of unobserved heterogeneity on structural relationships which poses a risk to the validity of structural model estimates, this study employs FIMIX-PLS to detect latent segments and improve model robustness as proposed by literature[149]

We initiated the analysis by running the FIMIX-PLS procedure on the dataset. As recommended by literature, the process began with a one-segment model, using default settings: a stop criterion of $1.0E^{-10}$, 5000 maximum iterations, and 10 repetitions. To determine the feasible number of segments, we followed Sarstedt approach and calculated the minimum required sample size per segment. A post hoc power analysis, assuming an effect size of 0.15 and 80% power, indicated a threshold of 85 observations per segment, supporting a maximum of nine segments. Accordingly, we reran the FIMIX-PLS procedure for up to nine segments using the same initial parameters.

The fit indices for the one- to nine-segment solutions present a somewhat unclear picture as shown in Table 5.28. literature propose that agreement between AIC3 and CAIC on the number of segments generally signals the appropriate segmentation solution[149]. In our case, however, AIC3 recommends a nine-segment solution, while CAIC favors four segments. Additionally, Sarstedt et al. (2011) point out that AIC4 and the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) generally perform well in determining the number of segments in FIMIX-PLS. Both the AIC4 and BIC indicate an eight-segment solution, which appears to be closely grouped according to the EN criterion according to Hair et al., (2016). Therefore, the results do not clearly point to a specific segmentation solution, as (1) AIC3 and CAIC suggest different numbers of segments, and (2) MDL5 indicates a two-segment solution (3)while AIC4 and BIC point to eight segment solution. Based on these mixed findings, we infer that unobserved heterogeneity is likely not severe, thus supporting the validity of analyzing the full dataset as a whole.

Table 5.28 FIMIX Fit indices for 9 Segments

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
AIC	2531.732	2117.969	1948.834	1859.596	1811.062	1776.754	1774.067	1714.229	1697.955
AIC3	2543.732	2142.969	1986.834	1910.596	1875.062	1853.754	1864.067	1817.229	1813.955
CAIC	2595.710	2251.256	2151.431	2131.503	2152.278	2187.280	2253.902	2263.374	2316.409
AIC4	2555.732	2167.969	2024.834	1961.596	1939.062	1930.754	1954.067	1920.229	1929.955
BIC	2583.710	2226.256	2113.431	2080.503	2088.278	2110.280	2163.902	2160.374	2200.409
MDL5	2887.622	2859.407	3075.820	3372.129	3709.142	4060.383	4443.242	4768.953	5138.226
EN	0.000	0.595	0.562	0.584	0.610	0.615	0.656	0.706	0.703

Note: AIC:Akaike's information criterion; AIC3:modified AIC with Factor 3; CAIC:consistent AIC; AIC4;modified AIC with Factor 4; BIC:Bayesian information criterion; MDL5:minimum description length with factor 5; EN:normed entropy statistic

5.9.4. Sensitivity Analysis with Control Variables

To ensure the robustness of the model and address potential confounding effects, demographic and contextual factors commonly identified in the literature as important control variables in satisfaction and trust research were considered [17,32,201]. Following the recommendations of literature[146], a sensitivity analysis was conducted including age group, education level, marital status, platform used, and service provider. The analysis revealed that none of the control variables reached statistical significance at the conventional 5% level, based on their p-values exceeding 0.05, which is the primary criterion for significance (age group: $p = 0.063$; education level: $p = 0.201$; marital status: $p = 0.067$; platform: $p = 0.499$; service provider: $p = 0.210$). Correspondingly, the t-statistics for all controls were below the critical value of 1.96 required for significance in a two-tailed test, and the standardized path coefficients (β) were near zero, indicating negligible effect sizes as shown by Table 5.29. Moreover, the model's explanatory power as measured by R^2 for Customer Satisfaction with Complaint Resolution (CSR) increased only slightly from 0.822 to 0.826 ($\Delta R^2 = 0.004$), with no change observed for Trust in the Company (TRC) at 0.481. These results confirm that control variables neither significantly affect the outcomes nor enhance the model's explanatory capacity, justifying their exclusion from the final model to preserve parsimony and focus on the main theoretical constructs [150].

Table 5.29 Control Variable influence on CSR

	β Coefficient	T statistics	P values	R^2	ΔR^2
Agegroup -> CSR	0.039	1.858	0.063		
Gender-> CSR	0.023	0.519	0.603		
Educationlevel -> CSR	-0.028	1.280	0.201		
Maritalstatus -> CSR	0.037	1.831	0.067		
Platform -> CSR	-0.016	0.676	0.499		
Serviceprovider -> CSR	-0.025	1.253	0.210		
TRC				0.481	0.000
CSR				0.822	0.004

5.9.5. Predictive Validity Using PLS predict

The PLS-predict procedure was applied as a robustness check to confirm that the model's predictive performance extends beyond the estimation sample, thereby supporting its practical relevance. PLS-Predict is a holdout-based procedure used in PLS-SEM to

assess the model's out-of-sample predictive power according to Shmueli et al., (2016). Unlike traditional evaluation metrics such as R^2 and path coefficients, which focus on explanatory power, PLS-Predict provides insights into how well the model performs in predicting new observations. Literature argues that including PLS-Predict results is important for enhancing the rigor and practical relevance of the model[146]. In this study, we conducted PLS-Predict using root mean squared error (RMSE) as the prediction metric and compared the RMSE values from the PLS-SEM model with those obtained from a linear model (LM). This comparison helps determine whether the PLS model provides superior predictive performance relative to a naïve benchmark.

The PLS predict results show that all indicators have positive Q^2_{predict} values, confirming the model's overall predictive relevance as recommended by literature [147]. The PLS-SEM model outperforms the linear benchmark in most indicators particularly across all CSR items and the majority of TRC items (TRC1, TRC2, TRC6, TRC7, TRC8, TRC9) as indicated by lower RMSE values. However, TRC3, TRC4, and TRC5 display slightly higher RMSE in the PLS model than in the linear model, suggesting marginally better performance by the benchmark for these specific indicators. Despite these minor exceptions, the model demonstrates strong out-of-sample prediction, supporting its practical utility for forecasting customer satisfaction and trust outcomes [147]. See table 5.30

Table 5.30 Predictive Validity Using PLS predict

Indicators	Q^2_{predict}	PLS-SEM_RMSE	LM_RMSE
CSR1	0.596	0.704	0.729
CSR2	0.561	0.720	0.730
CSR3	0.612	0.668	0.712
CSR4	0.428	0.744	0.769
TRC1	0.287	0.788	0.801
TRC2	0.270	0.872	0.894
TRC3	0.290	0.861	0.850
TRC4	0.308	0.921	0.895
TRC5	0.243	0.947	0.941
TRC6	0.240	0.896	0.915
TRC7	0.292	0.865	0.875
TRC8	0.287	0.854	0.864
TRC9	0.276	0.870	0.879

5.9.6. Robustness Assessment of PLS-SEM Findings Using CB-SEM in SmartPLS

To ensure the reliability and consistency of the PLS-SEM findings, a robustness test was conducted by re-estimating the model using the covariance-based SEM (CB-SEM) approach in SmartPLS. According to [146] PLS-SEM is particularly suitable for prediction-oriented research and complex models with fewer restrictions on data distribution. Similarly, [149] emphasize that PLS-SEM is advantageous when dealing with complex relationships and smaller samples. In contrast, studies highlight that CB-SEM is more confirmatory in nature and places emphasis on overall model fit[153,155]. One study further note that combining PLS-SEM and CB-SEM can strengthen the credibility of findings by testing structural relationships under different methodological assumptions[158]. Therefore, by employing both approaches, this study validates whether the structural relationships identified through PLS-SEM remain stable under the more rigorous assumptions of CB-SEM, thereby enhancing the robustness of the results.

5.9.6.1. Measurement Model Evaluation (CB SEM)

The outer loadings table indicates that all items across the seven constructs load above the recommended threshold of 0.70, confirming acceptable indicator reliability. Constructs like CBS, CSR, SQC, TRC, and SMI show particularly strong values, consistently well above 0.75. Although CFU and OCC have some relatively lower items, they still meet the 0.70 benchmark, suggesting the overall measurement model is reliable and valid.

All constructs demonstrate strong reliability, with Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values well above the 0.70 threshold. Adequate convergent validity is evidenced by AVE values greater than 0.50 (see Table 5.31).

Discriminant validity was assessed using HTMT and Fornell-Larcker criteria. As shown in Table 5.32 (HTMT), all values are below 0.85, indicating constructs are distinct. Table 5.33 (Fornell-Larcker) shows that the square root of AVE (diagonal) exceeds inter-construct correlations (off-diagonal), confirming discriminant validity, with some negative correlations reflecting inverse relationships.

The CB-SEM model fit results in Table 5.34 indicate that the estimated model demonstrates a strong fit to the data. The chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio (1.954) is well below the recommended threshold of 3, and the RMSEA value (0.041) with a 90% confidence interval of 0.039–0.043 indicates a close fit. Additional fit indices including

GFI (0.928), AGFI (0.914), NFI (0.904), TLI (0.931), and CFI (0.934) all exceed the conventional 0.90 benchmark, further supporting good model fit, while SRMR (0.040) is well below the recommended threshold of 0.08, indicating excellent fit.

Table 5.31 CB SEM Reliability and validity

Constructs	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_c)	AVE
SQC	0.948	0.948	0.604
SMI	0.937	0.938	0.602
CFU	0.921	0.922	0.540
OCC	0.919	0.919	0.533
TRC	0.936	0.936	0.619
CBS	0.957	0.957	0.761
CSR	0.912	0.916	0.725

Table 5.32 CB SEM HTMT

	CBS	CFU	CSR	OCC	SMI	SQC
CBS						
CFU	0.084					
CSR	0.839	0.135				
OCC	0.355	0.079	0.496			
SMI	0.447	0.102	0.585	0.487		
SQC	0.338	0.081	0.466	0.486	0.495	
TRC	0.507	0.046	0.653	0.472	0.621	0.542

Table 5.33 CB SEM Fornel Larkner

	CBS	CFU	CSR	OCC	SMI	SQC	TRC
CBS	0.873						
CFU	-0.080	0.735					
CSR	0.839	-0.141	0.852				
OCC	0.367	-0.072	0.490	0.730			
SMI	0.451	-0.099	0.588	0.491	0.776		
SQC	0.336	-0.067	0.465	0.487	0.485	0.777	
TRC	0.510	-0.006	0.652	0.483	0.615	0.538	0.786

Table 5.34 CB SEM Measurement Model Fit Indices

Category	Fit Index	Value	Level of Acceptance	Interpretation
Absolute Fit	Chi-Sqr/df	1.954	< 3.00	Good
	RMSEA (90% CI)	0.041 (0.039–0.043)	< 0.08	Good
	GFI	0.928	> 0.90	Good
	AGFI	0.914	> 0.90	Good
	SRMR	0.040	< 0.08	Good
Incremental Fit	NFI	0.904	> 0.90	Good
	TLI	0.931	> 0.90	Good
	CFI	0.934	> 0.90	Good
Parsimonious Fit	PGFI	0.767	> 0.50	Good

5.9.6.2. Structural Model Evaluation (CB SEM)

To ensure the robustness of the PLS-SEM findings, a covariance-based SEM (CB-SEM) analysis was conducted using SmartPLS software. The structural model fit indices in Table 5.35 indicate that the CB-SEM model fits the data well: $\chi^2/df = 2.05$, RMSEA = 0.043 (90% CI: 0.041–0.045), SRMR = 0.026, CFI = 0.927, and TLI = 0.924. These values suggest that the hypothesized model is a good representation of the observed data. Furthermore, examining the explanatory power, the CB-SEM results show R^2 values of 0.473 for Trust in the Company (TRC) and 0.734 for Customer Satisfaction with Complaint Resolution (CSR). These values are very close to the PLS-SEM results, which reported $R^2 = 0.481$ for TRC and 0.822 for CSR. Although the CSR R^2 is slightly higher in PLS-SEM, these small numerical differences fall within acceptable ranges and do not alter the substantive interpretation of the results. This similarity confirms that both methods consistently capture the proportion of variance explained in the key outcomes.

Looking at the direct paths (see Table 5.36), the CB-SEM results mirror the PLS-SEM findings. Service quality control (SQC), social media influencer utilization (SMI), and transparent organizational culture (OCC) positively influence CSR and TRC, while customer feedback utilization (CFU) negatively affects CSR and has an insignificant effect on TRC. Trust also has a positive effect on CSR in both analyses. Overall, the magnitude and significance of the paths are very consistent between PLS-SEM and CB-SEM, demonstrating robustness of the structural relationships. Such convergence across the different estimation approaches is consistent with methodological recommendations by

Hair et al., (2019), who highlight the value of triangulating results across SEM techniques to confirm robustness.

The mediation analysis in CB-SEM confirms the PLS-SEM findings (see Table 4.37). TRC partially mediates the relationships of SQC, SMI, and OCC with CSR, while CFU shows no mediation effect. The complementary partial mediation observed in both methods strengthens the conclusion that trust plays an important intermediary role in these relationships. Given that CB-SEM employs stricter assumptions for mediation testing than PLS-SEM, the alignment of results across both methods enhances the credibility of these mediation effects.

Moderation analysis was straightforward in PLS-SEM, but in CB-SEM it required creating interaction terms manually in Excel through mean-centering before uploading the data into SmartPLS. Despite this extra step, the CB-SEM results confirmed that customer behavior sensitivity (CBS) selectively moderates the effects of social media influencer utilization (SMI) and organizational transparency (OCC) on customer satisfaction with complaint resolution (CSR), while the effects of service quality control (SQC) and customer feedback utilization (CFU) remain unaffected (See Table 4.38). While moderation testing in CB-SEM is more constrained than in PLS-SEM, the fact that consistent patterns emerged across both methods provides strong support for the reliability of the moderation results. This consistency reinforces the robustness of the moderation findings and highlights the nuanced role of customer sensitivity in shaping complaint resolution outcomes.

Overall, the CB-SEM analysis reinforces the PLS-SEM findings, demonstrating strong consistency across estimation techniques. Key indicators, fit indices, explained variance, and structural paths align closely, confirming the stability of the hypothesized relationships. Since PLS-SEM is variance-based and CB-SEM is covariance-based, their convergence demonstrates methodological triangulation. This agreement shows that the findings are not artifacts of a single estimation paradigm but instead hold across distinct statistical assumptions. This convergence not only strengthens the credibility of the model but also highlights its methodological rigor, showing that the proposed relationships are not artifacts of a single analytical approach. By validating the results across distinct estimation frameworks, the robustness check provides greater confidence in the generalizability and

reliability of the study's conclusions, emphasizing the model's resilience to different statistical assumptions and potential data variations.

Table 5.35 CB SEM Structural Model Fit Indices

Category	Fit Index	Value	Threshold	Interpretation
Absolute Fit	χ^2/df	2.05	< 3.00	Good fit
	RMSEA (90% CI)	0.043 (0.041–0.045)	< 0.08	Good fit
	SRMR	0.026	< 0.08	Good fit
	GFI	0.922	> 0.90	Good fit
	AGFI	0.908	> 0.90	Good fit
Incremental Fit	CFI	0.927	> 0.90	Good fit
	TLI	0.924	> 0.90	Good fit
	NFI	0.937	> 0.90	Good fit
Parsimonious Fit	PGFI	0.763	> 0.50	Good fit

Table 5.36 CB SEM Direct relationships

Hypothesis	Path	Beta coefficient	T Values	P values	Sample mean (M)	Confidence Interval CI		Significant
						Lower Limit	Upper limit	
H1(a)	SQC -> CSR	0.060	1.801	0.036	0.059	0.009	0.117	Yes
H1(b)	SMI -> CSR	0.151	2.625	0.004	0.149	0.060	0.246	Yes
H1(c)	CFU -> CSR	-0.104	3.279	0.001	-0.106	-0.156	-0.053	Yes
H1(d)	OCC -> CSR	0.146	1.826	0.034	0.146	0.009	0.272	Yes
H2(a)	SQC -> TRC	0.237	4.818	0.000	0.236	0.173	0.332	Yes
H2(b)	SMI -> TRC	0.408	7.150	0.000	0.404	0.321	0.504	Yes
H2(c)	CFU -> TRC	0.073	1.455	0.073	0.077	-0.005	0.153	No
H2(d)	OCC -> TRC	0.207	2.616	0.005	0.217	0.083	0.336	Yes
H3	TRC -> CSR	0.268	4.167	0.000	0.273	0.162	0.376	Yes

Table 5.37 CB SEM Mediation

Hypothesis	Relationship	Beta coefficient	T Values	P values	Sample mean (M)	Confidence Interval		Significant	Mediation
						Lower Limit	Upper Limit		
H4a	SQC -> TRC->CSR	0.062	3.449	0.000	0.062	0.036	0.095	Yes	Complementary Partial mediation
H4b	SMI -> TRC->CSR	0.097	3.195	0.001	0.099	0.055	0.159	Yes	Complementary Partial mediation
H4c	CFU -> TRC->CSR	0.015	1.330	0.092	0.016	-0.001	0.034	No	No Mediation
H4d	OCC -> TRC ->CSR	0.036	2.283	0.011	0.037	0.014	0.063	Yes	Complementary Partial mediation

Table 5.38 CB SEM Moderation

Hypothesis	Path	Beta coefficient	T Value	P values	Sample mean (M)	Significant
H5a	CBS x SQC -> CSR	0.0310	0.7470	0.2280	0.0260	No
H5b	CBS x SMI -> CSR	-0.2740	4.7210	0.0000	-0.2780	Yes
H5c	CBS x CFU -> CSR	-0.0280	0.2730	0.3930	-0.0030	No
H5d	CBS x OCC -> CSR	0.3070	5.6350	0.0000	0.3140	Yes

5.10. Post-hoc Procedures

5.10.1. Exploratory Moderated Mediation

An exploratory moderated mediation analysis was conducted as a post hoc procedure to deepen insights into how complaints management practices influence customer satisfaction. This decision was driven by two key findings: Firstly, Customer Behavior Sensitivity (CBS) significantly moderated the effects of Social Media Influencer Utilization (SMI) and Transparent Organizational Culture (OCC) on satisfaction, and Secondly, Trust in the Company significantly mediated these relationships. Given these significant component paths, it was appropriate to explore whether the indirect effects via trust were conditional on levels of CBS a process known as conditional moderated mediation advocated by Hayes, (2018). Although not initially hypothesized, post hoc exploration is methodologically sound when justified by observed data patterns as argued by Becker et al., (2018). This approach helps uncover nuanced mechanisms and offers practical insights into when trust-building strategies are most effective under varying customer sensitivity levels.

The conditional moderated mediation analyses examining the interaction of Customer Behavior Sensitivity (CBS) with Social Media Influencers (SMI) and Organizational Culture (OCC), through Trust in the Company (TRC), on Customer Satisfaction with Complaint Resolution (CSR) revealed non-significant effects. Specifically, the moderated mediation effect for SMI was -0.012 ($t = 1.090$, $p = 0.276$), and for OCC was -0.016 ($t = 1.505$, $p = 0.133$). Both p -values exceed the 0.05 significance level, and their corresponding t -values fall below the critical threshold of 1.96, indicating insufficient evidence to support the presence of moderated mediation in these relationships. The detailed results are summarized in the table 5.39.

Table 5.39 Conditional Mediation Results

Path	Coefficient	SD	T statistics	P values
CBS x SMI -> TRC -> CSR	-0.012	0.011	1.090	0.276
CBS x OCC -> TRC -> CSR	-0.016	0.011	1.505	0.133

These results indicate that Customer Behavior Sensitivity (CBS) does not significantly influence how trust mediates the effects of Social Media Influencers (SMI) or Organizational Culture (OCC) on Customer Satisfaction with Complaint Resolution (CSR). This suggests that variations in customer sensitivity do not meaningfully alter the role of trust in these relationships

5.10.2. Importance Performance Map Analysis (IPMA)

To complement the primary findings and offer practical guidance for improvement, an Importance-Performance Map Analysis (IPMA) was conducted as a post hoc step. This analysis allows for the identification of constructs that are not only critical in influencing customer satisfaction with complaints resolution but also underperforming in practice. By mapping constructs based on their relative importance (total effects) and performance (rescaled latent variable scores), IPMA provides targeted insights into where strategic interventions would be most effective as argued by Ringle & Sarstedt, (2016)

The IPMA results highlight Social Media Influencer Utilization (SMI) as an area of concern. Although SMI demonstrates a moderate performance score of 69.796, it holds high importance, contributing 0.360 to customer satisfaction. This discrepancy suggests that SMI has untapped potential that, if harnessed more effectively, could significantly enhance customer satisfaction outcomes.

Specifically, an incremental improvement in SMI performance from 69.796 to 70.796 would theoretically lead to a 0.360-point increase in customer satisfaction scores (CSR), raising them from 73.611 to 74.971. This underscores the strategic value of improving SMI-related efforts, such as more credible influencer partnerships, clearer messaging, or better integration with complaint management strategies. See the IPMA figure 5.3.

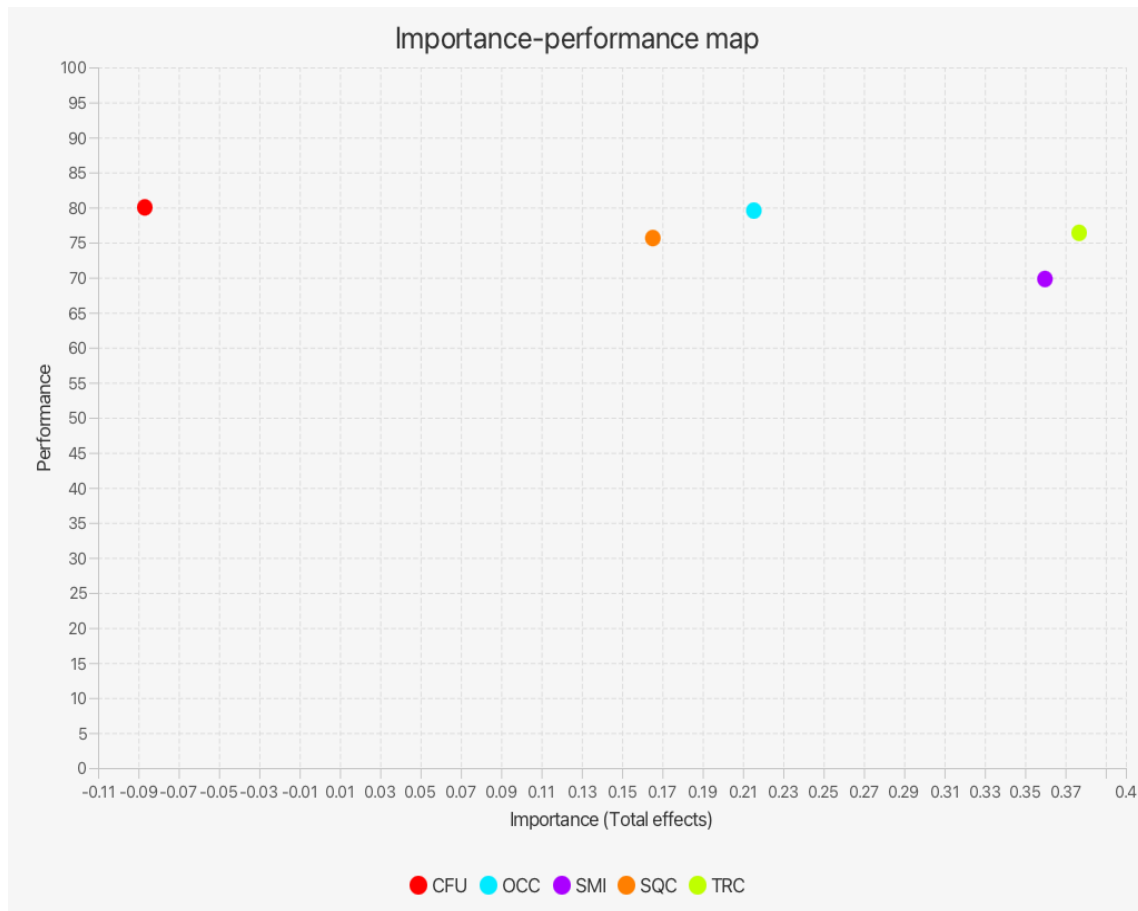


Figure 5.3 Importance Performance Map

5.10.3. Posthoc Interview

To validate the unexpected quantitative finding that Customer Feedback Utilization (CFU) negatively influenced customer satisfaction, a post hoc qualitative follow-up was conducted. Thirty-four customers were purposively selected from the original survey respondents based on their prior experience with telecom feedback mechanisms, ensuring diversity across age, gender, service usage, and frequency of feedback submission. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in person or via phone/online platforms, lasting approximately 30–45 minutes each, and were audio-recorded with participants' consent for

accurate transcription. The data were analyzed using a thematic approach, allowing patterns and recurring insights to emerge iteratively.

The findings revealed that CFU practices, even when procedurally rigorous, often failed to produce positive satisfaction outcomes due to contextual and cultural misalignments. Customers commonly perceived feedback mechanisms in major telecom companies, such as Vodacom Tanzania and Airtel Tanzania, as impersonal and standardized, failing to account for local communication norms and relational preferences. This lack of cultural sensitivity made responses feel perfunctory rather than meaningful, reducing trust and engagement. Furthermore, participants expressed a sense of tokenism, observing that while feedback was frequently solicited, tangible actions or visible improvements based on their input were rare, which undermined confidence in the process. Communication misalignment further compounded these issues, as formalized feedback requests conflicted with culturally preferred conversational styles, causing some participants to feel pressured or misunderstood. Collectively, these factors generated negative emotional responses, including frustration, skepticism, and disengagement, which likely explain the observed negative relationship between CFU and customer satisfaction.

By connecting these qualitative insights with the quantitative findings and real practices observed in telecom companies, this post hoc follow-up validates the unexpected statistical results, demonstrating that the effectiveness of CFU is contingent not only on procedural rigor but also on cultural congruence, relational sensitivity, and visible action. The analysis highlights that even well-intentioned feedback strategies can backfire if they fail to integrate contextual and organizational realities, providing both empirical validation and practical insights for improving complaints management in the Tanzanian telecom sector.

5.11. Discussion and Implications

5.11.1. Complaints Management Practices Influence Customer Satisfaction

The findings from Hypothesis H1(a-d) reveal that customer satisfaction with complaint resolution (CSR) is shaped by multiple interconnected factors, reflecting the complexity of effective complaint management. Although Service Quality Control (SQC) has long been recognized as a critical driver of general customer satisfaction, its impact appears more limited during complaint handling, supporting previous studies that show customers prioritize how their complaints are managed over the original service quality [162–169]. In

contrast, a Transparent Organizational Culture (OCC) plays a more significant role by fostering trust, fairness, and openness, which directly enhance satisfaction with complaint resolution [170–172]. Additionally, the strategic use of Social Media Influencers (SMI) emerges as a powerful influence on customer perceptions, as their authentic endorsements can strengthen a company's credibility and responsiveness in digital spaces, reinforcing brand authenticity and positively shaping customer attitudes [112,141,171]. Interestingly, Customer Feedback Utilization (CFU) shows a negative effect on CSR, challenging traditional expectations; this may reflect customer skepticism when feedback mechanisms are seen as performative rather than impactful, highlighting the importance of not only collecting feedback but transparently integrating it into meaningful service improvements [170]. Furthermore, the negative influence of CFU could be attributed to the culturally sensitive indicators, which were specifically designed to reflect the local Tanzanian context, where feedback is expected to be acknowledged and acted upon in ways that resonate with communal norms, respect for hierarchy, and relational expectations. In such a context, if feedback mechanisms are perceived as procedural formalities rather than culturally responsive actions, customers may interpret them as tokenistic or insincere, thereby reducing their satisfaction with complaint resolution. Altogether, these findings emphasize that achieving customer satisfaction in complaint management depends not only on what companies do but how genuinely and transparently they engage customers, underscoring the need for a holistic, customer-focused approach that balances service quality, organizational transparency, credible advocacy, and authentic responsiveness.

5.11.2. Complaints Management Practices Influence Trust in Company

The results from Hypothesis H2(a-d) reveal that not all complaints management practices contribute equally to building trust in the company, underscoring the complexity of trust formation in complaint contexts. Service quality significantly enhances trust, confirming that reliable, consistent service remains a cornerstone for customer confidence, as trust is fundamentally linked to customers' perceptions of a company's ability to meet their expectations [184,130]. Meanwhile, the pronounced impact of social media influencer utilization reflects the evolving dynamics of trust-building, where third-party endorsers serve as authentic voices that can bridge the skepticism often associated with corporate communications [36,127,35,133]. This suggests that companies seeking to strengthen trust

should strategically leverage influencers as part of their complaint resolution communications. In contrast, the insignificant effect of customer feedback utilization points to a critical shortfall, demonstrating that merely gathering feedback does not automatically translate into trust unless customers perceive their input leads to meaningful change. This highlights a disconnect between feedback collection and transparent, action-oriented communication, a gap that can undermine trust if left unaddressed. Hence, our findings contribute to literature that questions the assumption that feedback mechanisms inherently foster trust [67,183]. Similarly, consistent with prior studies highlighting transparency as a trust-enhancing mechanism, our findings confirm that organizational transparency reduces information asymmetry and strengthens relational trust [50]. Taken together, these findings suggest that building trust through complaint management requires more than procedural measures; it demands integrating consistent quality, credible advocacy, and genuine transparency. Firms must therefore move beyond transactional complaint handling toward cultivating an environment where customers feel heard, valued and assured of the company's integrity.

5.11.3. Trust in company Influence Customer Satisfaction

The findings of hypothesis H3 corroborate and extend the existing body of literature by highlighting the fundamental role of trust in influencing customer satisfaction within complaint management contexts [129,139]. Prior research has established trust as a critical antecedent of satisfaction and a key element in sustaining long-term relational exchanges between customers and firms [182,183]. Our study situates this relationship specifically within the complaint resolution process, a critical juncture where customer trust can be significantly tested and reinforced [114,139]. Trust acts as a cognitive and emotional mechanism that reduces perceived risk and uncertainty associated with service failures, enabling customers to interpret the company's handling of complaints as fair, transparent, and competent. Therefore, our findings significantly advance the literature by demonstrating how trust dynamically develops during complaint handling and is crucial for enhancing customer satisfaction. These findings are quite useful to the telecommunication sector which have high switching costs thus trust is important.

5.11.4. Trust as a Mediator of Complaints Management Practices and Customer Satisfaction

The findings of this study underscore trust as a pivotal mediator in the relationship between complaints management practices and customer satisfaction, consistent with relational theories that emphasize trust's essential role in service recovery processes [183]. Specifically, the partial mediation observed with social media influencers reveals that social media influencers role extends beyond mere promotion to actively building trust, which in turn enhances customer confidence in complaint handling, a contribution that enriches existing literature [134,139]. Similarly, the findings indicated that trust partially mediates the relationship between a transparent organizational culture and customer satisfaction. This aligns with existing literature, which suggests that a transparent organizational culture promotes trust by fostering accountability and openness, thereby reducing uncertainty and enhancing customers' perceptions of satisfaction throughout the resolution process [124]. Also, the mediation of service quality through trust further supports established views that reliability and commitment are foundational to customer satisfaction [130].

On the other hand, The failure of trust to mediate the link between customer feedback utilization and satisfaction (H4c) challenges the assumption that feedback mechanisms inherently build trust and satisfaction [138]. While past studies often view feedback as a trust-enhancing tool, this finding aligns with emerging research suggesting that feedback alone is insufficient. it must be paired with transparency and visible responsiveness to foster trust [136]. This result clarifies inconsistencies in the literature by showing that feedback without demonstrable action may fail to build, or even erode, trust.

Overall, these findings refine our theoretical understanding by positioning trust as a critical mechanism that determines the effectiveness of complaints management practices, highlighting the need for organizations, particularly those operating in complex, digital, and emerging market environments to embed trust-building deeply within their complaint resolution strategies to achieve sustainable customer satisfaction and loyalty.

5.11.5. Consumer Behavior Sensitivity as a Moderator of Complaints Management Practices and Customer Satisfaction

The consumer behavior moderation findings offer important theoretical refinements to the understanding of how customer complaints management practices interact with

individual psychological traits. Specifically, the significant negative moderation of CBS on the relationship between SMI and CSR contradicts mainstream assumptions that influencer involvement uniformly builds trust and satisfaction[67]. This result exposes a blind spot in the literature that treats customer audiences as homogenous, overlooking the potential for perceptive or skeptical customers to interpret influencer-based communication as manipulative or insincere—particularly in emotionally charged contexts like complaint resolution[36,126]. Thus, this study disrupts the overly optimistic view of influencer marketing in service recovery and supports calls for greater attention to consumer heterogeneity in marketing communications research.

Conversely, the positive moderation effect of CBS on the link between OCC and CSR reinforces and extends theoretical perspectives on trust-building in service recovery. It suggests that transparency is not merely a symbolic ideal but a practice whose value intensifies among behaviorally sensitive consumers who are more attuned to perceived fairness, accountability, and openness[124]. This CBS moderation finding clarifies inconsistent findings in previous literature where transparency showed mixed effects implying such outcomes may be contingent on customers behavioral sensitivities.

The lack of moderation CBS on the links between SQC and CFU with satisfaction challenges the common assumption that customer sensitivity uniformly enhances the impact of all complaint management practices. Hence, this finding aligns with literature suggesting that CFU often functions behind the scenes, limiting customers' awareness and thus reducing the role of sensitivity in shaping satisfaction [127]. Meanwhile, SQC involves structured efforts to improve service delivery in consistent and reliable ways, leading to similar satisfaction levels across different customers. Since these improvements are routine and often operate in the background, customers may not consciously notice them, which limits emotional or cognitive engagement. As a result, individual differences in sensitivity have little impact on how such practices affect satisfaction. This supports literature suggesting that while quality control is essential for maintaining standards, it does not create distinct experiences across customer types[130]. Therefore, the moderating effect of consumer behavior sensitivity (CBS) is more likely to emerge in response to organizational actions that are visible, personalized, and emotionally resonant. The moderation is quite important to explain sensitivities brought by gender, location and spending pattern.

5.11.6. Implications for Theory and Practice in Contemporary Complaint Management

This study strengthens and expands the theoretical discourse on service recovery by offering a contemporary, multidimensional understanding of how complaints management practices shape customer satisfaction in the digital era. Unlike traditional models that focus narrowly on service quality or procedural fairness, this research incorporates emerging constructs—most notably the use of social media influencers—to capture the modern communication landscape where customer perceptions are increasingly shaped by online advocacy and public visibility. By introducing trust in the company (TRC) as a mediating mechanism, the study explains why certain complaint-handling practices translate into satisfaction, showing that customers respond positively when interventions enhance their sense of reliability, transparency, and organizational integrity. Further, the inclusion of customer behavior sensitivity (CBS) as a moderating variable reveals for whom and under what conditions these practices are effective, highlighting that customers with heightened sensitivity react differently to influencer endorsements or transparency initiatives. Anchored in the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) framework, the study moves beyond the traditional linear “input–output” thinking and advances a more holistic perspective that integrates psychological, emotional, and cognitive processes. This enriched view challenges earlier assumptions in service recovery literature and offers a more realistic explanation of how customers interpret, internalize, and respond to complaint management efforts across multichannel environments.

The findings of this study provide a set of practical, priority-based implications that equip telecom operators with a clear and sequenced roadmap for enhancing customer satisfaction with complaint resolution. By integrating the structural model with the Importance–Performance Map Analysis (IPMA), the study identifies which complaint management levers have the greatest influence, which ones underperform in practice, and where managerial effort should be concentrated for maximum impact.

The analysis reveals that Social Media Influencer Utilization (SMI), despite its substantial importance to customer satisfaction demonstrates only moderate performance as indicated by the IPMA in section 5.10.2, suggesting a substantial performance gap. Because even a one-point improvement in SMI performance is projected to raise customer satisfaction scores significantly. Therefore, telecom operators should treat SMI as the

highest-priority strategic lever. Furthermore, the moderation findings reveal that highly sensitive customers react negatively when influencers are used poorly during complaint handling, but using influencers effectively can reduce these negative reactions. Therefore, Telecom companies should focus on making influencer engagement appropriate, effective, credible, authentic, and helpful in resolving complaints. Large telecom operators with large budgets can engage micro-influencers with technical knowledge and use them to provide clear explanations during outages, while smaller operators can run low-cost community-based partnerships with niche content creators whose following aligns closely with their geographic market. On social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook, influencers should be integrated into real-time resolution updates, while in traditional channels influencers can be used to reinforce preventive education and service tips rather than promotional messaging.

Transparent Organizational Culture (OCC) emerges as the second-priority area because it significantly influences both trust and satisfaction, with trust partially mediating this relationship. The moderation results show that customers with high sensitivity benefit especially from transparent communication. Therefore, this means telecom companies should focus on implementing clear communication protocols that ensure customers consistently receive honest updates about complaint status, causes of service disruptions, and expected timelines for resolution. Front-line staff should be trained to avoid generic or scripted responses and instead provide accurate and situation-specific explanations. Managers should also introduce transparency dashboards on digital channels—such as displaying real-time service issues, expected resolution timeframes, and progress indicators—so that customers do not feel misled or left uninformed. By integrating transparency into both internal operations and customer-facing touchpoints, operators can build stronger trust, reduce frustration among highly sensitive customers, and ultimately improve satisfaction with complaint resolution outcomes. For social media complaints, transparency means providing time-stamped updates and publishing standard resolution timelines, while in traditional channels it involves ensuring that front-line staff are trained to disclose the real cause and expected duration of service issues rather than offering generic apologies.

Service Quality Control (SQC) during complaints management constitutes the third priority. Although its direct impact on satisfaction is smaller, it strongly predicts trust, and trust in turn enhances satisfaction, underscoring the value of consistent, reliable complaint handling processes. Therefore, large telecom operators with huge budgets should automate triage using machine-learning models that quickly classify complaints by severity and assign them to dedicated resolution teams, while small telecom operators can focus on reducing ticket aging by tightening internal escalation rules. On social media, SQC improvements involve integrating CRM systems with social platforms to avoid repeated information requests, whereas in traditional channels it includes enforcing response-time service level agreements (SLAs) and routine audits of complaint logs.

The results caution managers against assuming that Customer Feedback Utilization (CFU) inherently improves satisfaction. The negative direct effect on CSR, combined with the absence of either a trust link or mediated influence, indicates that gathering feedback without visible action can irritate customers. Moreover, literature highlights that when feedback processes ignore cultural norms, communication styles, and customer expectations, they can easily backfire. These insights underscore the need for organizations to approach CFU not merely as a procedural task but as a culturally informed, action-oriented practice that visibly closes the feedback loop. Therefore, Large telecom operators with greater resources should therefore redesign their feedback systems to emphasize transparent, culturally sensitive improvement cycles that clearly demonstrate how diverse customer inputs lead to meaningful change. Smaller operators, even with limited capacity, can strengthen trust by offering simple, culturally attuned “you asked—we acted” updates that acknowledge local communication norms and expectations. On social media, CFU should highlight tangible changes informed by customer feedback, presented in a tone and style that resonate with the cultural context of users. Similarly, on traditional channels, operators should avoid over-surveying and instead adopt feedback mechanisms that respect customers’ preferred modes of interaction and focus on improvements that are visible and relevant within their cultural environment. This approach ensures that feedback processes not only drive service enhancements but also align with the social and cultural realities of the customers they aim to serve.

Overall, the priority matrix table 5.40 suggests a clear sequence of action: first, strengthen influencer-based communication strategies with an emphasis on credibility and complaint-specific utility; second, embed transparency mechanisms that stabilize expectations and support trust formation; and third, reinforce internal service quality controls that prevent escalation and ensure consistent complaint handling. When tailored to organizational size and communication channel, these evidence-based interventions move beyond generic prescriptions and offer operators a concrete, implementable pathway for improving customer satisfaction with complaint resolution.

Table 5.40 Priority Matrix

		PERFORMANCE	
		HIGH	LOW/MODERATE
IMPORTANCE	HIGH	PRIORITY Social Media Influencer Utilization (SMI)	MAINTAIN Transparent Organizational Culture (OCC)
	LOW	LOW PRIORITY Customer Feedback Utilization (CFU)	MONITOR Service Quality Control (SQC)

Effective allocation of resources is critical for telecom managers aiming to enhance customer satisfaction with complaint resolution. To guide strategic decision-making, the approximate cost, expected benefit, and potential return on investment (ROI) of each complaint management lever can be considered. Social Media Influencer Utilization (SMI), for example, requires a medium-level investment but offers high returns by strengthening brand trust, increasing customer engagement, and amplifying the visibility of complaint resolution efforts. By leveraging credible and well-aligned influencers, companies can foster stronger emotional connections with customers, which translates directly into higher satisfaction and loyalty in the service recovery activities.

Transparent Organizational Culture (OCC) stands out as a particularly high-impact lever. Implementing practices that promote transparency—such as clear communication on complaint status, open disclosure of service limitations, and proactive resolution updates—

requires low to medium investment, yet it delivers very high benefits. Customers perceive transparency as a signal of reliability and integrity, which enhances trust, reduces frustration, and decreases the likelihood of repeated complaints. This makes OCC not only a driver of immediate satisfaction but also a long-term stabilizer of customer relationships.

Service Quality Control (SQC) is essential for sustaining satisfaction levels but typically involves medium to high costs, as it may require system upgrades, staff training, or quality monitoring mechanisms. Its benefits are moderate in terms of incremental improvement since SQC primarily maintains existing service standards rather than producing dramatic leaps in satisfaction. Nevertheless, neglecting SQC could erode customer trust over time, making continued investment necessary.

Customer Feedback Utilization (CFU) generally incurs low costs and offers low to moderate benefits. While incremental in nature, systematically collecting, analyzing, and acting on customer feedback can improve internal processes, identify hidden pain points, and gradually enhance service delivery. Piloting CFU initiatives allows managers to gain insights with minimal financial risk, while laying the groundwork for broader process improvements over time.

In practice, managers should prioritize investment in levers with the highest ROI such as SMI and OCC so as to achieve immediate and visible impacts on customer satisfaction and trust. At the same time, maintaining SQC ensures consistent service quality, while carefully piloting CFU initiatives enables gradual process optimization without overextending resources. By strategically balancing high-impact initiatives with ongoing operational stability, telecom operators can maximize returns, strengthen customer relationships, and create a sustainable framework for complaint resolution excellence. See Table 5.41

Table 5.41 Cost benefit analysis

Lever	Cost	Expected Benefit	ROI
SMI	Medium	High: increases brand trust, customer engagement	High
OCC	Low-Medium	High: improves trust and satisfaction, reduces complaints	Very High
SQC	Medium-High	Moderate: sustains satisfaction levels	Moderate
CFU	Low	Low-Moderate: improves processes gradually	Moderate

5.11.7. Conclusions

This study set out to examine how complaints management practices impact customer satisfaction, with a focus on the mediating role of trust in the company and the moderating role of customer behavior sensitivity. The findings indicate that different management practices exert varying degrees of influence on satisfaction. While trust in the company mediates several of these relationships, it does not mediate the impact of customer feedback utilization (CFU). Similarly, customer behavior sensitivity was found to moderate some relationships but not others. These results highlight the intricate nature of complaint management, which appears to be shaped significantly by the interplay between customer trust and behavioral sensitivities. The evidence suggests that customers may interpret and respond to complaint resolution efforts through the lens of their trust in the company and their individual sensitivity underscoring the need to further explore how satisfaction with complaint resolution may function as an anchoring bias in customer perceptions.

Chapter 6 Discussion of Findings

6.1. Overview

This discussion synthesizes the findings from the two interconnected studies to offer a holistic understanding of how complaints management practices influence customer outcomes within the telecom sector. Collectively, the studies progress from exploratory to explanatory phases, each building on the insights of the previous. Study One provides a qualitative foundation by identifying the complaints management practices deemed most impactful by customers, service representatives, and managers. These findings inform the conceptual model tested in Study Two, which quantitatively examines how specific practices such as service quality, transparency, influencer utilization, and feedback responsiveness affect customer satisfaction, while accounting for customer behavior sensitivity and trust in company, as a moderator and mediator respectively. Through this layered design, the studies work in concert to uncover not only what matters in complaints management, but how and why these practices influence both immediate and future customer perceptions and decision-making.

6.2. Synthesis of Objectives, Findings, and Theoretical Insights

This part of the discussion connects the six research objectives to the key findings across the studies. It highlights how the research evolved from identifying impactful complaints management practices to testing their effects on satisfaction and trust. The integration of results reveals how emotional and relational factors jointly shape customer outcomes, reinforcing both the coherence and contribution of the study.

Objective 1: To explore the complaints management practices that influence customer satisfaction. Study One adopted a qualitative approach to uncover complaints management practices perceived as most effective by customers, frontline staff, and managers. The findings identified timeliness, openness, emotional engagement, organizational transparency, and responsiveness as key drivers of satisfaction. These insights confirmed that satisfaction is rooted not only in technical resolutions but also in relational and emotional dimensions. This exploratory phase was instrumental in shaping the multidimensional constructs tested quantitatively in later studies.

Objective 2: To study the influence of complaints management practices on customer satisfaction. Study Two employed structural equation modeling to assess how specific complaints management practices affect satisfaction. The results showed that service quality control, transparent organizational culture, and social media influencer utilization and customer feedback utilization significantly influenced customer satisfaction.

Objective 3: To study the influence of complaints management practices on customer trust in company. This objective was also addressed in Study Two, where findings demonstrated that the same complaints management practices significantly influenced customer trust. Notably, transparency and influencer utilization emerged as strong antecedents of trust, highlighting that both internal openness and external validation can shape how customers perceive organizational credibility and integrity. These results contribute to the relational dimension of CRM by reinforcing the importance of perceived fairness, authenticity, and visibility in building trust.

Objective 4: To study the influence of 'trust in company' on customer satisfaction. The findings confirmed that 'trust in the company' plays a mediating role and also acts as a direct predictor of satisfaction. This suggests that customers' willingness to express satisfaction is deeply contingent upon their perception of the firm's integrity and consistency. Even in situations where resolution is incomplete, trust can cushion dissatisfaction and preserve the customer relationship. This aligns with CRM literature and extends it by contextualizing trust within emotionally charged complaint episodes.

Objective 5: To investigate the mediating role of 'trust in the company' between customer complaints management practices and customer satisfaction. Trust was empirically validated as a partial mediator between majority of the complaints management practices and satisfaction. This confirms that trust is not merely an outcome of good complaint handling but an active relational mechanism through which procedural and emotional elements translate into satisfaction. The model thus reconceptualizes trust as both a relational bridge and a cognitive filter, shaping how customers evaluate complaint responses.

Objective 6: To examine the moderating effect of 'customer behavior sensitivity' on the relationship between customer complaints management practices and customer satisfaction.

Study Two further investigated how customer behavior sensitivity, particularly emotional sensitivity moderates the link between practices and satisfaction. Findings revealed that while transparency consistently improved satisfaction, influencer marketing had divergent effects: emotionally sensitive customers responded negatively to it, possibly perceiving it as manipulative. These insights underline the importance of tailoring complaints strategies to psychological customer profiles, and challenge universal or one-size-fits-all approaches.

6.3. Complaints Management Practices and Customer Satisfaction

This research integrates findings from two interconnected studies to advance a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of complaints management. By moving beyond the limitations of traditional linear service recovery models, it reveals the complex emotional, relational, and cognitive mechanisms that fundamentally influence customer outcomes which are underresearched in extant literature [64]. This multidimensional perspective helps reconcile the inconsistencies and contradictions frequently reported in prior research, offering a robust theoretical framework that enriches both academic discourse and practical strategies for effective complaints handling. Previous literature presents mixed findings on the influence of complaints management practices on customer satisfaction, with some studies reporting positive effects [96], while others suggest negligible or even negative impacts [90,95]. These inconsistencies may stem from differing conceptualizations of satisfaction, variations in sample characteristics, or the failure to account for mediating and moderating variables such as trust and customer sensitivity [98]. The studies conducted in this research generate new knowledge on how complaints management practices function not only to resolve immediate issues but also to foster trust and regulate emotional experiences,

At the core of this integrated insight is the recognition that complaints management is not merely a technical or procedural process; it is a psychologically and socially embedded experience that unfolds across multiple levels of customer perception. Yet, this layered psychological and social complexity remains underexplored in much of the existing literature [108,112], which tends to emphasize procedural efficiency [208]. Study 1 revealed the experiential dimensions of complaints handling by identifying key practices, such as timeliness, openness, emotional engagement, and communication quality that

customers, service representatives, and managers perceive as essential to satisfaction, aligning with findings in existing literature [124]. When these practices were formalized and empirically tested in Study 2, it became clear that not all perceived practices translate into satisfaction equally.

Collectively, these findings generate new theoretical insight by integrating and extending SOR, CRM and consumer behavior theory in ways not previously articulated in the literature. While existing studies have examined these frameworks independently, this research shows how they interact dynamically within the complaints management context. It advances SOR by revealing how specific practices serve as stimuli that activate distinct emotional and cognitive responses (satisfaction), which in turn shape customer behavior. It builds on CRM by repositioning trust as an active mediating mechanism, rather than a static outcome, that links complaint practices to long-term satisfaction. In doing so, this research contributes a novel, integrative framework that explains the psychological and relational mechanisms behind effective complaint handling, offering a more complete and actionable insights for both scholars and practitioners.

6.4. Customer Trust and Customer Behavior Sensitivity

The emergent theme of trust as a bridge between complaints management practices and customer satisfaction proved central in Study 2, highlighting that complaint handling is not merely transactional but fundamentally relational. Trust was shown to mediate the influence of most complaint practices on satisfaction, confirming that relational factors are pivotal in shaping customer evaluations of service recovery. This finding resonates with and extends prior research emphasizing trust as a key relational mechanism in service recovery and customer relationship management (CRM), reinforcing its role in converting procedural efficiency and perceived fairness into durable customer satisfaction [67,130]. By demonstrating that trust operates as a conduit linking organizational actions to customer perceptions, the study provides empirical support for the view that satisfaction is not only a direct consequence of complaint handling quality but is also socially and psychologically constructed through relational cues.

Furthermore, the integration of customer behavior sensitivity as a moderating factor adds a nuanced layer to understanding complaint management effectiveness. Study 2

demonstrated that emotionally sensitive customers respond differently to complaint strategies: they show a stronger positive reaction to transparency but a more negative reaction to influencer marketing. This indicates that the efficacy of complaint resolution strategies is contingent not only on the nature of the organizational response but also on the psychological profile of the customer. Such findings challenge the conventional one-size-fits-all approach to complaint resolution and underscore the importance of segmenting customers based on behavioral and emotional traits to optimize outcomes [145].

This interactional perspective also expands the conceptualization of trust and satisfaction, illustrating that these outcomes are co-constructed through the interplay of service practices and customer characteristics. Rather than viewing trust and satisfaction solely as outputs of service quality, the findings suggest that they are emergent properties arising from the alignment—or misalignment—between organizational responses and individual customer sensitivities. Practically, this insight calls for adaptive complaint management strategies that consider both procedural rigor and the emotional and cognitive predispositions of the customer. Strategically, organizations that calibrate their complaint handling approaches to account for customer sensitivity are likely to not only resolve issues more effectively but also cultivate longer-term relational bonds, enhancing loyalty, advocacy, and brand resilience.

In sum, the study bridges gaps in the literature by demonstrating that trust is both a mediator and a relational lens through which complaint management practices translate into customer satisfaction, while customer behavior sensitivity provides a crucial boundary condition that shapes these relational outcomes. These findings advance a more psychologically and socially embedded understanding of service recovery, highlighting the interdependence of organizational practices and customer heterogeneity in shaping satisfaction and loyalty trajectories.

6.5. Complaints Management Practices and the Emerging Market Context

The integrated findings of this study illuminate the multifaceted nature of complaints management in emerging market contexts, highlighting how structural, technological, and socio-cultural constraints interact with organizational practices to shape customer satisfaction and trust. Complaints management in these contexts is not merely procedural,

it is a complex, psychologically and socially embedded process that requires alignment between organizational capability and the realities of customer access and behavior. Both qualitative insights (Study 1) and quantitative evidence (Study 2) converge to show that the effectiveness of complaint handling practices is contingent upon context-sensitive strategies that recognize infrastructural limitations, digital divides, and culturally shaped customer expectations.

6.5.1. Service Quality in Complaints Management

Service Quality Control (SQC) emerged in this study as a critical complaints management practice, significantly influencing trust in the company while exhibiting a modest direct effect on customer satisfaction with complaint resolution. The qualitative findings revealed that customers perceive timely, accurate, and technically competent service delivery during complaints as a signal of organizational reliability and competence, aligning with some studies [183], who observed that service quality control strongly shapes satisfaction but can be undermined by ineffective complaint systems. These perceptions help explain why SQC strengthens trust: when customers experience consistent, competent handling of complaints, they interpret the organization as credible and capable, which reinforces relational confidence. One study noted that responsive complaint handling enhances trust [79], and another study emphasized that satisfaction from complaint resolution influences long-term loyalty[67]. Quantitative results from this study support this interpretation, showing that while SQC significantly impacts trust, its direct effect on satisfaction is weaker, suggesting that trust may act as an intermediary through which operational practices translate into positive customer experiences.

The findings also highlight the contextual constraints of emerging markets in shaping SQC effectiveness. Structural factors such as limited internet penetration, uneven access to high-speed networks, reliance on basic mobile services, and gender disparities in mobile ownership constrain who can engage with digital complaint channels, moderating SQC's impact on satisfaction as advocated literature [48]. Similarly, qualitative insights showed that some customers prefer agent-assisted or in-person interactions, reflecting the moderating role of customer behaviour sensitivity (CBS) in complaint evaluation as shown by some studied [149,189]. This explains why, despite strong trust-building effects, SQC

alone does not always generate high satisfaction: operational competence must be accessible and culturally aligned to influence perceptions of resolution quality fully.

The study further demonstrates that SQC's effectiveness is amplified when integrated with complementary organizational mechanisms. Customers reported that transparent organizational processes further enhanced their confidence in complaint handling which is in line with some study findings[192], while culturally sensitive communication reinforced the perception of fairness as advocated by another study [193]. In addition, strategic engagement with social media influencers shaped customer expectations and made complaint resolution more salient similar to what literature some literature portray[36,38]. These interactions indicate that SQC is most effective as part of a holistic approach, where technical competence, transparency, and engagement mechanisms collectively shape trust and satisfaction.

Overall, these results extend our understanding of complaint management in emerging markets. They show that SQC, while essential for establishing trust, is not sufficient on its own to maximize customer satisfaction. Instead, satisfaction outcomes emerge from the interplay between operational competence, structural accessibility, cultural alignment, and relational mechanisms. Some studies observed that transparent, timely public complaint responses enhance trust and corporate reputation[36], while others highlighted the value of prompt, personalized complaint responses in boosting satisfaction[38,178,197]. Therefore, this study demonstrates that firms operating in resource-constrained environments must adopt integrated SQC strategies combining technical quality, transparency, culturally responsive communication, and accessible complaint channels to enhance both trust and satisfaction. In doing so, SQC functions as both a relational and operational capability critical for managing complaints effectively in emerging-market contexts.

6.5.2. Social Media Influencer Utilization in Complaints Management

Social Media Influencer Utilization (SMI) emerged as a highly influential mechanism in shaping both trust in the company and customer satisfaction with complaint resolution with partial mediation through trust. These results indicate that influencers are not merely marketing channels but act as intermediaries that translate organizational practices into perceived credibility and reliability. The study's qualitative data revealed that customers

often interpret influencer endorsements as implicit validation of service quality, responsiveness, and corporate integrity. This aligns with researchers who observed that influencers shape consumer expectations, reinforce confidence in service delivery, and guide decision-making in contexts where direct organizational visibility is limited [32,36]. In this sense, SMI operates as a relational amplifier: it enhances the perceived legitimacy of complaint handling practices, thereby strengthening trust, which in turn partially drives satisfaction.

Importantly, the study highlights that the effectiveness of SMI in emerging markets is uneven and contingent on access to digital technologies. Structural barriers such as disparities in internet connectivity, device ownership, and gendered access to mobile technologies create a digital divide that limits the reach of influencer-driven interventions[150]. While digitally connected customers benefit from enhanced trust and more positive perceptions of complaint resolution, some portions of the customer base remain outside this influence. This illustrates a critical divergence from developed markets, where near-universal connectivity allows influencer strategies to reach almost all customer segments, producing more uniform effects on trust and satisfaction. These findings underscore that the power of SMI is highly context-dependent: it is most effective when customers can observe, engage with, and internalize influencer communications, which in emerging markets is closely tied to infrastructure, socio-economic status, and digital literacy [162]

Beyond structural constraints, the study also illuminates the interplay between SMI and customer behaviour sensitivity (CBS). Customers who are more discerning or culturally attuned interpret influencer messages in nuanced ways, either reinforcing or attenuating their trust and satisfaction responses aligning with literature[3]. This suggests that influencer impact is not purely linear; it interacts with local norms, expectations, and prior experiences with the organization. Moreover, influencer engagement can complement but not replace other complaint management practices, such as Service Quality Control (SQC) and transparent organizational processes, by creating social proof that amplifies the perceived effectiveness of these practices [145]. In practice, this means that firms in emerging markets must adopt a multi-layered strategy: leveraging influencers to signal

credibility and reliability while simultaneously ensuring that complaint handling processes are accessible, visible, and culturally [68].

In synthesis, the study demonstrates that SMI is a potent but context-sensitive tool for enhancing trust and satisfaction. Its value lies in its ability to act as a social and relational conduit, translating organizational practices into perceived competence and legitimacy. However, its uneven effectiveness due to digital divides and behavioural heterogeneity highlights the need for firms to combine influencer engagement with inclusive, multi-channel complaint management strategies. By doing so, organizations can maximize the reach and impact of SMI, ensuring that both digitally connected and traditionally served customers perceive fairness, responsiveness, and trustworthiness in complaint handling. This positions SMI not simply as a marketing tactic but as an integral component of a strategically orchestrated complaint management ecosystem in emerging-market contexts

6.5.3. Customer Feedback Utilization in Complaints Management

Customer Feedback Utilization (CFU) in this study displayed a negative direct effect on customer satisfaction with complaint resolution and showed no significant mediation through trust. This counterintuitive outcome suggests that feedback mechanisms, as currently implemented, may be functioning less as tools for engagement and more as sources of disappointment. Qualitative insights from the study revealed that customers perceive feedback channels as tokenistic when their input does not lead to visible, timely, or meaningful action. This perception has been argued for by extant literature [105,106]. Therefore, instead of customer feedback signaling responsiveness, the absence of follow-up reinforces skepticism about the organization's willingness or capacity to address concerns, thereby reducing satisfaction. A key reason for this negative relationship lies in the expectation–disconfirmation gap. When customers invest time providing feedback, they anticipate acknowledgment, updates, or corrective action. When none of these materialize, the resulting unmet expectations generate frustration more intense than if no feedback mechanism existed at all [133]. In emerging-market contexts such as Tanzania, this disconfirmation is magnified by structural limitations that inherently weaken digital feedback systems. Furthermore, the study integrated culturally sensitive indicators that revealed a deeper layer of dissatisfaction: respondents felt that feedback processes lacked

cultural appropriateness, personalization, and respect. In environments where interpersonal communication and relational cues carry significant weight, digital feedback channels—often generic and automated—are interpreted as detached or dismissive. This cultural mismatch itself becomes a driver of negative sentiment.

A clearer contrast between developed and developing contexts further helps explain why feedback utilization produces negative effects in this study. In many developing countries, low network bandwidth, unreliable connectivity, and reliance on basic mobile devices hinder customers' ability to submit feedback consistently, creating the impression that their input is neither captured nor valued. Cultural expectations also lean more toward agent-assisted or face-to-face communication, making digital platforms feel impersonal and less legitimate [166]. When organizations push customers toward these channels without providing relational assurance or timely responses, dissatisfaction intensifies especially in environments where historical experiences with slow or unresponsive institutions heighten sensitivity to delay or neglect. By comparison, developed countries typically benefit from stable digital infrastructure, widespread access to advanced devices, and established omnichannel systems with rapid response protocols and visible action loops. These features reduce ambiguity, enhance transparency, and build confidence in digital feedback processes, resulting in a stronger and more positive link between feedback utilization and customer satisfaction.

The findings of this study therefore underscore a crucial insight: CFU becomes detrimental when it collects information without demonstrating actionable follow-up. Without visible change, proactive communication, or culturally aligned engagement practices, feedback systems risk deepening dissatisfaction instead of building trust. Organizations operating in resource-constrained environments must respond by designing feedback processes that are not only technologically accessible but also relationally and culturally meaningful. Only then can CFU move from being a source of frustration to a driver of improved satisfaction

6.5.4. Transparent Organization Culture in Complaints Management

Transparent Organizational Culture (OCC) emerged as a consistent predictor of both customer satisfaction with complaint resolution and trust in the company, with trust

providing a complementary partial mediation. These results underscore that transparency is not simply an organizational ideal but a tangible driver of customer perceptions in complaint contexts. The qualitative findings showed that customers rely heavily on transparency cues such as visible escalation procedures, clear and realistic resolution timelines, and open, proactive communication to gauge whether the company is acting fairly and competently. This aligns with observations by researchers who noted that transparent processes enhance perceptions of fairness and reassure customers that their concerns are being handled with integrity[96]. In this sense, transparency operates both cognitively, by clarifying what the company is doing, and emotionally, by reducing uncertainty and frustration during the resolution process.

The stronger impact of transparent organization culture in this study can also be understood through its compensatory role in emerging-market environments where infrastructural limitations frequently undermine the visibility and predictability of complaint procedures [18]. Unlike developed markets where automated tracking systems, real-time service dashboards, and omnichannel communication provide transparency by default customers in contexts such as Tanzania often navigate opaque, fragmented systems with limited digital support. Some rely on agent-assisted channels, in-person visits, or basic mobile interactions, where information asymmetry is common and procedural clarity is often lacking. In such settings, even small acts of transparency such as an agent explaining the escalation process, providing reference numbers, or giving honest timelines carry disproportionate weight in shaping trust and satisfaction. These actions counter systemic opacity and help customers interpret delays or service failures as operational constraints rather than deliberate neglect or incompetence.

Furthermore, the complementary mediation through trust highlights that transparency not only enhances satisfaction directly but also strengthens relational confidence, which in turn reinforces positive evaluations of complaint handling. This relational mechanism is crucial in settings where customers may approach complaint processes with skepticism shaped by past experiences of inconsistent service delivery or limited recourse. The study's qualitative evidence suggests that transparency reduces ambiguity, prevents misinterpretation of procedural delays, and fosters a sense of procedural justice elements that are particularly important for customers who rely on non-digital channels where

updates are not automatically provided. Thus, Transparent organization culture (OCC) becomes a universal trust-building mechanism that bridges socio-technical divides: it benefits both digitally connected customers and those dependent on low-tech interactions.

Overall, the findings position Transparent Organizational Culture as a pivotal anchor of complaint management effectiveness in emerging markets. Its influence extends beyond operational clarity, functioning as a social signal of accountability, fairness, and institutional reliability. By embedding transparency into every stage of the complaint journey—whether digital or in-person—firms can mitigate the structural limitations of their operating environment and enhance customer trust and satisfaction even in the absence of advanced technological infrastructure. This makes OCC not only a predictor of outcomes in this model but a strategic foundation for inclusive and equitable complaint management systems in resource-constrained markets.

6.6. Theoretical Implications

This study offers several significant theoretical contributions by extending and integrating frameworks in customer relationship management (CRM), service recovery, and consumer psychology. First, it enriches the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) model by empirically demonstrating how specific complaints management practices—namely, service quality control, social media influencer engagement, feedback utilization, and organizational transparency—serve as stimuli that shape customers' internal psychological states such as trust and satisfaction. By positioning trust not merely as an outcome but also as a mediator between service interventions and satisfaction, the study moves beyond traditional linear models, offering a more dynamic understanding of customer cognition and affective processing in response to service encounters. This approach underscores that customer satisfaction is not a static endpoint but part of an interconnected system of perceptions and reactions, providing a richer framework for modeling service recovery processes.

Second, the study introduces customer behavior sensitivity as a novel moderating variable, highlighting the importance of individual differences in shaping reactions to complaints-handling strategies. This addition advances the literature on customer-centric models by recognizing that the effectiveness of service recovery and feedback mechanisms

is contingent on customers' sensitivity to service quality, responsiveness, and organizational transparency. By accounting for behavioral sensitivity, the study provides a theoretical basis for understanding why similar complaint management strategies yield divergent outcomes across customer segments, thus supporting more tailored and psychologically grounded CRM strategies.

Third, this research bridges gaps between CRM and consumer behavior by demonstrating that organizational practices, including digital interventions such as social media influencer engagement, have cognitive and emotional consequences that go beyond immediate transactional outcomes. It shows that consumer trust is influenced not only by objective service performance, like the timely resolution of complaints, but also by how consumers perceive organizational attentiveness, transparency, and responsiveness. For example, engagement through social media influencers can serve as a powerful signal to consumers that the company values their concerns and communicates effectively, thereby shaping expectations, attitudes, and subsequent behaviors. This underscores that consumer behavior in response to complaints is guided not only by functional outcomes but also by psychological interpretations of organizational commitment. By highlighting these perceptual and behavioral dynamics, the study advances the theory of trust formation in service contexts, emphasizing that lasting trust arises from the interaction between concrete service actions and the consumer's subjective processing of organizational cues.

Fourth, by empirically examining multiple pathways—including direct, mediated, and moderated effects—this study makes a nuanced contribution to service recovery theory by revealing how complex interactions between organizational practices and consumer behavior shape satisfaction. It shows that customer responses to complaints are not uniform but are influenced by a combination of behavioral cues (e.g., timely service recovery), cognitive appraisals (e.g., perceptions of fairness and transparency), and emotional reactions (e.g., trust and perceived attentiveness). This approach moves beyond simple linear models, illustrating that the effectiveness of complaints management strategies depends on how organizational actions are interpreted and experienced by consumers, including the moderating role of individual differences such as customer behavior sensitivity. By integrating these behavioral, cognitive, and emotional dimensions, the study provides a foundation for more comprehensive, consumer-centered models of service

recovery that can better predict post-complaint satisfaction across diverse contexts and customer segments.

Fifth, the study extends existing CRM and service recovery theories by highlighting the critical role of feedback utilization in shaping customer perceptions and trust, particularly in emerging-market contexts. While prior research often assumes that feedback mechanisms and utilization automatically enhance satisfaction, the findings demonstrate that their effectiveness depends on customers' perceptions of responsiveness and cultural alignment. This suggests that theoretical models of service recovery must incorporate not only the presence of feedback systems but also how consumers interpret and respond to them, bridging a gap between technical service processes and consumer behavior theory. By doing so, the study provides a framework for understanding why similar complaint-handling strategies can produce divergent outcomes depending on the customer's context, expectations, and behavioral sensitivity.

In conclusion, this study advances theory by offering a more integrative and nuanced understanding of how organizational practices influence consumer responses in post-complaint contexts. Beyond demonstrating direct effects, it illuminates the complex cognitive, emotional, and behavioral mechanisms through which consumers interpret service recovery efforts, thereby enriching the SOR framework with evidence of multi-layered psychological processing. By bridging CRM and consumer behavior perspectives, the research highlights how perceptual and symbolic cues—such as digital interventions or signals of transparency—shape trust formation and decision-making, extending theoretical models to incorporate the interplay between tangible service actions and consumers' subjective interpretations. Furthermore, by examining moderation through customer behavior sensitivity, the study underscores the importance of individual differences in predicting the effectiveness of service strategies, contributing to more psychologically grounded, customer-centric models. Importantly, the inclusion of emerging-market contextual factors in the constructs indicators which accommodated cultural elements of the emerging market context, further broadens the applicability of service recovery and CRM theories, providing a globally relevant lens for understanding how organizational practices influence consumer satisfaction and trust across diverse settings. Overall, this research offers a comprehensive theoretical framework that integrates behavioral, cognitive, and

emotional dimensions to better explain and predict consumer responses in contemporary service environments.

6.7. Practical Implications

The integration of qualitative and quantitative findings in this study provides telecom operators with a practical and structured roadmap for enhancing customer satisfaction with complaint resolution. By combining survey-based insights, qualitative interview narratives, the the Importance–Performance Map Analysis (IPMA), Priority Matrix, and a cost-benefit assessment(detailed in chapter 5), the study identifies which complaint management levers are most influential, where performance gaps exist, and how resources can be optimally allocated. This integrated approach ensures that recommendations are not generic but tailored to the operational realities, customer expectations, and strategic priorities of each telecom operator.

The IPMA results in chapter 5 indicate that Social Media Influencer Utilization (SMI) is the most impactful lever for improving customer satisfaction. Despite its high importance, the analysis shows moderate performance, signaling a substantial gap that, if addressed, can yield significant improvements in satisfaction scores. Qualitative evidence highlights that poorly managed influencer engagement can exacerbate dissatisfaction, especially among highly sensitive customers, whereas effective influencer strategies credible, authentic, complaint-specific, and educational can strengthen trust and accelerate complaint resolution. The Priority Matrix confirms that SMI should be a top-priority area of focus (explained in chapter 5), while the cost-benefit analysis reveals that medium-level investment in influencer engagement offers high returns through increased brand trust, customer engagement, and visibility of complaint resolution efforts. This combination of evidence underscores why telecom operators should prioritize SMI in both digital and traditional channels in their complaints management strategies, scaling interventions according to organizational size and customer base.

Transparent Organizational Culture (OCC) emerges as the second-highest priority. Quantitative results demonstrate its strong influence on both trust and satisfaction, partially mediated by trust, while qualitative insights highlight that transparency through timely, accurate, and situation-specific communication reduces customer frustration and stabilizes

expectations, particularly for sensitive customers. The Priority Matrix and IPMA suggest that while OCC is performing moderately, even small improvements can generate meaningful gains in satisfaction. From a cost-benefit perspective, implementing transparency mechanisms such as real-time dashboards, clear communication protocols, and staff training requires low to medium investment yet provides very high benefits in trust and loyalty. Consequently, telecom operators should embed transparency into both internal processes and customer-facing channels, adapting the approach to service types and resource availability.

Service Quality Control (SQC) is identified as the third priority. Quantitative findings indicate that while its direct effect on satisfaction is smaller, SQC strongly predicts trust, which in turn enhances satisfaction. Qualitative insights suggest that consistent, reliable service processes such as triaging complaints efficiently, enforcing service level agreements, and monitoring service delivery are essential for preventing escalation and sustaining long-term satisfaction. The Priority Matrix places SQC as moderate priority, while cost-benefit analysis shows medium to high investment is required, with moderate incremental gains. Therefore, SQC should be maintained and reinforced alongside high-impact interventions like SMI and OCC, with channel-specific implementation: CRM integration for social media and routine audits for traditional complaint channels.

Customer Feedback Utilization (CFU), in contrast, warrants cautious application. Both quantitative and qualitative findings indicate that feedback collection alone does not improve satisfaction and may even create frustration when customers perceive no visible action. The Priority Matrix places CFU as low priority, and the cost-benefit assessment indicates low costs with low to moderate benefits. Telecom operators should implement CFU selectively, ensuring that feedback drives observable service improvements and is communicated back to customers e.g., “you asked, we changed” updates, rather than indiscriminate surveys.

Taken together, the Priority Matrix, IPMA, and cost-benefit analysis provide a sequenced, evidence-based framework for strategic decision-making. First, operators should focus on high-impact, high-return interventions: SMI for effective customer engagement and complaint visibility. Second, they should embed transparency mechanisms (OCC) to strengthen trust and stabilize expectations. Third, SQC processes should be

reinforced to ensure operational consistency. Finally, CFU should be deployed selectively to enhance processes without overextending resources.

This structured guidance informs telecom-specific recommendations, ensuring that interventions are context-sensitive: large operators like Vodacom and Airtel can leverage high-tech dashboards, machine-learning triage, and multiple influencers, while smaller operators such as TTCL and Halotel can rely on SMS updates, community-based influencer engagement, and simplified feedback mechanisms. By aligning complaint management strategies with customer expectations, resource capacity, and service channels, telecom operators can maximize satisfaction, build trust, and create sustainable improvements in complaint resolution outcomes. The recommendations summarized in the table 6.1 below operationalize these implications, providing actionable steps tailored to the strengths and challenges of each operator

Table 6. 1 Actionable Recommendations for Telecom Operators based on Study Findings

Telecom Company	Key Strengths / Challenges	Specific Recommendations
Vodacom	- Market leader - Strong mobile money (M-Pesa) usage - Large customer base → high complaint volume.	1. Social Media Influencer Strategy: Use high-reach influencers to address M-Pesa complaints, educate users about transfer rules, and publicly resolve recurring problems. 2. Transparency Dashboard: Create a public “M-Pesa complaint status” tracker on the Vodacom website/app showing average resolution times and typical issues. 3. Service Quality Control: Invest in predictive analytics to detect when M-Pesa or network congestion might lead to complaints; proactively alert and compensate affected customers. 4. Customer Feedback Utilization: Launch structured feedback for mobile money users (surveys, in-app prompts) to improve usability, transaction flow, and error messaging. 5. Channel Optimization: For social media complaints (e.g., on Twitter, Facebook), deploy a “fast-response” team; for in-app complaints, embed “report issue” within the M-Pesa interface.
Tigo	- Strong user engagement; growing share - Known for mobile-money (Tigo Pesa) and data services. - sensitive around data privacy / trust.	1. Influencer Engagement: Collaborate with trusted local micro-influencers to demystify Tigo Pesa policies (fees, limits) and encourage complaint reporting. 2. Cultural Transparency: Emphasize data privacy in communications. Given past concerns around data-sharing (e.g., political risks), regularly publish a “data protection / complaint transparency report.” 3. Service Monitoring: Use customer journey mapping to identify common pain points (e.g., USSD failures, app crashes) and improve them. 4. Feedback Loop: Introduce periodic focus groups or online feedback sessions with Tigo Pesa heavy users to co-design improvements. 5. Channel Strategy: For USSD-based complaints, shorten escalation paths; for social media, use WhatsApp Business or dedicated support bots to handle Pesa-related issues.
Airtel	- Large base of voice, SMS, and data users. - Possibly weaker in mobile money compared to Vodacom and Tigo. - Reliability problems	1. Service Quality Control: Prioritize network reliability, especially for data-heavy customers: monitor dropped calls, slow data, and report metrics publicly. 2. Transparency: Publish a “Service Quality Report” quarterly, highlighting resolution times for network issues. 3. Influencer Use: Partner with influencers to promote lesser-known customer service channels (e.g., in-app complaint form), encouraging customers to use proper channels rather than venting publicly. 4. Feedback Utilization: Create a feedback system specifically for data and voice users (via SMS or app), asking about call quality, latency, and network coverage. 5. Complaint Channels: Strengthen frontline call-center training to ensure empathetic, fast resolution; use callback options to reduce waiting time.
Halotel	Strong rural coverage due to large fiber investment.	1. Transparency via SMS: Use SMS-based updates for complaint resolution in rural areas (where app or social media may be less used): send a message when complaint is logged, when in queue, when resolved.

TTCL	• Lower market share compared to top three • Smaller mobile share. • limited resources compared to MNO giants. • Provide both fixed-line and mobile service.	2. Local Influencers: Use community leaders or local radio personalities in rural regions to communicate complaint processes and raise awareness about available channels.
		3. Service Quality Monitoring: Use field teams (mobile “quality vans”) to measure signal strength and service quality in rural zones; proactively fix weak spots.
		4. Feedback Mechanisms: Deploy simple USSD-based surveys (e.g., 1471#) for users to report satisfaction after complaint resolution.
		5. Channel Differentiation: For network or voice issues in rural areas, emphasize call-in support + field agents; for data complaints, integrate with the Halotel app (if available) or SMS support.
		1. Lean Transparency: Use its website and customer portal to publish complaint metrics (resolution times, types) — cost-effective and builds trust.
		2. Customer Education: Use posters / leaflets at physical branches about how to complain, expected timelines, and how to escalate.
		3. Service Quality Control: Use network monitoring tools focused on problem areas (especially fixed-line) and resolve systematically.
		4. Feedback Use: Use paper-based or SMS surveys after service repairs / line maintenance to capture customer sentiment.
		5. Channel Strategy: Encourage customers to report via SMS or call; set up a callback system to reduce hold times and improve customer experience

Therefore, telecom companies must align their complaint management strategies with their market position, customer expectations, and operational strengths to enhance satisfaction, trust, and long-term loyalty.

Vodacom company, as a market leader with a large M-Pesa user base, experiences high complaint volumes that could erode customer confidence if not handled proactively. Engaging high-reach social media influencers addresses recurring complaints and educates users, which improves transparency and reduces misinformation. A public complaint-tracking dashboard reinforces trust by making resolution processes visible, while predictive analytics and structured feedback allow the company to anticipate issues and improve service quality before problems escalate. Optimized reporting channels, both in-app and on social media, ensure quick and convenient complaint handling, reducing frustration and supporting customer retention.

Tigo company, with strong mobile-money engagement but heightened sensitivity around data privacy, benefits from strategies that emphasize trust and cultural appropriateness. Partnering with local micro-influencers helps clarify Tigo Pesa policies and encourages complaint reporting in a culturally sensitive way. Regularly publishing data protection and complaint transparency reports reassures users that their information is handled responsibly. Monitoring service touchpoints and implementing feedback loops, such as focus groups with heavy users, enables Tigo to identify pain points and co-create solutions, improving user experience and loyalty. Streamlined complaint channels through USSD, WhatsApp, or social media bots make the process accessible and efficient.

Airtel company faces reliability challenges across voice, SMS, and data services, which can frustrate customers. Focusing on service quality control and publishing performance reports demonstrates accountability and informs users about ongoing improvements. Using influencers to promote proper complaint channels reduces public venting and encourages efficient resolution. Targeted feedback systems for voice and data users, combined with trained call-center staff and callback options, improve satisfaction, reduce waiting times, and reinforce trust in the brand.

Halotel, with strong rural coverage but lower market share, must prioritize accessibility and local engagement. SMS-based complaint updates and simple USSD surveys allow customers in areas with limited internet access to report and track issues conveniently.

Partnering with local influencers, such as community leaders or radio personalities, raises awareness of complaint processes and builds trust. Field-based service monitoring ensures network reliability in rural zones, helping Halotel differentiate itself through dependable service. Tailored channels for voice, data, and network issues ensure that complaints are resolved efficiently based on local conditions.

TTCL, as a smaller operator with limited resources, should focus on lean, high-impact processes. Publishing complaint metrics online and providing physical branch education enhances transparency and sets realistic expectations. Systematic monitoring of network and service issues ensures recurring problems are addressed efficiently. Feedback collection via SMS or paper surveys captures customer sentiment without high costs, while callback systems and streamlined reporting reduce hold times and improve overall satisfaction.

Overall, these strategies transform complaint management from a reactive process into a proactive, trust-building, and customer-centric approach. By tailoring solutions to their specific strengths, operational context, and customer needs, each telecom can enhance service quality, foster loyalty, and turn complaint resolution into a competitive advantage.

6.8. Conclusion

In sum, the integration of these studies offers a paradigm shift in how we understand complaints management. Rather than viewing it as a reactive process aimed at restoring satisfaction, this research positions complaints handling as a strategic, emotionally and cognitively consequential process with long-term implications for trust, customer behavior, and brand equity. This synthesized understanding provides a strong foundation for future research and practice that treats complaints not as isolated incidents, but as critical moments of truth that shape the entire arc of the customer relationship.

Chapter 7 Conclusions

The final chapter summarizes the key findings of the study, highlighting their theoretical and practical significance. It provides a concise overview of how the research objectives were met and discusses the contributions to both academic knowledge and industry practice. The chapter emphasizes the importance of integrating service quality, transparent organizational culture, and influencer engagement in customer complaints management strategies. The chapter also provides management insights, innovation of the study and the limitations of the study.

7.1. Conclusions

This research provides a comprehensive examination of complaints management practices within Tanzania's telecommunications sector, an industry at the forefront of the nation's digital transformation and economic advancement. In an environment where service expectations are intensifying and competition is growing, the capacity to manage complaints effectively is no longer a support function but a strategic lever for customer satisfaction and long-term trust. Grounded in the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) frameworks, this study was conducted through two interconnected studies: a qualitative inquiry (Study 1), followed by a quantitative study, each offering complementary insights into the mechanisms and consequences of complaints management.

Study 1, a qualitative investigation, explored customer, employee, and managerial perspectives to uncover how specific organizational practices shape the complaints management experience. Thematic analysis highlighted four key practices: service quality control, transparent organizational culture, social media influencer utilization, and customer feedback utilization as critical influences on customer satisfaction. These qualitative findings provided an interpretive foundation for the subsequent quantitative studies by identifying relevant constructs and informing the development of testable relationships. Study 2, a survey-based quantitative study, tested the influence of these complaints management practices on customer satisfaction and trust. Service quality control emerged as an influential driver of both trust and satisfaction outcomes. In a context where issues such as network instability, billing disputes, and delayed complaint resolution

are common, the delivery of consistent, efficient, and reliable service was found to be fundamental to restoring customer confidence and reducing dissatisfaction. The findings suggest that strong quality assurance systems not only resolve immediate complaints but also play a longer-term role in reinforcing organizational dependability and customer loyalty.

The study demonstrates that strategically leveraging social media influencers significantly enhances customer satisfaction and trust during complaints management, a finding that aligns with the SOR framework, where influencer communication serves as a persuasive stimulus that shapes customer perceptions and emotional responses. This outcome also resonates with Service Recovery and CRM theories, which emphasize credibility, empathy, and relational communication as key drivers of positive recovery experiences. Empirically, the results are consistent with global literature showing that influencers by virtue of their authenticity and social capital effectively translate corporate messages into relatable narratives that reassure customers and reinforce perceptions of responsiveness[36]. In the Tanzanian telecom context, this dynamic is especially valuable given the sector's high service-contact frequency and reliance on digital communication channels. Accordingly, companies should prioritize influencers whose audience trust and values align with the brand, and strategically integrate them into complaint-resolution communication to humanize responses, enhance transparency, and generate real-time customer insights. Overall, the utilization of social media influencers emerges not only as a practical tool for improving complaint handling but also as a theoretically grounded and empirically validated mechanism for strengthening customer trust, elevating satisfaction, and modernizing service recovery practices in a digital-first environment.

The study, revealed a relationship of customer feedback utilization and customer satisfaction with complaints resolution. These findings show that increased engagement with feedback processes actually correlates with lower satisfaction levels. As previously discussed, the culturally sensitive indicators used in this study may be driving this negative association, a trend that aligns with existing scholarly evidence[38,139]. Thus indicating systemic weaknesses in how feedback is processed, communicated, and integrated into the complaints management cycle. The posthoc interview provide an insight on the matter. The outcome suggests that customers often experience a disconnect between providing

feedback and seeing meaningful action—an issue that undermines the service recovery expectation–disconfirmation process, where unmet expectations lead to frustration rather than improved perceptions. From a CRM and SOR perspective, feedback mechanisms that fail to demonstrate responsiveness function as a negative stimulus, triggering feelings of neglect and reducing satisfaction with the resolution process. These findings align with empirical studies in emerging markets, which similarly report that ineffective or opaque feedback systems erode trust and heighten customer skepticism [88]. For Tanzanian telecom companies, this underscores the need to redesign feedback pathways by enhancing transparency, demonstrating how customer input translates into service improvements, and communicating these changes visibly and consistently. Strengthening this feedback loop can cultivate a sense of inclusion, affirm customers' role in shaping service quality, and ultimately rebuild confidence in the organization's commitment to addressing concerns.

Transparent organizational culture demonstrated a strong and consistent positive influence on both customer satisfaction and trust during complaints management. Qualitative insights also reinforced this outcome, revealing that customers felt neglected when updates were vague or absent, yet became noticeably more patient and trusting when companies provided clear explanations—even during delays. This aligns with core principles from service recovery and CRM theories, which emphasize procedural fairness and open communication as essential components of effective complaint resolution. In the Tanzanian telecom environment, where uncertainty and inconsistent information are common pain points, transparency acts as a stabilizing force that reduces frustration and strengthens perceptions of organizational integrity. Practically, Tanzanian telecom companies can enhance transparency through measures such as automated complaint-tracking dashboards, structured SMS update systems, and clear escalation guidelines as recommended in chapter 6. These interventions carry relatively modest cost implications—mainly software integration and staff training—but yield significant returns by reducing repeat inquiries, improving workflow efficiency, and fostering long-term customer loyalty. Overall, the study concludes that embedding transparency into everyday operational practices is not merely an operational enhancement but a strategic necessity for building trust, strengthening reputation, and elevating the overall effectiveness of complaints management.

Trust in the company emerged as a central mechanism through which effective complaints management practices translate into increased customer satisfaction, reflecting both theoretical and empirical insights. Aligned with the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) framework, trust functions as the “organism” that interprets organizational stimuli—such as service quality control, transparent communication, and social media influencer engagement—into positive behavioral responses, including satisfaction and loyalty. This finding resonates with service recovery and CRM literature, which consistently emphasize that perceived reliability, ethical conduct, and responsiveness are critical determinants of customer trust[89,115]. Qualitative evidence from the Tanzanian telecom context further illustrated that customers perceive consistent, empathetic, and transparent complaint handling as a signal of organizational integrity, strengthening their confidence in the company. Practically, cultivating trust can be achieved through staff training, transparent status updates, and strategically leveraging credible influencers, interventions that involve moderate costs but generate significant returns in terms of customer retention, satisfaction, and brand reputation. By serving as the mediating pathway between complaints management practices and customer outcomes, trust not only mitigates dissatisfaction but also consolidates long-term loyalty, highlighting its strategic importance for telecom firms operating in dynamic and competitive markets.

The moderating role of customer behavior sensitivity revealed that complaints management practices are not equally effective for all customers, highlighting the need for tailored approaches. Highly sensitive customers responded most positively to transparency, valuing clear, timely, and honest communication during complaints management that reassures them when expectations are closely monitored. The moderating role also influenced social media influencer strategies suggesting that generalized messaging may not address their heightened evaluative tendencies. These findings align with consumer behavior theory, which emphasizes individual differences in perception and emotional responsiveness, and the SOR framework, where sensitivity shapes the processing of organizational stimuli and subsequent reactions. Empirical studies similarly indicate that personalized, direct communication fosters greater satisfaction among highly involved or discerning customers[121,123]. Practically, Tanzanian telecom companies should segment

customers based on sensitivity and adopt differentiated strategies, such as providing direct updates and dedicated support for sensitive customers while leveraging influencer campaigns for broader audiences during the complaints management encounters. By doing so, organizations can enhance the effectiveness of complaints management across diverse customer profiles, improve satisfaction and trust, and strengthen long-term loyalty

In conclusion, this study highlights the pivotal role of effective complaints management practices in shaping customer satisfaction and trust in Tanzania's telecom sector. Emphasizing high service quality, transparent organizational practices, and the strategic deployment of social media influencers enables companies to resolve complaints efficiently while reinforcing positive customer relationships. Furthermore, tailoring complaints management strategies to account for variations in customer behavior sensitivity enhances the effectiveness of interventions across diverse customer segments. By consistently applying fair, transparent, and emotionally attuned complaint resolution processes, Tanzanian telecom companies can mitigate anchoring effects, recalibrate customer expectations, and promote favorable future decisions. These insights align with the principles of the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) framework, service recovery theory, and customer relationship management (CRM), collectively offering a strategic pathway for fostering customer loyalty, sustaining competitiveness, and achieving long-term growth in a rapidly digitizing market environment.

7.2. Management Insights

The integration of qualitative and quantitative findings, combined with IPMA, Priority Matrix analysis, cost-benefit assessments, and tailored recommendations for each telecom operator explained in detail in chapter 6, provides a robust foundation for actionable management insights. These insights offer a structured roadmap for enhancing customer satisfaction, trust and overall complaint resolution effectiveness in Tanzania's telecom sector. The conclusion section provides a summary of the research study and offer the following insights for the management practices of Tanzanian Telecom companies.

First, strategic Social Media Influencer Utilization (SMI) emerges as a high-impact yet under-leveraged practice, making it a critical area for managerial attention. The convergence of qualitative narratives, quantitative path results, and priority matrix insights

confirms that while SMI holds strong power in shaping customer perceptions, trust, and satisfaction, telecom operators are only performing it at a moderate level revealing a clear performance gap and a missed competitive advantage. Influencers who are credible, knowledgeable about telecom issues, and skilled in educating customers on complaint processes can significantly amplify customer reassurance during service failures. They can help demystify complex procedures, humanize the brand, and speed up information flow during outages or high-risk complaint periods. By using influencers to clarify steps, acknowledge customer frustrations, and guide users toward proper channels, companies reduce uncertainty and enhance perceived fairness—two psychological triggers strongly linked to customer satisfaction and trust. From a cost-benefit standpoint regarding Social Media Influencer Utilization, the analysis indicates that medium-level investment can yield disproportionately high returns because influencer messaging scales quickly across platforms like X (Twitter), Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. For dominant players such as Vodacom and Airtel, who already command massive digital audiences, employing a multi-influencer model—combining tech reviewers, customer-education influencers, and micro-influencers—can deepen reach and strengthen message authenticity. Meanwhile, TTCL and Halotel, operating with more constrained budgets and niche market penetration, can gain meaningful traction through community-rooted influencers, such as local tech bloggers, regional digital advocates, and trusted community figures who resonate with specific customer clusters. Such tailored, context-appropriate influencer strategies ensure that SMI functions not merely as a promotional tool but as a complaints-resolution support mechanism, increasing transparency, addressing customer anxieties in real time, and reinforcing the brand's reliability across diverse customer segments.

Second, embedding a Transparent Organizational Culture (OCC) during complaints management serves as a powerful trust-building mechanism by stabilizing customer expectations through honest, timely, and situation-specific communication. The qualitative and quantitative findings show that transparency significantly reduces frustration especially among highly sensitive customers by clarifying what is happening, why it is happening, and how the company is addressing the issue. Even small, low-cost enhancements such as real-time network dashboards, clear communication protocols, and staff training generate high returns by increasing predictability and reducing perceived neglect. To maximize

impact, telecom operators must align transparency tools with their operational scale: larger companies like Vodacom and Airtel benefit from sophisticated, automated updates due to their large subscriber bases, while smaller operators such as TTCL and Halotel can leverage simpler, more personalized communication approaches. When implemented consistently, transparency becomes a strategic asset that strengthens trust, enhances satisfaction, and reinforces long-term loyalty across diverse customer segments.

Thirdly, strategic investment in Service Quality Control (SQC) is critical for Tanzanian telecom operators to strengthen reliability, trust, and customer satisfaction. The study's quantitative results, supported by IPMA and priority matrix analyses, show that consistent complaint triaging, monitoring of service delivery, and enforcement of Service Level Agreements are key drivers of customer trust, which in turn mediates satisfaction. The cost-benefit analysis further highlights that while SQC requires medium-to-high investment, the returns are substantial because it underpins high-impact initiatives such as Social Media Influencer Utilization (SMI) and Transparent Organizational Culture (OCC), ensuring that communication and influencer engagement are credible and effective. For telecom managers, this insight signals that prioritizing SQC not only prevents complaint escalation and operational failures but also maximizes the impact of complementary strategies, delivering measurable improvements in satisfaction, trust, and brand reputation across both digital and traditional channels.

Fourthly, telecom companies in Tanzania achieve the greatest impact from customer feedback when it is selectively utilized, action-oriented, and culturally sensitive. The study's findings, supported by IPMA and priority matrix analyses, reveal that collecting feedback without meaningful follow-up or consideration of local cultural expectations can increase customer frustration, particularly among highly sensitive users who value responsiveness and respect for their preferences. Managers should prioritize feedback that directly influences trust, satisfaction, and service reliability, and implement mechanisms that translate insights into observable improvements, communicated in ways that resonate with customers' cultural expectations and norms. Cost-benefit analysis confirms that culturally attuned, action-driven CFU optimizes resource allocation, enhances perceived responsiveness, and strengthens credibility. When executed strategically, CFU becomes a

powerful tool for building trust, demonstrating respect for customer perspectives, driving meaningful service enhancements, and fostering long-term loyalty and brand reputation.

The integration of the study's findings with IPMA, Priority Matrix, and cost-benefit analyses offers Tanzanian telecom operators a structured, evidence-based pathway for enhancing complaint management and customer satisfaction. The recommended approach emphasizes a sequenced deployment of interventions, beginning with high-impact, high-return strategies such as strategic Social Media Influencer utilization (SMI), which has been shown to significantly influence customer perceptions, trust, and engagement. Once this foundation is established, embedding mechanisms that promote a transparent organizational culture (OCC) ensures consistent communication, accountability, and the reinforcement of customer confidence across all touchpoints. Strengthening service quality control (SQC) subsequently consolidates operational reliability and enhances the overall service experience, while the selective utilization of customer feedback (CFU) allows companies to make targeted, resource-efficient improvements without overextending their operational capacity. Importantly, this sequenced strategy should be tailored to the specific context of each telecom operator, taking into account company size, customer behavior sensitivity, and operational constraints, thereby ensuring that resources are deployed efficiently and interventions deliver maximum impact. By following this evidence-based, prioritized, and adaptive framework, telecom managers can not only improve complaint resolution effectiveness but also foster deeper customer trust, higher satisfaction, and sustained loyalty, all while maintaining strategic competitiveness and operational resilience in an increasingly dynamic and digitally-driven market.

7.3. Innovative Points

This study examined the influence of complaints management practices on customer satisfaction, offering several valuable contributions beyond existing research. While prior studies have largely relied on traditional service recovery models and assumed a straightforward, linear link between complaint resolution and satisfaction, this study advances the field in four key ways. First, it enriches the service recovery framework by demonstrating that the relationship between complaints resolution and satisfaction is indirect, introducing 'trust in the company' as a mediating factor and 'customer behavior

sensitivity' as a moderating factor to provide a more nuanced understanding. Secondly, it uniquely incorporates the variable of 'social media influencer utilization', revealing how influencers can strategically shape complaints management outcomes, which is an aspect that is not illuminated in current literature despite its growing impact. Thirdly, the study develops an innovative, theoretically integrated complaints management model, moving beyond single theory-model explanations to provide a more holistic framework which incorporates the Stimulus Organism Response(SOR), CRM,Service recovery and consumer behavior theories. Finally, it offers important contextual contributions from emerging market settings and delivers a practical, evidence-based roadmap for telecom companies seeking to optimize their complaint management strategies.

7.3.1. Enriching the Linear Service Recovery Model: Through Innovative Variable Inclusion - with Trust as Mediation and Sensitivity as Moderation Variables

This study enriches the traditional Linear Service Recovery Model by incorporating 'trust in company' as a mediator and 'customer behavior sensitivity' as a moderator making the model more nuanced and context-sensitive. In previous research, complaint management practices were often analyzed without considering the underlying psychological and relational factors that significantly influence customer satisfaction. Most studies focused on direct relationships between complaint management actions and customer outcomes, treating these interactions as linear and uniform across different customer segments. That approach overlooked the complexity of customer dynamics, particularly how 'trust in the company' and individual differences in 'customer sensitivity' might shape responses to complaint resolution efforts. This study's innovative approach to exploring the mediating role of 'trust in the company' and the moderating role of 'customer behavior sensitivity' offers a fresh perspective on complaint management practices. This research goes beyond traditional analyses by integrating these factors into the framework, revealing their complex interplay and its impact on customer satisfaction.

Using 'trust in the company' as a mediator is a key innovative aspect because it uncovers the crucial pathway through which effective complaint management practices can enhance customer satisfaction, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of customer dynamics. It highlights how the effectiveness of complaint management practices hinges on the foundational trust customers have in the company. Trust not only links effective

complaint resolution to higher customer satisfaction but also serves as a catalyst for improving overall customer perceptions and loyalty. This innovative focus emphasizes that complaint management is not just about addressing issues but also about reinforcing trust through transparent, empathetic, and consistent interactions. By positioning trust as a mediator, the study underscores its pivotal role in transforming complaint handling efforts into enhanced customer satisfaction, thus offering a new lens through which to evaluate complaint management effectiveness.

The role of customer behavior sensitivity as a moderator adds another layer of innovation. The innovative use of customer behavior sensitivity as a moderator significantly advances the study of complaint management practices by acknowledging that customers respond differently based on their sensitivity to service quality and handling. This approach moves beyond the traditional one-size-fits-all model, advocating for tailored strategies that address the unique needs of diverse customer segments. By recognizing that highly sensitive customers may require more personalized and attentive responses, while less sensitive customers may need lesser intensive interventions, this study enhances the precision of complaint management practices. This nuanced perspective not only improves the measurement of strategy effectiveness but also enriches theoretical frameworks by integrating psychological variability into existing models. Ultimately, this innovation promotes a shift towards more personalized customer interactions, fostering deeper connections and improving overall satisfaction.

These innovative points not only offer a deeper understanding of the mechanisms through which complaint management practices affect customer satisfaction but also provide practical implications for companies. By incorporating trust and sensitivity into their complaint management frameworks, companies can design more effective strategies that not only resolve issues but also foster long-term customer loyalty and satisfaction. This novel approach enhances the theoretical foundation of complaint management research and opens avenues for further exploration into how psychological and relational factors influence customer experiences.

7.3.2. Provided a Novel Insight into Social Media influencers role in Complaints Management Strategies

This study provides an innovative look into the role of social media influencers (SMIs) in complaints management, a dimension which is largely overlooked in existing research. While SMIs have been extensively studied in relation to branding, marketing, and sales contexts, their strategic potential on how companies use them in complaints management strategies has remained unexplored. This study's innovatively incorporate this aspect by conceptualizing the 'social media influencer utilization' construct into the research model. And the findings of the study show that influencers are not merely promotional tools they play a critical role in shaping customer perceptions, building trust, and enhancing satisfaction during complaint resolution. By leveraging their credibility, reach, and relational influence, SMIs can de-escalate conflicts, mitigate negative publicity, and transform potentially damaging complaints into opportunities for engagement and loyalty. This research positions influencers as central actors in modern complaints management, offering telecom managers an evidence-based approach to strategically integrate SMIs into complaint-handling processes. In doing so, it extends traditional complaints management frameworks, providing a fresh, empirically supported perspective that bridges social media dynamics with customer relationship strategies. The value of social media influencers in complaints management can also be adopted by other industries as this study portray that it is a great complaint management strategy.

7.3.3. Development of a Theoretically Integrated Innovative Model for Complaints Management and a Specified Roadmap for Telecom Companies

Another innovative contribution of this study lies in its development of a comprehensive and theoretically integrated complaints management model, specifically designed for the Tanzanian telecom sector and the broader context of sectors and developing countries. Previous studies have typically relied on single theoretical lenses, offering limited explanations for complaint management outcomes. In contrast, this research uniquely combines insights from the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) framework, Customer Relationship Management (CRM), service recovery theory, and consumer behavior theory to create a unified and holistic model. By integrating multiple independent variables: service quality, social media influencer utilization, customer

feedback utilization, and transparent organizational culture, the study captures the complexity of modern complaint handling in a digitalized environment. It highlights the critical role of social media influencers in shaping customer perceptions, trust, and satisfaction, bridging the gap between immediate complaint resolution and long-term relationship-building. This innovative framework encourages telecom companies to adopt proactive, adaptive strategies that align with evolving customer expectations and dynamic market conditions. Beyond theoretical enrichment, the model offers practical guidance for leveraging contemporary tools, such as social media influencers, to enhance complaint resolution, strengthen customer trust, and improve brand reputation. Ultimately, this study provides a robust, evidence-based roadmap for telecom companies to optimize complaint management practices, elevate customer satisfaction, and sustain a competitive advantage in a rapidly changing industry.

Building on the theoretically integrated model, this study also provides a practical, evidence-based roadmap for telecom companies to systematically enhance their complaints management strategies. The roadmap translates the conceptual framework into actionable steps, guiding companies on how to prioritize interventions, allocate resources efficiently, and implement practices that maximize both customer satisfaction and trust. By leveraging tools such as social media influencers strategically, reinforcing service quality controls, embedding transparent organizational culture, and selectively utilizing customer feedback, telecom operators can address complaints more effectively while fostering stronger long-term relationships. Therefore, this study innovatively integrates multiple theories into a unified complaints management model while providing a practical roadmap, enabling telecom companies to strategically harness influencers, service quality, transparency, and feedback to boost customer trust, satisfaction, and brand reputation.

7.4. Limitations and Future Research Implications

This study has some limitations, which also present opportunities for further investigation. First, the cross-sectional design of the quantitative component limits the ability to observe changes in customer attitudes and behaviors over time. Although this limitation was mitigated by integrating qualitative insights to provide a richer, multi-layered understanding, future research could employ longitudinal designs to capture the

temporal dynamics of complaint resolution and its long-term effects on customer loyalty and trust.

Similarly, the mixed methods design adopted in this study followed a sequential approach, where qualitative findings were used to inform the development of quantitative constructs. While this integration strengthened construct relevance and contextual grounding, it also introduced an imbalance in methodological emphasis, with the quantitative phase receiving greater analytical weight. This dominance may have constrained the depth and independent contribution of qualitative insights, reducing their role primarily to an instrumental function. To counter this limitation, the study ensured that qualitative themes were rigorously derived and systematically mapped onto measurement items, and that illustrative qualitative evidence was retained during interpretation to support quantitative results. Nevertheless, future research could adopt a more balanced mixed methods design such as a concurrent or fully integrated approach, where qualitative and quantitative strands are given equal priority. Additionally, scholars could expand the qualitative phase through larger or more diverse samples, or employ iterative designs where findings from each phase continuously inform the other, thereby enhancing methodological complementarity and depth of insight.

Thirdly, the use of data from only three regions limits the geographical representativeness of the findings, as variations in customer behavior, service experiences, and telecom infrastructure across other regions may not be fully captured. This limitation arose primarily due to logistical and resource constraints, including time and accessibility challenges. To mitigate this concern, the study ensured diversity within the selected regions (strong reasons for region selection is provided in methodology) and complemented quantitative findings with qualitative insights to enhance contextual depth and robustness. Future studies are encouraged to expand the geographical scope by including a wider range of regions or adopting cross-country comparisons to improve generalizability. Similarly, the study employed snowball sampling, which may introduce selection bias and limit the randomness of the sample, as participants are more likely to refer individuals with similar characteristics or experiences. This approach was adopted due to the difficulty in accessing a comprehensive sampling frame of telecom customers, particularly those with relevant and recent complaint experiences. To address this issue, efforts were made to initiate multiple

referral chains and include participants from varied demographic backgrounds to enhance heterogeneity. Nonetheless, future research should consider using probability-based sampling techniques or mixed sampling strategies to improve sample representativeness and strengthen the external validity of the findings.

Forthly, the study relied primarily on self-reported survey data, which inherently introduces the risk of common method bias and social desirability effects. Respondents may unintentionally overstate positive experiences or underreport negative ones, potentially affecting the accuracy of the findings. While precautions such as careful questionnaire design, assurances of anonymity, and statistical controls were employed to mitigate these risks, future studies could enhance the robustness of results by triangulating survey responses with behavioral data, such as actual complaint logs, social media interactions, or third-party evaluations of organizational complaint handling. Such data could provide more objective measures of complaints resolution effectiveness and customer responses.

Also, this research was conducted specifically within the Tanzanian telecommunications sector, a context that is highly relevant given the sector's rapid digital adoption and expanding customer base. While this focus provides valuable insights into complaint management in a digitally evolving environment, it also limits the generalizability of the findings to other industries or cultural contexts. Different sectors may face distinct challenges influenced by regulatory frameworks, service characteristics, and varying customer expectations, which could affect how complaints are managed and resolved. Additionally, the limited literature on digital complaint management in Africa prevented a comparative analysis between traditional and digital channels within this study, highlighting a broader knowledge gap in the region. Nevertheless, this specificity presents an opportunity for future research to explore cross-industry and cross-country comparisons, investigating whether the patterns observed in this study hold in sectors such as finance, healthcare, or e-commerce, and examining how digital complaint management tools operate across diverse socio-economic and cultural settings.

Finally, while this study provides an examination of digital complaint management practices in an African context, it does not fully capture emerging technological innovations such as AI-powered chatbots, automated sentiment analysis, or multi-channel complaint tracking. Future research could incorporate these tools to assess their integration and

effectiveness in enhancing customer satisfaction and trust, and to explore how customers with varying levels of digital literacy respond to such innovations, and the organizational challenges associated with the adoption of such technologies. Furthermore, future studies could take a more comprehensive approach by investigating more countries and more sectors at once so as to be able to provide a comparative analysis of the phenomena and more valuable recommendations

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List of Publications

1. Mrisha, S. H., & Xixiang, S. (2024). The power of influence: How social media influencers are shaping consumer decision making in the digital age. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*.
2. Samuel Hudson Mrisha & Sun Xixiang.(2024). Swahili Consumerism.A race against time to digital transformation. *International Journal of Business Administration and Management*. Vol 14, Number 1, Pg 1-18

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Appendix A1 – Customer Satisfaction Survey

Survey Questionnaire for a Quantitative Study

Dear Participant,

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey. My name is Samuel Hudson Mrisha, and I am a PhD student in Business Administration at Wuhan University of Technology. As part of my research, I am exploring various aspects of customer complaints management practices within the telecom industry.

The purpose of this survey is to gather valuable insights into how different practices and strategies in managing customer complaints affect customer satisfaction. Your responses will provide critical information to help improve complaint management practices and enhance customer experiences.

This survey consists of several sections including demographic information, and questions about service quality, social media influencer utilization, customer feedback utilization, transparent organizational culture, and your perceptions of customer trust and behavior. The questionnaire is designed to be completed in approximately 20 to 30 minutes.

Please answer the questions based on your personal experiences and opinions. All responses are anonymous and confidential. Your participation is greatly appreciated and will contribute significantly to the success of this research.

If you have any questions or need further information, please feel free to contact me at samuelhmrisha@gmail.com

Thank you for your participation!

Sincerely,

Samuel Hudson Mrisha

PhD Student, Business Administration

Wuhan University of Technology

Part A: Demographic Information

Please answer the following questions about yourself. This information will help us understand the background of our respondents and ensure that our analysis is comprehensive. Your responses will be kept confidential and used solely for research purposes.

Demographic Information

1. What is your Gender? 1. Male. ☐ 2. Female
2. What is your Age Group?
☐ 1. Below 17 years. ☐ 2. 18-34 years ☐ 3. 35-54 years
☐ 4. 55-64 years ☐ 5. 64+ years
3. What is your Education Level?
☐ 1. Primary Education ☐ 2. Secondary Education ☐ 3. Tertiary Education
☐ 4. Bachelor's degree ☐ 5. Master's degree ☐ 6. Doctoral degree
4. What is your Occupation?
☐ 1. Student ☐ 2. Formally Employed ☐ 3. Self-employed
☐ 4. Retired ☐ 5. Unemployed ☐ 6. Other
5. Where do you live? 1. Urban ☐ 2. Rural ☐
6. What is your Marital Status?
☐ 1. Single, never married ☐ 2. Married
☐ 3. Divorced or separated ☐ 4. Widowed
7. Who is your main Mobile Network Provider?
☐ 1. Vodacom ☐ 2. Tigo ☐ 3. Airtel
☐ 4. TTCL ☐ 5. Halotel
8. What is the Length of Service with the current Telecom Provider?
☐ 1. 1-5 years ☐ 2. 6-10 years ☐ 3. Above 10 years
9. Which platform do you use to address complaints?
☐ 1. Social Media Platforms ☐ 2. Call Centres
☐ 3. Physical Visit to Company ☐ 4. Others
10. What nature of complaints do you frequently have?
☐ 1. Service-related complaints ☐ 2. Technical-related complaints
☐ 3. Internet-related complaints ☐ 4. Billing-related complaints
☐ 5. Others

Part B: Complaints Management Questionnaire

Please select your response for each question based on the scale provided below.

1 - Strongly Agree

2 - Agree

3 - Neutral

4 - Disagree

5 - Strongly Disagree

Statements	Answers				
	1	2	3	4	5
Service Quality in Complaints Management					
When your telecom company promises to resolve your issue by a certain time, it fulfills this promise.					
When you have a problem, your telecom company shows a sincere interest in solving it.					
Your telecom company keeps you informed about the progress and timeline of the resolution.					
Employees at your telecom company provide prompt service during complaint resolution.					
Employees at your telecom company are always available to respond to your requests promptly.					
The behavior of employees at your telecom company instills confidence in their ability to resolve your complaint.					
You feel secure in your interactions with your telecom company during the complaint resolution process.					
Employees at your telecom company possess the knowledge needed to answer your questions effectively.					
Employees at your telecom company give you individual attention when handling your complaint.					
Your telecom company acts in your best interests when resolving your complaint.					
Your telecom company uses modern-looking equipment to facilitate complaint resolution.					
The physical facilities of your telecom company are visually appealing and conducive to resolving complaints.					

Statements	Answers				
	1	2	3	4	5
Social Media Influencer Utilization Practice					
The social media influencers used by my telecom company are dependable in highlighting the company's efforts to address customer complaints.					
The social media influencers used by my telecom company are honest about the company's initiatives to resolve complaints.					
The social media influencers used by my telecom company provide reliable information about the company's complaint resolution strategies.					
The social media influencers used by my telecom company are sincere in their endorsements of the company's efforts.					
The social media influencers used by my telecom company are trustworthy in their communications regarding complaint resolution.					
The social media influencers used by my telecom company are knowledgeable about the company's complaint resolution procedures.					
The social media influencers used by my telecom company have relevant experience in addressing telecom-related issues.					
The social media influencers used by my telecom company can effectively communicate the company's expertise in resolving complaints.					
The social media influencers used by my telecom company are capable of explaining the company's strategies for complaint resolution.					
The social media influencers used by my telecom company are skilled in promoting the company's complaint management efforts.					
The social media influencers used by my telecom company are engaging and appealing when discussing the company's complaint management efforts.					

Statements	Answers				
	1	2	3	4	5
Perceived Customer Feedback Utilization					
Your telecom company provides channels that allow you to express your concerns in ways that feel familiar and culturally comfortable.					
Your telecom company provides multiple ways for you to contact them about your issues in a culture friendly manner					
Your telecom company actively seeks your input on complaints, considering community and cultural expectations..					
Your telecom company updates your complaint information quickly, honoring the cultural value of showing respect through prompt attention					
Your telecom company brings together feedback from different departments, reflecting a community-oriented approach to resolving complaints.					
Your telecom company merges feedback from different channels, demonstrating cultural sensitivity in handling complaints.					
Employees at your telecom company find it easy to access the information you provide about your complaints demonstrating respect for timely and culturally sensitive handling					
Your telecom company allows staff to consult your complaints from different locations, reflecting cultural norms of consistent and responsible care.					
Your telecom company develops detailed customer profiles from your feedback, ensuring culturally sensitive understanding of your needs					
Your telecom company uses your feedback to tailor offers and services in ways that respect local needs and preferences.					

Statements	Answers				
	1	2	3	4	5
Transparent Organization Culture					
Your telecom company transparently invests in improving product/service quality based on customer complaints.					
Your telecom company always transparently addresses customer dissatisfaction resulting from complaints.					
Your telecom company offers solutions based on what they believe is better, while transparently explaining why it might differ from what customers desire in their complaints.					
Your telecom company seeks customer opinions about products/services and transparently considers their feedback for improvements when managing complaints.					
Your telecom company transparently responds to changes in the external environment when managing complaints.					
Work at your telecom company is performed diligently and transparently when serious problems arise from complaints.					
Employees and managers at your telecom company transparently address problems arising from complaints, ensuring they are not ignored or left unresolved.					
Your telecom company has a transparent long-term strategy, plans, and goals for handling complaints.					
Goals and plans related to complaints management at your telecom company are achieved purposefully and communicated transparently.					
Work related to complaints management is planned at your telecom company so that everybody knows what and how to do their job, with transparency in communication.					

Statements	Answers				
	1	2	3	4	5
Trust in Company					
I believe that my telecom company is honest with me regarding my complaints.					
I think my telecom company is trustworthy in handling my complaints.					
My telecom company is very thoughtful about my well-being when managing my complaints.					
In critical situations, I can rely on my telecom company to address my complaints.					
I believe that my telecom company will point out the best alternatives for me at any time when handling my complaints.					
My telecom company is capable of satisfying my needs regarding complaints management.					
My telecom company knows its business when it comes to handling complaints.					
My telecom company can solve my problems effectively when I file complaints.					
In critical situations, I feel well-advised by my telecom company regarding my complaints.					

Statements	Answers				
	1	2	3	4	5
Customer Behavior Sensitivity					
I would advise my family, neighbors, and close community members not to use this telecom company if my complaint is ignored or poorly handled.					
I would openly discuss my dissatisfaction with this telecom company in community gatherings, local forums, or social groups if my complaint is unresolved					
I would seek a replacement or alternative solution if my complaint about the telecom service is not addressed.					
I am likely to practice “kuzira” (swahili cultural way of boycotting) by not using this telecom company's services if my complaint is ignored					
I might wait for guidance from respected community members before escalating my complaint					
I would escalate my complaint to the media if the telecom company does not address it satisfactorily.					
I would complain to the relevant regulatory authorities if the telecom company does not handle my complaint properly.					

Statements	Answers				
Customer Satisfaction	1	2	3	4	5
I am satisfied with the way the telecom company handled my complaint.					
I had a positive experience when complaining to this telecom company.					
I am very satisfied with the complaint handling process of this telecom company.					
In my opinion, the telecom company has provided me with a satisfactory resolution to my problem on this specific occasion.					

Appendix B

Interview Guide for the Qualitative Interviews

An interview protocol was developed to guide the conversations, ensuring consistency while allowing flexibility for respondents to elaborate on their experiences. The protocol included open-ended questions designed to probe various aspects of complaint management. The protocol guide is hereunder

Interview Guide for Customer Service Representatives

Daily Responsibilities and Complaint Handling

1. Can you describe your daily responsibilities related to handling customer complaints?
2. What are the typical steps you follow when a customer lodges a complaint?
3. How do you prioritize and manage multiple complaints throughout the day?

Strategies for Effective Resolution

1. What strategies do you use to resolve complaints effectively?
2. Are there specific tools or techniques you find particularly helpful?
3. How do you ensure that the solution you provide addresses the customer's concerns comprehensively?

Challenges in the Complaint Resolution Process

1. Can you share any challenges you face in the complaint resolution process?
2. What obstacles do you encounter when trying to resolve complaints?
3. How do you handle difficult or complex cases that require additional support or resources?

Customer Feedback and Improvement

1. How do you incorporate customer feedback into your complaint resolution process?
2. Are there any common pieces of feedback you receive from customers about the complaints process?
3. How does this feedback influence your approach to handling complaints?

Training and Support

1. What kind of training or support do you receive to handle complaints effectively?
2. How do you think this training could be improved?
3. Do you feel that you have adequate resources to manage complaints?

Interview Guide for Managers

Policies and Procedures

1. What are the key policies and procedures in place for managing customer complaints?
2. Can you outline the process from when a complaint is received to its resolution?
3. How are these policies communicated to and implemented by customer service staff?

Effectiveness of Complaint Management Strategies

1. How do you measure the effectiveness of your complaint management strategies?
2. What metrics or indicators do you use to evaluate success?
3. How do you track and report on the outcomes of complaints?

Improvements and Enhancements

1. What improvements would you suggest to enhance complaint resolution?
2. Are there any specific areas where you believe the current practices could be improved?
3. How do you prioritize and implement changes based on feedback or performance metrics?

Resource Allocation

How do you allocate resources for complaint management?

1. What factors influence your decisions on resource distribution?
2. Are there any resource constraints that impact the effectiveness of the complaint management process?

Training and Development

1. How do you support the training and development of your staff in handling complaints?
2. What ongoing training is provided to ensure staff are up-to-date with best practices?
3. How do you assess the training needs of your team?

Interview Guide for Customers

Experience with Complaint Lodging

1. Can you describe your experience with lodging a complaint with your telecom provider?
2. What motivated you to file a complaint?
3. How did you go about lodging the complaint (e.g., through phone, email, social media)?

Satisfaction with Resolution Process

1. How satisfied were you with the resolution process?
2. Did you feel your complaint was handled in a timely and effective manner?
3. Were there any aspects of the resolution process that you found particularly satisfactory or unsatisfactory?

Trust and Influence Factors

1. What factors influenced your trust in the telecom company during and after the complaint resolution?
2. How did the company's response affect your perception of their reliability and customer service?
3. Did the resolution process impact your overall satisfaction with the company?

Suggestions for Improvement

1. What suggestions do you have for improving the complaints management process?
2. Are there any specific changes you believe would enhance customer satisfaction?
3. How could the company better address your concerns in the future?

Follow-Up and Communication

1. How was the follow-up and communication handled after your complaint was resolved?
2. Were you kept informed about the progress and outcome of your complaint?
3. Did you receive adequate follow-up to ensure your issue was fully resolved?

Appendix C- Suporting Tables

Appendix C1 – Tests of Normality

Tests of Normality						
Variable	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
SQC 1	0.280	562	<.001	0.790	562	<.001
SQC 2	0.253	562	<.001	0.774	562	<.001
SQC 3	0.281	562	<.001	0.794	562	<.001
SQC 4	0.329	562	<.001	0.802	562	<.001
SQC 5	0.286	562	<.001	0.794	562	<.001
SQC 6	0.303	562	<.001	0.835	562	<.001
SQC 7	0.258	562	<.001	0.803	562	<.001
SQC 8	0.288	562	<.001	0.818	562	<.001
SQC 9	0.304	562	<.001	0.817	562	<.001
SQC 10	0.302	562	<.001	0.793	562	<.001
SQC 11	0.257	562	<.001	0.782	562	<.001
SQC 12	0.275	562	<.001	0.751	562	<.001
CBS 1	0.334	562	<.001	0.788	562	<.001
CBS 2	0.336	562	<.001	0.777	562	<.001
CBS 3	0.345	562	<.001	0.792	562	<.001
CBS 4	0.346	562	<.001	0.779	562	<.001
CBS 5	0.315	562	<.001	0.796	562	<.001
CBS 6	0.318	562	<.001	0.792	562	<.001
CBS 7	0.344	562	<.001	0.768	562	<.001
SMI 1	0.273	562	<.001	0.871	562	<.001
SMI 2	0.266	562	<.001	0.863	562	<.001
SMI 3	0.250	562	<.001	0.879	562	<.001
SMI 4	0.258	562	<.001	0.874	562	<.001
SMI 5	0.254	562	<.001	0.875	562	<.001
SMI 6	0.246	562	<.001	0.873	562	<.001
SMI 7	0.283	562	<.001	0.858	562	<.001
SMI 8	0.296	562	<.001	0.825	562	<.001
SMI 9	0.297	562	<.001	0.839	562	<.001
SMI 10	0.271	562	<.001	0.801	562	<.001
TRC 1	0.300	562	<.001	0.789	562	<.001
TRC 2	0.287	562	<.001	0.786	562	<.001
TRC 3	0.265	562	<.001	0.798	562	<.001
TRC 4	0.292	562	<.001	0.783	562	<.001

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TRC 5	0.255	562	<.001	0.814	562	<.001
TRC 6	0.287	562	<.001	0.819	562	<.001
TRC 7	0.275	562	<.001	0.802	562	<.001
TRC 8	0.270	562	<.001	0.745	562	<.001
TRC 9	0.268	562	<.001	0.770	562	<.001
OCC 1	0.341	562	<.001	0.755	562	<.001
OCC 2	0.317	562	<.001	0.787	562	<.001
OCC 3	0.336	562	<.001	0.763	562	<.001
OCC 4	0.314	562	<.001	0.796	562	<.001
OCC 5	0.283	562	<.001	0.748	562	<.001
OCC 6	0.261	562	<.001	0.766	562	<.001
OCC 7	0.268	562	<.001	0.758	562	<.001
OCC 8	0.264	562	<.001	0.737	562	<.001
OCC 9	0.261	562	<.001	0.742	562	<.001
OCC 10	0.268	562	<.001	0.747	562	<.001
CSR 1	0.280	562	<.001	0.815	562	<.001
CSR 2	0.270	562	<.001	0.804	562	<.001
CSR 3	0.296	562	<.001	0.810	562	<.001
CSR 4	0.342	562	<.001	0.782	562	<.001
CFU 1	0.265	562	<.001	0.753	562	<.001
CFU 2	0.277	562	<.001	0.756	562	<.001
CFU 3	0.284	562	<.001	0.755	562	<.001
CFU 4	0.283	562	<.001	0.760	562	<.001
CFU 5	0.253	562	<.001	0.777	562	<.001
CFU 6	0.253	562	<.001	0.784	562	<.001
CFU 7	0.298	562	<.001	0.758	562	<.001
CFU 8	0.304	562	<.001	0.746	562	<.001
CFU 9	0.292	562	<.001	0.767	562	<.001
CFU 10	0.293	562	<.001	0.752	562	<.001

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Appendix C2 – Indicator Loadings and VIF

Constructs	SQC	SMI	CFU	OCC	TRC	CBS	CSR	VIF
SQC1	0.825							2.902
SQC2	0.831							3.056
SQC3	0.798							2.815
SQC4	0.762							2.295
SQC5	0.798							2.959
SQC6	0.769							2.158
SQC7	0.823							2.847
SQC8	0.795							2.406
SQC9	0.799							2.448
SQC10	0.804							2.601
SQC11	0.776							2.636
SQC12	0.789							2.783
SMI1		0.814						2.552
SMI2		0.802						2.438
SMI3		0.835						2.782
SMI4		0.825						2.933
SMI5		0.770						2.182
SMI6		0.802						2.688
SMI7		0.801						2.586
SMI8		0.822						2.617
SMI9		0.812						2.653
SMI10		0.714						1.751
CFU1			0.810					2.164
CFU2			0.766					1.983
CFU3			0.804					1.943
CFU4			0.756					2.166
CFU5			0.757					1.99
CFU6			0.717					2.004
CFU7			0.696					2.123
CFU8			0.770					2.213
CFU9			0.705					2.033
CFU10			0.781					2.057
OCC1				0.717				2.029
OCC2				0.718				1.995
OCC3				0.708				1.893

OCC4	0.700		2.051
OCC5	0.808		2.365
OCC6	0.775		2.184
OCC7	0.793		2.236
OCC8	0.797		2.262
OCC9	0.784		2.127
OCC10	0.798		2.246
TRC1		0.815	2.453
TRC2		0.816	2.426
TRC3		0.821	2.576
TRC4		0.843	2.777
TRC5		0.813	2.44
TRC6		0.795	2.376
TRC7		0.808	2.343
TRC8		0.821	2.548
TRC9		0.783	2.178
CBS1		0.902	4.151
CBS2		0.905	4.513
CBS3		0.894	4.072
CBS4		0.899	4.355
CBS5		0.893	3.619
CBS6		0.875	3.401
CBS7		0.876	3.424
CSR1			0.905 3.301
CSR2			0.902 3.049
CSR3			0.917 3.639
CSR4			0.832 2.113

Appendix C3 - Cross loadings- Discriminant Validity

Construct	SQC	SMI	CFU	OCC	TRC	CBS	CSR
SQC1	0.785	0.380	-0.049	0.376	0.404	0.252	0.349
SQC2	0.791	0.413	-0.057	0.363	0.434	0.238	0.316
SQC3	0.798	0.386	-0.034	0.318	0.355	0.225	0.294
SQC4	0.762	0.378	-0.072	0.350	0.404	0.224	0.312
SQC5	0.798	0.399	-0.048	0.359	0.353	0.230	0.288
SQC6	0.769	0.411	-0.087	0.339	0.450	0.328	0.424
SQC7	0.783	0.314	-0.106	0.376	0.412	0.236	0.359
SQC8	0.795	0.355	-0.088	0.414	0.448	0.306	0.417
SQC9	0.799	0.356	-0.051	0.365	0.413	0.248	0.348
SQC10	0.774	0.371	-0.114	0.367	0.429	0.279	0.379
SQC11	0.776	0.375	-0.048	0.394	0.406	0.249	0.331
SQC12	0.789	0.345	-0.037	0.357	0.392	0.28	0.35
SMI1	0.349	0.814	-0.113	0.386	0.460	0.314	0.411
SMI2	0.399	0.802	-0.088	0.385	0.474	0.352	0.454
SMI3	0.355	0.835	-0.087	0.381	0.515	0.359	0.436
SMI4	0.357	0.825	-0.076	0.339	0.410	0.329	0.418
SMI5	0.322	0.810	-0.042	0.338	0.438	0.316	0.389
SMI6	0.338	0.802	-0.104	0.341	0.407	0.313	0.400
SMI7	0.379	0.801	-0.074	0.355	0.49	0.398	0.483
SMI8	0.385	0.822	-0.099	0.413	0.476	0.385	0.484
SMI9	0.392	0.812	-0.099	0.368	0.493	0.358	0.464
SMI10	0.457	0.804	-0.038	0.375	0.488	0.276	0.405
CFU1	-0.067	-0.076	0.788	-0.036	-0.021	-0.096	-0.142
CFU2	-0.031	-0.115	0.766	-0.024	-0.065	-0.112	-0.121
CFU3	-0.120	-0.087	0.784	-0.093	0.013	-0.154	-0.177
CFU4	-0.034	-0.096	0.756	-0.038	0.005	-0.049	-0.077
CFU5	-0.041	-0.037	0.757	-0.053	0.022	-0.024	-0.100
CFU6	-0.048	-0.062	0.717	-0.069	0.034	-0.020	-0.05
CFU7	0.022	0.002	0.706	-0.03	0.015	-0.003	-0.014
CFU8	-0.077	-0.056	0.770	-0.061	-0.014	-0.048	-0.085
CFU9	-0.022	-0.073	0.705	-0.04	-0.002	-0.007	-0.051
CFU10	-0.084	-0.094	0.781	-0.068	-0.024	-0.064	-0.134
OCC1	0.324	0.283	0.006	0.717	0.237	0.190	0.263

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OCC2	0.311	0.304	-0.046	0.718	0.276	0.177	0.273
OCC3	0.291	0.306	-0.072	0.708	0.270	0.184	0.273
OCC4	0.305	0.266	-0.006	0.700	0.259	0.193	0.275
OCC5	0.387	0.420	-0.03	0.788	0.432	0.294	0.427
OCC6	0.353	0.364	-0.089	0.775	0.334	0.296	0.382
OCC7	0.372	0.371	-0.023	0.793	0.397	0.285	0.355
OCC8	0.374	0.366	-0.111	0.797	0.369	0.317	0.392
OCC9	0.388	0.39	-0.071	0.784	0.377	0.300	0.400
OCC10	0.358	0.384	-0.078	0.798	0.388	0.307	0.404
TRC1	0.454	0.462	-0.003	0.376	0.815	0.378	0.490
TRC2	0.403	0.471	0.010	0.364	0.816	0.374	0.462
TRC3	0.417	0.503	0.003	0.341	0.821	0.398	0.523
TRC4	0.450	0.502	-0.058	0.382	0.843	0.427	0.559
TRC5	0.373	0.461	-0.035	0.349	0.813	0.437	0.521
TRC6	0.375	0.461	0.011	0.311	0.805	0.343	0.43
TRC7	0.368	0.529	-0.001	0.369	0.808	0.406	0.491
TRC8	0.470	0.438	0.003	0.409	0.821	0.363	0.457
TRC9	0.452	0.441	-0.014	0.391	0.803	0.394	0.486
CBS1	0.325	0.41	-0.083	0.312	0.455	0.892	0.723
CBS2	0.292	0.411	-0.094	0.323	0.441	0.895	0.724
CBS3	0.322	0.397	-0.134	0.337	0.449	0.894	0.718
CBS4	0.271	0.380	-0.091	0.305	0.414	0.899	0.707
CBS5	0.318	0.386	-0.106	0.320	0.471	0.893	0.719
CBS6	0.250	0.345	-0.064	0.282	0.389	0.875	0.662
CBS7	0.254	0.329	-0.058	0.265	0.383	0.876	0.648
CSR1	0.397	0.547	-0.17	0.391	0.558	0.720	0.905
CSR2	0.397	0.461	-0.109	0.426	0.574	0.716	0.902
CSR3	0.435	0.515	-0.170	0.399	0.543	0.731	0.917
CSR4	0.330	0.409	-0.090	0.441	0.475	0.624	0.902

Appendix C5- Assesment of Endogeneity using the Gaussian Copula approach

Test	Construct Path	Coefficient	P values
Gaussian copula of model 1 (SQC)	GC (SQC) -> TRC	-0.019	0.321
Gaussian copula of model 2 (SQC)	GC (SQC) -> CSR	0.098	0.473
Gaussian copula of model 3 (SMI)	GC (SMI) -> TRC	-0.013	0.294
Gaussian copula of model 4 (SMI)	GC (SMI) -> CSR	-0.034	0.346
Gaussian copula of model 5 (CFU)	GC (CFU) -> TRC	-0.062	0.347
Gaussian copula of model 6 (CFU)	GC (CFU) -> CSR	-0.092	0.173
Gaussian copula of model 7 (OCC)	GC (OCC) -> TRC	-0.041	0.319
Gaussian copula of model 8 (OCC)	GC (OCC) -> CSR	-0.019	0.734
Gaussian copula of model 9 (TRC)	GC (TRC) -> CSR	0.023	0.668
Gaussian copula of model 10 (SQC,SMI)	GC (SQC) -> TRC	-0.055	0.664
	GC (SMI) -> TRC	-0.071	0.210
Gaussian copula of model 11 (SQC,CFU)	GC (SQC) -> TRC	-0.091	0.100
	GC (CFU) -> TRC	-0.064	0.330
Gaussian copula of model 12 (SQC,OCC)	GC (SQC) -> TRC	-0.073	0.200
	GC (OCC) -> TRC	-0.025	0.435
Gaussian copula of model 13 (SMI,CFU)	GC (SMI) -> TRC	-0.036	0.347
	GC (CFU) -> TRC	-0.046	0.482
Gaussian copula of model 14 (CFU,OCC)	GC (CFU) -> TRC	-0.053	0.422
	GC (OCC) -> TRC	-0.038	0.222
Gaussian copula of model 15 (SQC,TRC)	GC (SQC) -> TRC	-0.090	0.121
	GC (TRC) -> CSR	0.023	0.668
Gaussian copula of model 16 (SMI,TRC)	GC (SMI) -> TRC	-0.013	0.373
	GC (TRC) -> CSR	0.023	0.668
Gaussian copula of model 17 (CFU,TRC)	GC (CFU) -> TRC	-0.062	0.347
	GC (TRC) -> CSR	0.023	0.668
Gaussian copula of model 18 (OCC,TRC)	GC (OCC) -> TRC	-0.041	0.219
	GC (TRC) -> CSR	0.023	0.668
Gaussian copula of model 19 (SQC,SMI,CFU)	GC (SQC) -> CSR	0.032	0.752
	GC (SMI) -> CSR	-0.080	0.197
	GC (CFU) -> CSR	-0.075	0.274
Gaussian copula of model 20 (SQC,CFU,OCC)	GC (SQC) -> CSR	0.032	0.571
	GC (CFU) -> CSR	-0.087	0.203
	GC (OCC) -> CSR	-0.031	0.578
Gaussian copula of model 21 (SMI,CFU,OCC)	GC (SMI) -> CSR	-0.022	0.310
	GC (CFU) -> CSR	-0.082	0.229

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Gaussian copula of model 22 (SQC,SMI,CFU,OCC)	GC (OCC) -> CSR	-0.001	0.979
	GC (SQC) -> CSR	0.032	0.461
	GC (SMI) -> CSR	-0.078	0.441
	GC (CFU) -> CSR	-0.074	0.280
	GC (OCC) -> CSR	-0.019	0.737

Note: GC-Gaussian copula

Appendix D: Thematic Analysis Process (Braun and Clarke)

This study employed the six-phase thematic analysis approach developed by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke to systematically analyze qualitative data collected from customers, Customer Service Representatives (CSRs), and managers in the Tanzanian telecommunications sector. The method was considered appropriate because it allows for a flexible yet rigorous identification of patterns of meaning across a dataset, particularly in studies exploring experiences, perceptions, and organizational practices related to customer complaint management on social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook. The analysis was guided by the study's objectives and theoretical lens, including the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) framework and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) perspectives.

The first phase involved familiarization with the data. All interviews conducted with customers, CSRs, and managers were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and carefully checked against the recordings for accuracy. The researcher then repeatedly read through each transcript to immerse himself in the data and develop a deep understanding of participants' narratives. During this process, initial ideas were noted regarding recurring issues such as delayed complaint responses, customer frustration with unresolved issues, perceptions of transparency, the influence of organizational communication practices, and the role of social media in shaping customer expectations. This stage also involved writing reflective notes to capture early interpretations and potential relationships between concepts such as service responsiveness, trust formation, and satisfaction outcomes.

The second phase involved generating initial codes across the entire dataset. Coding was conducted manually by identifying meaningful segments of text that were relevant to the research objectives and assigning concise labels to capture their essence. Both inductive and deductive coding approaches were applied. Inductively, codes emerged directly from participants' accounts, while deductively, the coding was informed by the SOR framework and constructs such as service quality, organizational culture, customer feedback utilization, social media influencer impact, trust, and satisfaction. Examples of initial codes included “delayed response to complaints,” “lack of follow-up,” “quick resolution increases

satisfaction,” “transparency builds confidence,” “social media monitoring teams,” and “influencer credibility enhances trust.” Codes were continuously compared across transcripts to ensure consistency and conceptual clarity.

The third phase involved searching for themes by clustering related codes into broader categories that represented significant patterns across the dataset. Codes such as “delayed response,” “unresolved complaints,” and “customer frustration” were grouped under a broader theme reflecting ineffective complaint handling practices. Similarly, codes such as “quick response,” “timely feedback,” and “acknowledgement of complaints” were grouped under service quality responsiveness. Other emerging themes included transparent organizational culture, customer feedback utilization, the role of social media influencers, customer trust, and customer satisfaction with complaint resolution. At this stage, thematic maps were developed to visualize relationships among codes, sub-themes, and overarching themes, while also examining differences and similarities across customers, CSRs, and managers.

The fourth phase involved reviewing and refining the themes to ensure they accurately represented the dataset. This process was conducted at two levels. First, coded extracts under each theme were reviewed to assess coherence and internal consistency, leading to the merging of overlapping codes and the removal of redundant ones. For instance, codes related to “fast response” and “continuous communication” were consolidated under service quality responsiveness. Second, the themes were reviewed in relation to the entire dataset to ensure that they adequately reflected the breadth of participants’ experiences. This iterative process resulted in clearer distinctions between themes and improved conceptual alignment with the research objectives and theoretical framework.

The fifth phase involved defining and naming themes. Each theme was refined to clearly articulate its scope, focus, and analytical meaning. The final themes included service quality responsiveness, customer feedback utilization, transparent organizational culture, role of social media influencers, customer trust in the company, customer satisfaction with complaint resolution, and customer behavior sensitivity. Detailed thematic definitions were developed to explain how each theme related to complaint management practices in telecom firms, how it was experienced by different participant groups, and how it contributed to shaping trust and satisfaction outcomes. Sub-themes were also identified

where necessary, such as timeliness, empathy, and follow-up communication under service quality responsiveness, and transparency, accountability, and openness under organizational culture.

The sixth and final phase involved producing the report by integrating the refined themes into a coherent analytical narrative aligned with the research questions and theoretical framework. Representative quotations from customers, CSRs, and managers were selected to support each theme and demonstrate how interpretations were grounded in the data. The findings were systematically linked to existing literature on complaint management, service recovery, social media engagement, and customer trust. In addition, the analysis was interpreted through the SOR framework, where complaint management practices were conceptualized as stimuli, customer trust as the organismic response, and customer satisfaction as the behavioral outcome. This ensured that the analysis moved beyond description to provide deeper theoretical and practical insights into how telecom companies manage complaints in a social media environment.

To enhance trustworthiness, the study applied multiple validation strategies. Data triangulation was achieved by including three categories of participants: customers, CSRs, and managers, allowing for multiple perspectives on the same phenomenon. Member checking was used to confirm the accuracy of interpretations with selected participants. Reflexivity was maintained throughout the analysis through continuous memo writing to minimize researcher bias. Peer debriefing with academic colleagues helped refine codes and themes, while an audit trail was maintained to document all analytical decisions, ensuring transparency and dependability of the research process.

Overall, the application of Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis provided a systematic and rigorous framework for analyzing qualitative data in this study. It enabled the identification of meaningful patterns related to complaint management practices, organizational responsiveness, trust formation, and customer satisfaction within the Tanzanian telecommunications sector, while ensuring that the findings remained firmly grounded in participants' lived experiences.