RELATIONSHIP MARKETING DYNAMICS AND CUSTOMER LOYALTY IN HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
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In response to the challenges facing higher educational institutions, including declining public funding, globalization and stiff competition, this study aims to fill literature gaps by proposing and validating a customer loyalty model based on relationship marketing for the higher education sector. Drawing upon social exchange and social learning theories, this study examines the moderating effect of long term orientation on the link between relationship marketing dynamics and customer loyalty. A total of 416 graduates and undergraduate students of federal universities in Nigeria participated in the study. The results of the partial least squares (PLS) path analysis supported the hypothesized direct and indirect effects of relationship marketing dynamics on customer loyalty. Specifically, relationship marketing dynamics of bonding, communication, and personalization were found to have significant positive relationship with customer satisfaction and trust. The results of the analysis also suggest that customer satisfaction and trust mediate the link between bonding, communication, personalization and customer loyalty. Furthermore, long term orientation moderates the relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Specifically, there is more significant positive relationship between customer satisfaction and customer loyalty for individual customers high in long term orientation than for individual customers low in long term orientation. However, no moderating effect of long term orientation was found on the path between trust and customer loyalty. Taken together, the findings of the study lend empirical support to the view that relationship marketing in general, and service personalization in particular, can promote customer loyalty, especially among individual customers high in long term orientation. Hence, knowledge of individual customer long term orientation can assist university administrators in managing their students profile effectively. Theoretical, managerial, and methodological implications are discussed and a conclusion is drawn.

**Keywords:** customer loyalty, relationship marketing, customer satisfaction, long term orientation, higher education sector
ABSTRAK


Kata kunci: kesetiaan pelanggan, pemasaran perhubungan, kepuasan pelanggan, orientasi jangka panjang, sektor pengajian tinggi
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<td>AVE</td>
<td>Average Variance Extracted</td>
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<td>BON</td>
<td>Bonding</td>
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<td>CLOY</td>
<td>Customer Loyalty</td>
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<td>CMV</td>
<td>Common Method Variance</td>
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<td>COM</td>
<td>Communication</td>
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<td>CRM</td>
<td>Customer Relationship Management</td>
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<td>CS</td>
<td>Customer Satisfaction</td>
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<td>f2</td>
<td>Effect Size</td>
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<td>FMOE</td>
<td>Federal Ministry of Education</td>
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<td>GoF</td>
<td>Goodness of Fit</td>
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<td>HE</td>
<td>Higher Education</td>
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<td>HEIs</td>
<td>Higher Educational Institutions</td>
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<td>HES</td>
<td>High Education Sector</td>
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<td>LISREL</td>
<td>Linear Structural Relationship</td>
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<td>LTO</td>
<td>Long Term Orientation</td>
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<td>MBA</td>
<td>Master of Business Administration</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>OYAGSB</td>
<td>Othman Yeop Abdullah Graduate School of Business</td>
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<td>PER</td>
<td>Personalization</td>
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<td>PBUH</td>
<td>Peace Be Upon Him</td>
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<td>PhD</td>
<td>Doctor of Philosophy</td>
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<table>
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<th>Abbr</th>
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<td>PLS</td>
<td>Partial Least Squares</td>
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<td>Q2</td>
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<td>R2</td>
<td>Coefficient of Determination</td>
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<td>RM</td>
<td>Relationship Marketing</td>
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<td>SEM</td>
<td>Structural Equation Modelling</td>
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<td>SET</td>
<td>Social Exchange Theory</td>
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<td>SLT</td>
<td>Social Learning Theory</td>
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<td>SPSS</td>
<td>Statistical Package for the Social Sciences</td>
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<td>SWT</td>
<td><em>Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>TR</td>
<td>Trust</td>
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<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>United States of America</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
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<td>Universiti Utara Malaysia</td>
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The strategic importance of the services marketing industry is universally acknowledged as dominating the global market (Berry, 1995; Gummeson & Gronroos, 2012) and providing over 70 per cent of employment in both the public and private domains (Berger & Humphrey, 1992; Hoffman & Birnbrich, 2012). Perhaps, this accounts for the shift in marketing theory and practice from manufacturing or goods marketing to services marketing (Gronroos, 1994). Extant literature suggests that in service context, relationship marketing (RM) is most critical because services are perceived intangible, easily perishable and less consistent (Palmatier, Dant, Grewal & Evans, 2006). Further, customers and firms are more involved in the consumption and production of services than they are for manufactured products (Zeithaml, Parasuraman & Berry, 1985). These basic features of services imply that consumers cannot verify claims made by service providers by mere inspection (Abubakar, 2011; Palmer, 2000) thus, making trust a critical decision making parameter in the production and consumption of services (Palmatier, et al., 2006).

Within the services industry, the education sector is a key component given its critical and pivotal role in the development agenda of nations (UNESCO, 2013). The university as a social institution has the mandate to enrol and graduate students in various scientific and educational fields that are excellent in character and learning for the
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