



RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Intervening Role of Perceived Value and Emotional Intelligence in Relationship Marketing Strategies and Customer Relationships

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Keywords

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Using the retail electronics and consumer goods industries as a case study, this study explores intervening variables in the relationship between relationship marketing strategy and relationships with customers as perceived value and emotional intelligence. The study examines their joint influence on promoting customer loyalty and satisfaction at the institutional level using emotional intelligence as the moderating variable and perceived value as the mediating variable. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used to analyze a purposive sample of 391 participants from the retail sector to explore direct, indirect and moderated relationships between these variables. What the findings contribute is new insights into how emotional intelligence and perceived value affect customer relationship management in nuanced ways.

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INTRODUCTION

In today's retail world, competitive success can be assured through strong, lasting customer relationships that keep business growing and surviving. As far as marketing is concerned, the shift from transactional to relationship marketing has stressed on the need of more than just a transaction, it requires building more loyalties among customers, more satisfaction from customer and more trust in a customer. Key elements of relationship marketing strategies, which aim at building long term customer ties; have been used to increase customer retention, increase brand loyalty and opposite companies in crowded markets. Nevertheless, although there is a lot of potential in these strategies, their success is usually influenced by other factors that either reinforce or cancel out the impact. Perceived value and emotional intelligence can be classed as the most significant intervening variables under which the customers will experience and respond to relationship marketing efforts.

Key mediating variable in determining the success of relationship marketing strategies is perceived value which is defined as the customer assessment of the benefits obtained from a product or service compared to its cost. As such, it has strong bearing on the customer's decision making, affecting not only purchase intentions, but also brand quality perception, fairness, and overall satisfaction. As regard relationship marketing initiatives encouraged long term loyalty, customers tend to develop positive attitudes towards the brand when they perceive high value.

Similarly, emotional intelligence – the capacity to recognize, understand, and be in control of emotions is a moderating factor that affects customers' perception and involvement (or adoption) of

relationship marketing efforts. If someone has a lot of emotional intelligence, retail employees and brand reps can use that emotional intelligence to become more empathetic and personalized with customers who make marketing messages and strategies sound more relevant and relatable. The personal connection can help increase customer trust, increase customer loyalty and improve customer experience. In a highly competitive electronics and consumer goods industry where we struggle with commoditized, interchangeable products, these emotional connections became a unique competitive advantage for brands.

Despite their recognized importance, there is surprisingly little research systematically addressing how customer relationships in this sector are shaped by the interaction of perceived value and emotional intelligence. Hence, this study strives to fill that gap by examining the dual role of perceived value and emotional intelligence as intervening items in the link between relationship marketing strategies and customer relationship outcomes. The research, through this lens, aims to offer actionable wisdom on how retailers can leverage these factors to achieve greater customer engagement, trust, and long term relationship quality.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Studies have shown that relationship marketing strategies including communication, conflict handling, empathy and emotional intelligence have relationship into perceived value and customer relationships (Singh et al., 2020) and perceived value is a direct impact on customer loyalty especially in services industries. Like Torres et al. (2021), research seems to argue the point that empathy in the customer interaction can build trust and satisfaction leading to stronger long term relationships with customers. Another key factor of conflict handling, Chinomona & Maziriri (2019) proved that good conflict management enhances the perceived value of which is considered as the signal of commitment to customer welfare, thereby influencing relationship quality positively. Much like Zhao et al. (2022), the authors also shed light and emphasize how empathy can reduce customer dissatisfaction during service recovery which will increase perceived value, and loyalty. Moreover, Tsaour et al. (2023) discovered that emotionally intelligent service personnel are better at conflict management and supplying empathy, and provide higher customer satisfaction and loyalty. This is supported by a study by Brierley et al. (2020) who suggests that emotional intelligence of staff mediates their effect on customer loyalty, that is, emotional competencies of staff lead to indirectly enhance customer retention because value perceived by customers.

Similarly, on the other hand, Hossain & Quaddus (2022) investigated how perceived value is a mediating mechanism that links empathy and customer bond, that is, higher empathy levels lead to higher perceived relational value leading to a stronger customer bond. Additionally, Anwar et al. (2021) says that empathy when coupled with communication is a contributor to customers perceiving a higher sense value which makes them to feel better taken care of and valued, and so they will be loyal. Research by Ghaffari & Fazlzadeh (2019) finally concludes that communication and the conflict handling predict the customer loyalty as the perceived value acts as the moderating variable. Taken together, the findings from these studies highlight the interaction between relationship marketing strategy, perceived value, and customer relationship quality.

Statement of the problem

Although everyone agrees that relationship marketing strategies are powerful to build customer loyalty and satisfaction, the impact of moderating factors including perceived value and emotional intelligence is understudied. For example, in the electronics and consumer goods retail sector, exactly how these variables affect relationship marketing effort effectiveness is unclear. This study attempts to fill this void by investigating how relationship marketing strategies are mediated and emotional intelligence moderates their relationship with customer relationships.

Research gap

Research on relationship marketing strategies and customer loyalty has been quite extensive, but very little has been devoted to the combined influence of perceived value and emotional intelligence as intervening factors. Studying customer relationships in electronics and consumer goods sector, the existing studies hardly focus on the moderating role of emotional intelligence and how it interacts with perceived value to build customer relationship. This study attempts to fill this gap by examining

these factors simultaneously in an integrated manner where relationship marketing strategies can most favorably enhance strong customer relationship with these specific factors.

Research question

It seeks to find answers to questions like how does communication, conflict handling, and empathy as relationship marketing strategies affect customer relationships and to what extent perceived value, emotional intelligence acts as mediating and moderating factors respectively, to further these relationships.

Research objectives

This research examines the mediating impact of perceived value on the relationship between relationship marketing strategies and customer relationship outcome. In addition, it also investigates how perceived value affects customer relationship and how emotion IQ moderates perceived value on customer relationship. The research applies structural equation modeling (SEM) to test the integrated effect of these variables to understand the complete effect relationship marketing strategies have on customer relationships through perceived value and emotional intelligence.

Hypothesis

H01: The relationship between Relationship Marketing Strategies and customer relationship is not mediated by perceived value.

H02: Emotional Intelligence does not moderate the relationship between Perceived Value and customer relationship

H03: There is not good fit for the hypothesized model.

Proposed conceptual model

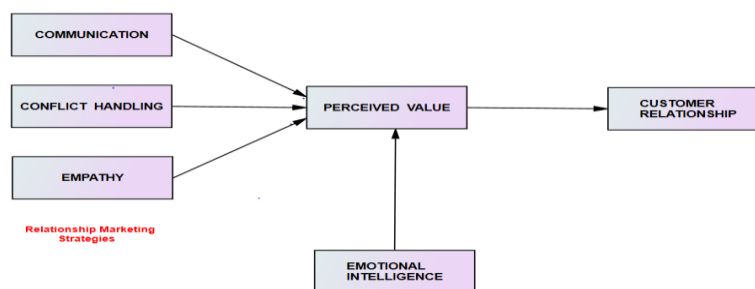


Figure 1: Proposed conceptual model

The model illustrates how relationship marketing strategies such as communication, conflict handling, and empathy influence perceived value, which in turn impacts customer relationship as an outcome. Perceived value and customer relationship is moderated by emotional intelligence in that it affects the strength or direction of the relation between the two variables. On the other hand, the model presented here intends to explore, first the mediating role of perceived value, and secondly moderation effect of emotional intelligence in efficacy of relationship marketing strategy to promote customer relationships.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

On a quantitative basis, this study investigates the effect of relationship marketing strategies, perceived value, and emotional intelligence to customer relationships. A sample of 391 purposive units from the electronics and consumer goods retail sector was taken based on Cochran's formula to determine sample size. The purposive sampling involves sampling targeted respondents who are knowledgeable and involved in customer affairs in retail terms of business. Structured surveys were conducted to obtain data on respondents' perceptions of relationship marketing efforts, perceived value, emotional intelligence, and customer relationship quality.

Data analysis

Data In this study, data analysis will have been done by testing mediating, moderating, and structural relationships among variables using Hayes' PROCESS macro for SPSS and Structural Equation

Modeling (SEM). The mediation and moderation analysis will be conducted by utilizing Hayes' PROCESS in order to test how the perceived value mediates the relationship between overall relationship marketing strategies (combining of communication, conflict handling, and empathy) and customer relationship, and how it moderates the effect of perceived value on customer relationship. The entire structural model will then be validated through SEM to test all paths simultaneously with validity of the model being tested via CFI and RMSEA. By combining Hayes' techniques and SEM this approach provides a comprehensive view of the direct, indirect and moderated pathways that influence customer relationships.

Hayes process macro mediation analysis

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***** TOTAL, DIRECT, AND INDIRECT EFFECTS OF X ON Y *****
Total effect of X on Y
  Effect      se      t      p      LLCI      ULCI      c_cs
.8379      .0200     41.9790    .0000     .7986     .8771     .9051

Direct effect of X on Y
  Effect      se      t      p      LLCI      ULCI      c'_cs
.7979      .0269     29.7007    .0000     .7451     .8507     .8619

Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:
Perceive      Effect      BootSE      BootLLCI      BootULCI
.0400      .0400      .0190      .0047      .0794

Completely standardized indirect effect(s) of X on Y:
Perceive      Effect      BootSE      BootLLCI      BootULCI
.0432      .0206      .0051      .0855

***** ANALYSIS NOTES AND ERRORS *****
Level of confidence for all confidence intervals in output:
95.0000

Number of bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals:
5000
    
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Figure 2: Mediation analysis result

Interpretation

Mediation analysis results indicate that perceived value does mediate the relationship between relationship marketing strategies (x) and customer relationship (y). It is significant to the total effect of X such that X has significant effect on Y (Effect = 0.8379, $p < 0.001$), therefore relationship marketing strategies have strong overall effect on customer relationship. Effect = 0.7979 ($p < 0.001$) also highlighting the fact that perceived value does not nullify the significance of the direct relationship marketing strategy to customer relationships. Although less important than the mediated path, the indirect effect by perceived value is, likewise, important (Effect = 0.0400; 95% CI [0.0047, 0.0794]), an indication of this in that the confidence interval about zero is not completely to the right of zero. The findings from this study indicate that relationship marketing strategies are partially mediated by perceived value, in the customer relationship. Hence we reject the null hypothesis (H01) and maintain that perceived value partially mediates the relationship marketing strategy impact on customer relationship.

Hayes process macro moderation analysis

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Model Summary
      R      R-sq      MSE      F      df1      df2      P
.8802      .7748      .1314     443.7593     3.0000     387.0000     .0000

Model
      coeff      se      t      p      LLCI      ULCI
constant     -1.1722     .2903     -4.0384     .0001     -1.7430     -.6015
Perceive       .7742     .0693     11.1765     .0000     .6380     .9104
Emotiona      1.0538     .0746     14.1224     .0000     .9071     1.2005
Int_1         -1.1200     .0168     -7.1519     .0000     -1.1530     -.0870

Product terms key:
Int_1      :      Perceive x      Emotiona

Test(s) of highest order unconditional interaction(s):
      R2-chng      F      df1      df2      p
x*W      .0298      51.1497      1.0000     387.0000     .0000
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Focal predict: Perceive (X)
Mod var: Emotiona (W)

Conditional effects of the focal predictor at values of the moderator(s):
      Emotiona      Effect      se      t      p      LLCI      ULCI
3.4804      .3564      .0236     15.0716     .0000     .3099     .4029
4.3708      .2495      .0239     10.4428     .0000     .2026     .2965
5.0000      .1740      .0291      5.9738     .0000     .1168     .2313
    
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Figure 3: Moderation analysis result

Interpretation

The analysis of moderation results shows that emotional intelligence plays a significant role in moderating both customer relationship value' at once and perceived value' on the customer

relationship. Perceived value ($b = 0.7742$, $p < 0.001$) and emotional intelligence ($b = 1.0538$, $p < 0.001$) both positively and significantly influence customer relationship individually. Therefore, interaction term (Perceive \times Emotional Intelligence) is significant ($b = -0.1200$, $p < 0.001$) as well; with an R^2 change of 0.0298, which is significant, indicating that adding interaction term plays an important role in explaining customer relationship variance. This result shows that the relationships between perceived value and customer relationship are differ according to the level of emotional intelligence. In particular, they show that as emotional intelligence increases, perceived value has smaller effects on customer relationship. Thus, H02 is rejected and a significant moderating role for emotional intelligence in the relationship between perceived value and customer relationship is confirmed.

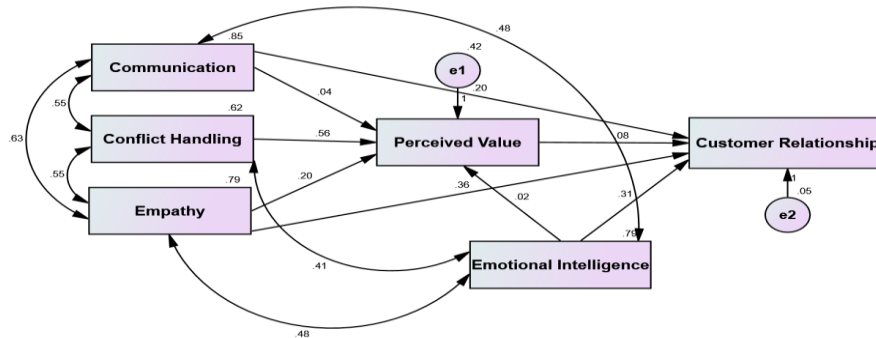


Figure 4: SEM path analysis

Table 1: Model fit measures

Measure	Estimate	Criteria	Interpretation
CMIN		-	
DF		-	
CMIN/DF	1	Between 1 and 3	Model Fit
GFI	0.999	> 0.9	Model Fit
CFI	1	> 0.95	Model Fit
SRMR	0.001	< 0.08	Model Fit
RMSEA	0.000	< 0.06	Model Fit
PClose	0.561	> 0.05	Model Fit

Interpretation

The results then suggest that the hypothesized model can be accepted as shown by rejection of the null hypothesis H0₃ that the model does not fit well. Key fit indices support this conclusion: Since the CMIN/DF ratio of 1 is well within the acceptable range of 1 and 3, the discrepancy between the model and the data is minimal. Furthermore, GFI (0.999), CFI (1), and SRMR (0.001) surpass of the threshold for a good fit; values showing them closely representing the observed data. The model had RMSEA = 0.000 and PClose = 0.561 which means the model fit is good and it is not different from perfect. Altogether, these indices establish that the hypothesized model agrees with the observed data well, and hence the hypothesized model characterizes the relationships in the dataset adequately.

FINDINGS

It also identifies perceived value as a partial mediator between relationship marketing strategies and customer relationships. This implies that relationship marketing strategies are directly linked with customer relationships, and that perceived value is an additional path of influence, but with smaller effects. Moreover, emotional intelligence also moderates the relation between perceived value and customer relationship and the findings indicate that emotional intelligence weakens the impact of

perceived value. Overall, the structural equation model (SEM) has a high fit to the data, emphasizing the robustness of the proposed model and hypothesized relationships within.

SUGGESTIONS

It is possible to strengthen the model by refining the construction that captures nuanced dimensions of perceived value and emotional intelligence. Second, samples can represent more diverse industries, or broader demographic profiles to learn more about the universality or variability of these effects. Furthermore, the moderating effect may also be further explored through a multi-level analysis to determine if industry specific factors affect these relationships even more.

SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could investigate additional mediators or moderators, additional than trust or customer satisfaction, that could help explain the paths between relationship marketing strategies and the customer relationships. Further longitudinal studies are encouraged to view the impact over time and identify any longer term influences where the perceived value and emotional intelligence influenced customer relationships.

CONCLUSION

The hypothesized model is validated and it is emphasised that direct and indirect relationship marketing strategies are needed to promote strong customer relationship. The results suggest that relationship marketing directly skews customer relationships while perceived value serves as a partial mediator, creating additional perceived benefit or satisfaction among customers. Furthermore, perceived value should also affect customer relationship outcomes, which are moderated by emotional intelligence. More specifically, as emotional intelligence levels increase, the effect of perceived value on customer relationships decreases, perhaps because high emotional intelligence customers might rely less on perceptions of value than emotional perceptions alone. This nuanced interaction allows understanding of the conditions in which relationship marketing is most effective and demonstrates how emotional factors and perceived value compensate and work in very meaningful ways to influence customer loyalty and engagement. The relatively strong fit of the structural equation model to the data further verifies the robustness of these relationships, and this framework effectively describes the underlying dynamics. Taken together, these insights suggest that relationship marketing approaches must take account of not just the customer's perception of offering value, but also his or her emotional intelligence, in order to maximize customer engagement and loyalty.

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