Effects of Relationship Marketing Strategies on Customer Responses in Iran's Banking Industry: Role of Mediator the Relationship Quality

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Abstract

The current paper seeks to study the effects of Relationship marketing strategies on relationship quality, customer's behavioral and attitudinal responses by presenting a model for effectiveness of relationship marketing in Iran's Banking industry. Survey method was used for this study and Questionnaire was selected as the most appropriate tool for data collection. In these respect customers of Iran banks was selected as the target population of the suggested theoretical model of this experiment and 417customers of the bank have participated as the statistical samples to achieve the goals of this paper. The collected data was analyzed through structural equation modeling (AMOS 18). Findings of the current Paper showed that the strategies of communication development, staff expertise development and investment in relationship are effecting the improvement of relationship quality between bank and the customer, but conflict management has no effect on the quality of this relationship. Also the results of the research showed that the quality of bank-customer relationship has positive effects on Customer loyalty, word-of-mouth and customer's share.

Keywords: Relationship marketing strategies, relationship quality, customer loyalty, customer share, word-of-mouth.

Introduction

Relationship marketing has taken a central position in marketing strategy in the past two decades[1]. Existing trends in business, such as transition to a services-based economy, development of information and communication technologies, increasing global competition, etc has led to increasing the importance and attractiveness of loyalty based on the relationship in comparison with other mix marketing of companies. However, some of these trends have improved the expectations of our customers to receive exclusive features, such as reducing the perceived risk, the level of trust and greater flexibility in the exchange-based relationship. This situation often creates a relationship in transactions[2] between buyers and sellers. Today in the banking industry, long-term relationship with the customer is a critical strategy. Banks need to establish a long-term relationship with its customers in order to sustain in current competitive environment in banking. Many studies have shown that the profitability of a bank depends strongly on customer loyalty and retention[3].

In recent years, the financial services sector in Iran, particularly the banking industry has become more competitive due to the emergency of new technologies, relative similarity of service and emergency of private sector competitors and of any other time, banks require establishing secure and close relationship with customers for distinct and sustained presence in the competition. It is obvious that maintaining and developing a long term relationship does not occur spontaneously and it

needs adopting appropriate strategies for relationship marketing. Therefore for a better understanding of relationship marketing strategies, and high effectiveness to establish and maintain long term relationship with the customers of the banking industry in Iran, it is necessary to do a comprehensive study.

This Paper wants to do such a study and in this regard, we will try to offer insights in the development of more comprehensive models to the researchers that indicate effect of relationship marketing strategies on relationship quality and customer responses in the banking industry.

Our study is structured as follows. First, we define the meaning of relationship quality and determine their dimensions within the literature. Second, we determine the relationship marketing strategies affecting relationship quality. Third, we test the effects of strategies of relationship marketing on the quality of the relationship. Finally, we conclude with a discussion of the managerial implications of the study and directions for the future researches.

The Conceptual Model and the Literature Review: It is essential that literature is developed based on the proposed model in order to provide theoretical and experimental support for the each hypothesis. Therefore in this section, first theoretical model is presented. Then theoretical and experimental evidence for the hypothesized relationships in the model are presented to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the causal relationships between variables, and

to support the research hypothesis. Therefore, we suggest the following model for the present study base on preliminary studies in the relevant literature on relationship marketing. Required to explain that this model is formed based on composition and modification Different models are presented by Palmatier[1], Palmatier et al.[4] and the studies of Terawatanavong, et al.[5] and Chen, et al.[6]

Relationship Marketing Strategies: Existing literature presents wide range of activities and strategies to create a strong and long term relationship with the customer[4]. Palmatier et al.[4] search the empirical research from 1987 to 2004 (17 years) and conduct a meta-analysis through which they identify 97 different empirical investigations representing 38,077 different relationships. In this study, 9 relationship marketing strategies have been identified that have influence on the quality of the relationship, based on the importance. They are: Conflict management, expertise of vendor, Communication, Relationships investments, Similarity, Relationship benefits, Dependence on seller, the frequency and duration of interaction. In the recent study, According to limitations of the model among these strategies, only four strategies were selected that have the greatest effect on the quality of the relationship between buyer and seller. The strategies are respectively: Conflict management, Seller expertise, Communication, and Relationships investments that are discussed separately below.

Conflict Management and Relationship Quality: Conflict management is reflecting of the ability of Seller for avoiding of potential conflict, Solve conflicts before they create problems, the ability to talk freely and presented appropriate solutions when problem occurs. Conflict management requires the cooperative behavior of the parties to the transaction. Although in service industries, particularly in the banking achieving to exchange is hard without conflict, presenting effective solutions to conflict or having an appropriate mechanism for solving problems is very important.

Ndubisi[7,8] confirms positive effects of conflict management on the relationship quality in the banking industry in Malaysia.

Lattimore[9] found similar results in the banking industry in Canada and U.S. and suggests that conflict management causes the increase of customer commitment, customer trust and finally customer satisfaction to the bank. We therefore propose:

H1: Conflict Management is positively related to relationship quality.

Communication and Relationship Quality: Communications refers to ability of providing timely and reliable information[10]. Communication in relationship marketing means having a constant contact with valuable customers, providing timely and reliable information about services and its changes and establishing active communication before occurring problems in service.

Valuable information and transparency in transactions between parties improves trust in relationships by reassuring the parties about common promises, identifying new opportunities to create value that causes to increase the commitment in a relationship. Communication accordance with their roles about identifying opportunities with value shows positive impact on all aspects of the quality of the relationship[1].

In recent years various researchers such as Yang and Capel[11], Aisyah Salim[2], Naoui and Zaiem[12], Wong and Sohal[13], Ndubisi[7], Ndubisi[8], Kim and Cha[14], confirmed the positive effect of communication on the quality of the relationship and its dimensions that are trust, commitment and satisfaction of relationship. We therefore propose:

H2: Communication is positively related to relationship quality.

Seller Expertise and Relationship Quality: Seller expertise is the reflection of knowledge, experience and generally competency of the seller. When consumers are faced with the qualified and competent vendor, they receive more value, relationships are more important and they try for improving and maintaining relationships[15].
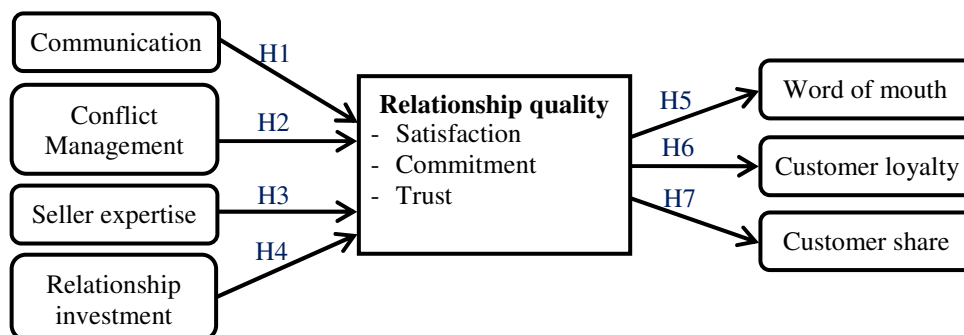

Figure-1
Proposed Theoretical Model of Relationship Marketing in Banking Industry

Crosby, et al.[15] realized that Seller expertise on the relationship quality in the insurance industry has positive and meaningful effect. Experienced and qualified seller can decrease uncertainty and anxiety perceived by customers that causes more satisfaction and customer trust to the seller. Customers are faced with high uncertainty in exchange of service because of the nature of service. Therefore professional ability of the Seller for reducing the uncertainty of customer determines the quality of the relationship[15]. Many authors conformed effect of seller expertise on relationship quality between buyer and seller[16, 17, 7].

Chen et al.[6] showed that customer perceptions of the level of expertise and merit of the vendor have an impact on the quality of the relationship (commitment, trust and relationship satisfaction) in financial services industry. We therefore propose:

H3: Seller expertise is positively related to relationship quality.

Relationship Investment and Relationship Quality: Relationships investment refers to the investment of time, effort, and other irrecoverable resources in a relationship to create psychological bonds that encourage customers to stay in that relationship and to set an expectation of reciprocation. Expectation of reciprocation can help strengthen and maintain a relationship, thereby positively influencing trust, commitment, and satisfaction[6].

Liang and Wang[18] and Wang et al.[19] express that companies can interact with their customers through the investment in the three relational bonds (financial, social and structural). In financial bonds, service provider uses economic benefits such as price, discounts and other financial incentives to secure customer loyalty[20, 21]. For example, in the banking, banks can present Free Service or discount for their permanent customers in the form of the loyalty programs[20].

Social bonds Include Interpersonal relationships that are established by self express intimacy, making supporting, expressing sympathy, responding, shared sense and experience. Generally, social bonds include many aspects such as: acquaintance, friendship, social support, maintaining the relationship, expressed self or any other interpersonal interaction[20].

According to Smith[22], structural bonds have been seen as ties relating to the structure, governance, and institutionalization of norms in a relationship. Accordingly, banks can provide benefits for customers with implementation of these activities that easily it is not imitated by competitors. For example, some banks provide to their clients web-based technology so that they can access account information and other information.

Smith's research shows that there are a strong relationship between the functional bonds (e.g. financial) and social bonds and quality of the relationship. However it is not true about the structural bonds and quality of the relationship. In another study, Wang et al.[19] presented more empirical evidence on the effects of relational bonds, including any financial, social and structural on quality of relationship. We therefore propose:

H4: Relationship investment is positively related to relationship quality.

Relationship Quality: The second part of the theoretical model of research is allocated to the link between the quality of relationship and behavioral and attitudinal response of customer including of loyalty, word of mouth and share of customer. For this purpose, first the issue of quality of relationship as a higher-order construct that is made the three components of trust, commitment and satisfaction, is discussed and then the empirical evidence for the hypothesized relationship between quality of relationship and behavioral and attitudinal responses of customer is presented.

Relationship quality has been viewed as "an overall assessment of the strength of the relationship and the extent to which it meets the needs and expectations of the parties based on a history of successful encounters or events"[22]. That is, relationship quality means that to what extent the relationship is consistent with needs, perceptions goals and aspiration[13]. Crosby et al.[15] provided a model which is suggesting that from the customer's viewpoint, the higher the ability of the salesman in reducing the ambiguity in a relation, the higher the quality of the relation. In the framework of the model, the high levels of relationship quality means that customer trusts in salesman's integrity and this leads to his satisfaction.

Relationship quality is generally conceptualized as a multi-dimensional construct and considered as a higher-order construct, consisting of several distinct though related dimensions[23]. Crosby et al.[15] defined relationship quality as "a higher–order construct composed of at least two dimensions, including trust in the salesperson, and satisfaction with the salesperson".

In reviewing the literature in this field, is determined that Wang et al.[19], and Palmatier et al.[4] added a third dimension of relationship commitment to the earlier two dimensions of relationship quality (trust and satisfaction). Although, other authors have also added another dimension to relationship quality construct, this dimension has not received much attention in relationship marketing researchers.

Trust is generally viewed as a two-dimensional construct, consisting of perceived credibility and benevolence of the trust target[24]. Doney and Cannon suggested that frequent interactions between customers and firm can help customers to assess the service firm's credibility and benevolence.

When we look at the literature which also serve the role of **satisfaction** as a tool for measuring and evaluating the relational quality, it is obvious that satisfaction is being seen as an affective position in which the cognitive aspect is not being considered. This can be explained better when we focus more precisely on the affective-based components of satisfaction and find it more important than the cognitive ones[20].

According to Morgan and Hunt[25] commitment is regarded as an essential component for successful long-term relationships. According to Fullerton[26], definitions of commitment within relationship marketing mirror those in the organizational behavioral setting where commitment has been conceptualized within the three-component framework. This is particularly so when taking into account that affective commitment and normative commitment are the same due to the components being highly correlated[27] from continuance perspective, commitment is fuelled by the ongoing benefits accruing to each partner. From an affective commitment perspective, Moorman et al.[28] defined commitment as "an enduring desire to maintain a valued relationship".

Relationship Quality and Word of Mouth: Palmatier[1] believe that behaviors such as word of mouth resulting from the high cost of switching supplier or lack of time and motivation are not created, in comparison of customer loyalty that is one of the most effective indicators.

Assuming that customers have only a strong relationship with the supplier, his reputation is jeopardized with description of the supplier in front of the potential customers, therefore, trust and commitment has a positive effect on word of mouth.

He also expresses that referral behavior and word of mouth from behaviors influenced by the loyalty can be different because the two factors represent two different communication techniques for improving performance. Loyalty affects the financial output through change in the exchange process with customer loyalty while, word of mouth affect often through financial outputs affects the creation of new customers for the business[1]. Findings of researchers such as Aisyah Salim[2], Chen et al.[6], Chung and Shin[29], Rajaobelina and Bergeron[17], and Macintosh et al.[16] indicates that dimensions of quality of relationship (trust, commitment and satisfaction) have a positive impact on word of mouth. Therefore we assume that:

H5: Relationship quality is positively related to word of mouth.
Relationship Quality and Customer Loyalty: According to Palmatier et al.[4], Increasing customer loyalty is one of the most common consequences that achieved by adopting a relationship marketing strategies. That is why the main objective of relationship marketing is to establish long term relationship with customers which called "customer loyalty".

Shamdasani and Balakrishnan[30] achieved the results that the quality of the relationship consists of trust and satisfaction on loyalty is a powerful factor. This results that show the link between quality of relationship and behavioral and attitudinal loyalty in banking are compatible with increasing evidence. For example, the results of Liang and Wang[18] shows quality of relationship Leads to behavioral and attitudinal loyalty in banking. Wang et al.[19] similarly showed quality of relationship has a significant influence on customer loyalty. We therefore propose:

H6: Relationship quality is positively related to customer loyalty.

Relationship Quality and Customer Share: Although most researchers expressed customer loyalty and word of mouth as a result of relationship quality**,** but some researchers found the influence of relationship quality (commitment, trust, satisfaction) on functional outcomes of seller such as customer share in their studies.[31] Gummesson[32] introduced the concept of customer share in relationship marketing instead of market share. Customer share refers to a certain percentage of customer purchases of service or product of a company during of period. Castellanos-Verdugo et al.[33] concluded that in Spain hotel industry, Quality of relationship as a strong predictor is to obtain a greater share of the customer's stay at the hotel. Kim and Cha[14] also concluded that owners of hotels need to strengthen of trust and satisfaction in order to increase share of customer purchase and achieving consistency of relationship and positive word of mouth. Chen et al.[6] have confirmed the effect of the quality of relationship on customer's share. Begalle[31] also concluded that trust causes increasing share of customer. We therefore propose:

H7: Relationship quality is positively related to customer share.

Methodology

Measurement: The scales used in this research have been developed from a review of the relevant literature. In sum, a total of 42 scale items were used to measure the constructs in the model. Table 1 shows a summary of the number and source of the items used to test each construct.

All measurement scales reflect the underlying construct and employ seven-point Likert-type scales anchored by "strongly disagree" and "strongly agree" except construct of customer share. Respondents were asked to respond to a question (Of all the potential products you could purchase from this bank, what % you currently buy from this bank?).

The Sample and Data Collection: The questionnaire was finalized once a precise study of the related literature was completed; the viewpoints of the bank managers were received and the interviews with bank customers were prepared. The final stage was to receiving the expert opinions of the marketing scholars. Aim of This stage to evaluate the measures which were exploited in the study. All these were led to some

modifications and corrections in the questionnaire. The revised questionnaire was sent to 690 bank customers. 417 of 690 customers agreed to fill the questionnaire. This resulted in a 60 percent response rate and this is proper for using structural equation modeling.

Table-1
Total of Scale Items Used in This Research

Constructs	Number of Items	Sources
Relationship marketing strategies	**28**	-
Communication	4	Morgan and Hunt (1994)
Conflict management	6	Morgan and Hu nt(1994); Anderson and weitz (1989)
Seller expertise	5	Crosby et al. (1990); Castellanos-Verdugo et al. (2009)
Relationship investments	13	Palmatier et al. (2008)
Relationship quality	**14**	-
Satisfaction	4	Palmatier et al.(2007); De wulf et al.(2003)
Commitment Customer	5	Morgan and Hunt (1994); Chen et al. (2011); Roberts et al. (2003)
Trust Customer	5	Roberts et al. (2003); Swan et al. (1985); Churchill and Surprenant (1982)
Customer responses	**9**	-
Word of mouth	4	Castellanos-Verdugo et al. (2009)
Customer loyalty	4	De Wulf et al.(2001)
Customer share	1	Palmatier et al. (2007)

Analysis Approach: Data analysis proceeds according to the two-step approach recommended by Anderson and Gerbing[34]. That is, first the measurement model is estimated. Then, using AMOS Version 18.0, a structural model is analyzed and the path coefficients are estimated.

As shown in figure 2, the first stage (measurement model) aims to develop the underlying measures. By using CFA, the measurement model stage in this research was conducted in two steps. This involves the assessment of the unidimensionality, followed by the assessment of reliability and validity of the underlying constructs. In Assessing Unidimensionality, Based on the results of confirmatory factor analysis, Items which have a weak load on supposed constructs were excluded from the measurement instrument. The value of acceptable factor load is, 0.5 in this study.
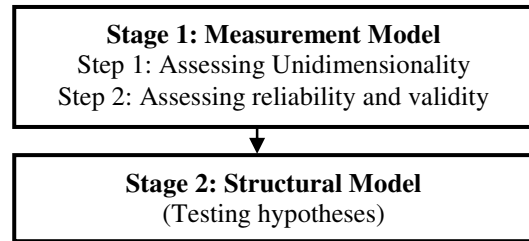
Stage 1: Measurement Model
Step 1: Assessing Unidimensionality
Step 2: Assessing reliability and validity

Stage 2: Structural Model
(Testing hypotheses)

Figure-2
Two-Stage Structural Model Used in This Study

After being Unidimensionality constructs were determined, the validity and reliability constructs are tested in the second step. Procedure of Cranach's alpha, construct reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) were used to assess the reliability of construct. Validity of the research was evaluated by two procedures content validity and construct validity.

After this step, paths and causal relationships were determined between latent variables in the structural model (Stage Two), in the structural model, this question is answered that how can causal relationships between the hidden variables and causal effects and clarified variances are studied? In other words, the structural model will examine research hypothesis and it shows what extent the variance of the hidden variable are explained by other factors (Except for the variable or hidden variable in the model).

Results and Discussion

Sample Characteristics: Sample characteristics results are presented in table 2. In this sample, there were more men (286; 74 percent) than women (101; 26 percent). Their median age ranged from 25 to 34 years and their median relationship duration with bank ranged from 1 to 5 years.

Table-2
Demographic Data

		Number of Respondents	%
Gender	Male	101	26
	Female	286	74
Age	Up to 25	29	7.1
	25-34	162	39.4
	35-44	156	38
	45-54	62	15.1
	55-64	4	1
	65+	2	0.5
Relationship duration with bank **(years)**	1-5	136	33.8
	6-10	132	32.8
	11-20	109	27.1
	20+	25	6.2

Measurement Model: The results of the measurement model as mentioned, at this step the measurement model is evaluated in

two parts. The evaluation of one-dimensionality of each factor is in the first phase and assessment of validity and reliability of each construct is devoted in the second phase.

Assessing the Unidimensionality (step-1): Each of the constructs under investigation Including communication, conflict management, staff competency, investment in relationship, relationship quality, customer loyalty and word of mouth advertising were analyzed in a distinct measuring model separately. Items that load factor less than 0.5 were eliminated for the confirmation of the measuring model and the model was redefined. More detailed assessment of fitting of models was obtained by survey of modification indices and normalized residual or standardized residual[35].

Standardized residual refers to the difference between the observed variance and covariance and estimated variance and covariance. The modification indices refer to calculation each of estimated relations. Residuals greater than ±2.58 are Indicate the specific error in the model. Also, the amount more than 3.84 shows in modification indices when the associated parameters (fixed) can be estimated, Chi-square model decrease significantly[35]. table 3 shows the evaluation of Unidimensionality of each of the constructs in model.

Reliability and Validity of Construct (step-2): Reliability and validity of construct should be evaluated after performing of the

unidimensionality step and before testing the hypotheses in the structural model (stage two). table 4 Shows Results of test of validity and reliability of measurement model. As can be seen in table 4, All Evaluated indexes of validity and reliability are in acceptable level.

Structural Model (Hypothesis Test): The results of the structural model are presented in tables 5 and 6. These results indicate that although, except assumption H_2 and H_3, the other hypothesis of the research are meaningful in the level of p< 0.001 and can be confirmed in terms of statistical, the model does not have fitting adequate. Since some goodness-of-fit indices are not within acceptable levels (χ^2/df=4.89, AGFI=0.861, RMSEA=0.097) and Chi-square index is a meaningful ($\chi^2 = 229.2$, df = 47, p< 0.001, N=417). Therefore, it is essential to do adjustment in the model for Adequate Fitting the model. For this purpose, when modification indices was investigated, it was determined that Chi-square value will decrease of 47.019 units by correlated with the error of word of mouth and the customer loyalty (E7 and E8). Of course theoretically, correlating of Errors of the two variables is justifiable. In other words, it indicates that some influencing Indicators can be common on both variables and sometimes word of mouth is considered as a dimension of loyalty in literature review. Therefore, the structural model was performed by correlating of errors of E7 and E8.

Table-3
Evaluation of Unidimensionality Constructs in Model

Variable / Construct	Number of Items	The Number of Items Were Deleted	Reason for Omitting Item
Communication	4	1	Factor loading of item 4 was Less than 0.5 and Modify the modal by removing this item.
Conflict Management	6	2	Standardized residual For the item 6 was 2.71 that were not within the acceptable level. Modification indices also showed that item 3 had large values (12.02). Therefore, it was decided to remove these two items.
Seller expertise	5	1	Modification indices showed that item 4 had large values (22.12). Therefore, it was decided to remove this item
Relationship Investment	13	4	Standardized residuals indicated that four items (Item 1, item 5, item 9 and item 13) had residual values greater than the threshold of ±2.58. Therefore, it was decided to remove these four items.
Relationship Quality	14	3	Factor loading of item 4 was Less than 0.5 and Standardized residual also showed that item 7 and item 14 had large values. Therefore, it was decided to remove these three items.
Word of mouth	4	1	Modification indices showed that item 4 had large values (5.24). Therefore, it was decided to remove this item.
Loyalty	4	0	All items were confirmed.

Table-4
Measurement Model Evaluation

Construct	Items	Standardized Loading	Cronbach's alpha (α)	CR	AVE	Construct	Items	Standardized Loading	Cronbach's alpha (α)	CR	AVE
Communication	-	-	0.794	0.77	0.53	relationship Quality	-	-	0.926	0.95	0.66
	1	0.833	-	-	-		1	0.777	-	-	-
	2	0.67	-	-	-		2	0.881	-	-	-
	3	0.681	-	-	-		3	0.875	-	-	-
Conflict Management	-	-	0.912	0.81	0.52		4	0.851	-	-	-
	1	0.695	-	-	-		5	0.904	-	-	-
	2	0.653	-	-	-		6	0.868	-	-	-
	4	0.736	-	-	-		8	0.631	-	-	-
	5	0.79	-	-	-		10	0.77	-	-	-
Seller expertise	-	-	0.93	0.82	0.54		11	0.855	-		
	1	0.657	-	-	-		12	0.782	-	-	-
	2	0.834	-	-	-		13	0.72	-	-	-
	3	0.785	-	-	-	Word of mouth	-	-	0.963	091	0.78
	5	0.647	-	-	-		1	0.929	-	-	-
relationship Investment	-	-	0.921	0.93	0.61		2	0.926	-	-	-
	2	0.703	-	-	-		3	0.794	-	-	-
	3	0.928	-	-	-	Loyalty	-	-	0.962	0.93	0.78
	4	0.727	-	-	-		1	0.837	-	-	-
	6	0.718	-	-	-		2	0.907	-	-	-
	7	0.839	-	-	-		3	0.92	-	-	-
	8	0.782	-	-	-		4	0.872	-	-	
	10	0.783	-	-	-						
	11	0.832	-	-	-						
	12	0.715	-	-	-						

Table-5
Testing Hypotheses Using Standardized Estimates (Hypothesized Model)

Hypothesized Path	UnStd. Coefficients	S.E	Std. Coefficient	T-Value	p	Supported
H_1: Communication ⟶ Relationship quality	.128	.035	.173	3.664	.000	Yes
H_2: Conflict management ⟶ Relationship quality	.002	.04	.002	.044	.965	No
H_3: Seller expertise ⟶ Relationship quality	.078	.041	.098	1.902	.057	No
H_4: Relationship investment ⟶ Relationship quality	.633	.067	.669	9.46	.000	Yes
H_5: Relationship Quality ⟶ Word of mouth	1.149	.052	.913	22.22	.000	Yes
H_6: Relationship Quality ⟶ Customer Loyalty	1.139	.052	.906	21.97	.000	Yes
H_7: Relationship Quality ⟶ Customer share	8.156	1.3	.31	6.97	.000	Yes

Table-6
The Goodness-of-fit Indices of Hypothesized Structural Model

/df χ^2	RMSEA	CFI	NFI	TLI	AGFI	GFI	p	df	χ^2
4.89	.097	.948	.936	.927	.861	.916	.000	47	229.9

The results of modified model are presented in tables 7 and 8 and figure 3. As shown in table 7, statistically all hypotheses are meaningful and can be confirmed expect of the hypothesis of H_2. Also, the results of the goodness-of-fit indices show that this modified model fits the data adequately (table 8) and all goodness-of-fit indices are in acceptable range. As table 8 shows although chi-square are meaningful, other goodness-of-fit indices are in standard range.

According to table 7 can be expressed H_2 hypothesis is not confirmed and conflict management in bank has no effect on relationship quality between bank and customer however, other hypotheses are confirmed. In other words, Seller expertise, Communication, and relationship investment have a positive effect on the quality of the relationship in bank. Also quality of the relationship in this bank on word of mouth, Customer loyalty and share of customer has a positive and meaningful effect.
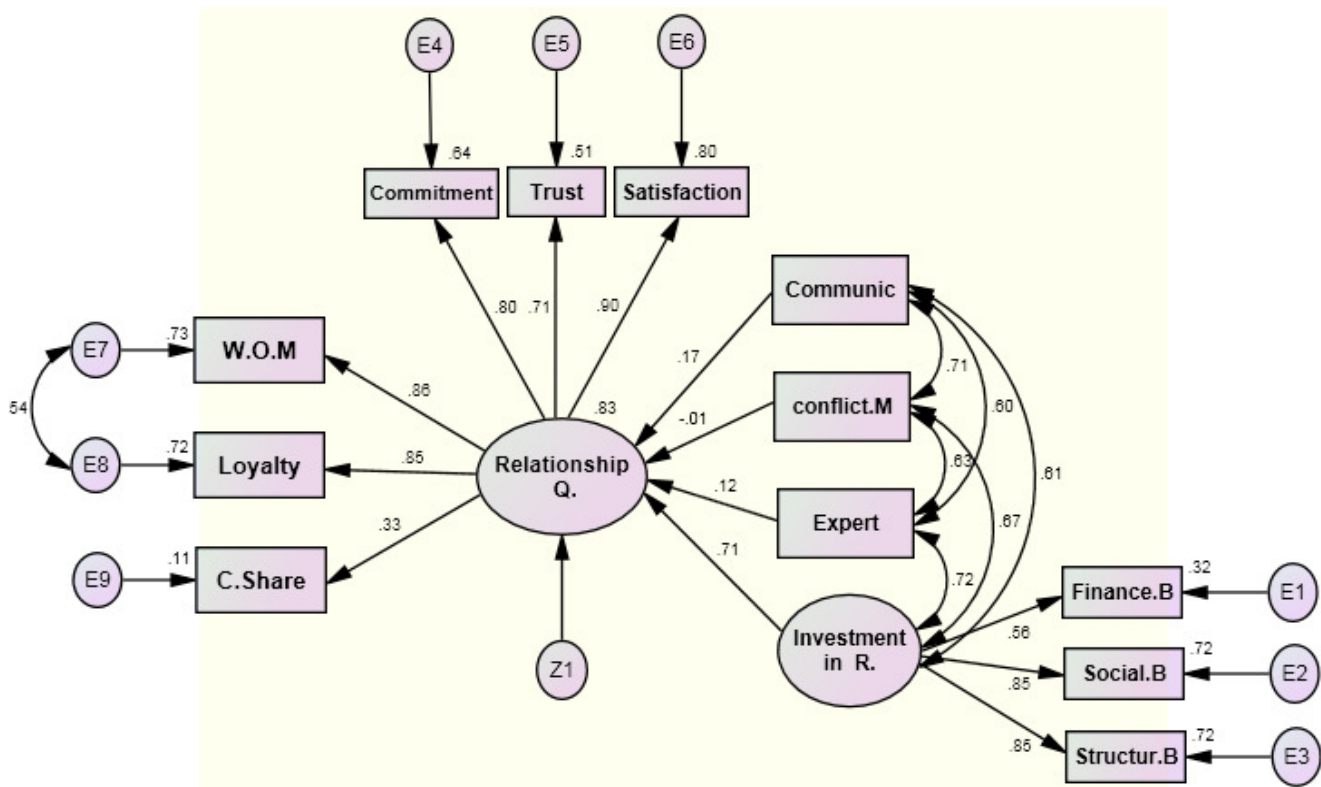

Figure-3
Final Structural Model

Table-7
Testing Hypotheses Using Standardized Estimates (Final Model)

Hypothesized Path	UnStd. Coefficients	S.E	Std. Coefficient	T-Value	p	Supported
H_1: Communication ⟶ Relationship quality	.131	.033	.174	3.92	.000	Yes
H_2: Conflict management ⟶ Relationship quality	-.009	.039	-.011	-.24	.811	No
H_3: Seller expertise ⟶ Relationship quality	.094	.039	.118	2.411	.016	Yes
H_4: Relationship investment ⟶ Relationship quality	.674	.065	.712	10.397	.000	Yes
H_5: Relationship Quality ⟶ Word of mouth	1.065	.053	.855	20.19	.000	Yes
H_6: Relationship Quality ⟶ Customer Loyalty	1.055	.053	.847	19.9	.000	Yes
H_7: Relationship Quality ⟶ Customer share	8.546	1.294	.327	6.606	.000	Yes

Table-8
The Goodness-of-fit Indices of Final Structural Model

/df χ^2	RMSEA	CFI	NFI	TLI	AGFI	GFI	p	df	χ^2
3.194	.073	.971	.959	.959	.914	.949	.000	46	146.9

Conclusion

Research results can be evaluated in two sections as follows: i. Effect of relationship marketing strategies on relationship quality. ii. Effect of relationship quality on attitudinal and behavioral responses of consumers.

The Effect of Relationship Marketing Strategies on Relationship Quality: Results of hypothesis test showed that development of Communication, promotion of competency of bank employees and financial, social and structural investment of bank for development of relations with customers enhance trust of bank customer and customer are committed themselves to bank and it causes that customers are pleased with the bank. This result in general makes that customer assess equality of the relationship between him/her and the bank properly. The results showed that all of relationship marketing strategies have no equivalent effect on equality of the relationship. Relationship investment on the quality of the relationship has the most effect among the relationship marketing strategies. However, Conflict Management has no effect the quality of the relationship. These results indicate that bank customers assess the quality of the relationship appropriately when bank provides some advantages in terms of financial, social and structural benefits for the customer. Although the competence and expertise of bank employees and development of communication have a positive effect on relationship quality from the viewpoints of Customer, this influence is less In comparison with relationship investment. Comparison of the present results with literature shows that the results of this study are compatible with previous results of Chen et al.[6], Palmatier et al.[4], Kim and Cha[14], Hennig-Thurau et al.[36] and Smith[22] about influence on relationship investment on relationship quality. Also the result of research about the effect of the communication on relationship quality is consistent with the results of such research of Yang and Capel[11], Aisyah Salim[2], Naoui and Zaiem[12], Wang et al.[19], Ndubisi et al.[8], Ndubisi[7], Palmatier et al.[4] and Kim and Cha[14].

In the section of financial service, the role of communication in the increasing of commitment and trust of customer to bank and in the improving the quality of the relationship is high due to the importance the performing to presented promise by the bank and new opportunities are provided to create values for customers.

There are rich theoretical and empirical supports in the current literature about the effect of expertise of bank employee on relationship quality that it can be mentioned the research of Rajaobelina and Bergeron[17], Ndubisi et al.[8], Macintosh et al.[16], Palmatier et al.[4] and Smith[22]. However it seems that expertise and competence of employee has less effect on the perceived quality of relationship by consumers due to the informing and standardizing of services in banks.

On the other hand, it is not unexpected the rejection of the effect of conflict management on relationship quality in this research

and previous research also shows the lack of confirmation. Relationship between conflict management and relationship quality has not been confirmed in researches of Yang and Capel[11]. In the Malaysia and New Zealand Banking and research of Terawatanavong et al[5]. Probably one of the reasons for disapproval in mentioned relationship In the Iranian banking is that customer considers conflict ordinary. Perhaps another reason is that usually, long-term conflict reduces trust and commitment of customers to seller and in the short term, this effect is reduced[1] and due to the culture of short-term convergence in Iran who they seek short-term benefits and in this case, especially in the banking industry where competition come over and approximately all banks offer the same services, can be true. Therefore there is this probability that the kind of attitude cause the lack of relationship between conflict management and relationship quality in banking industry in Iran.

The effect relationship quality on behavioral and attitudinal responses of customer: Results of hypothesis showed that relationship quality has a meaningful effect on three variables means word of mouth, loyalty and share of customer. These results indicate increasing trust and commitment of customer to bank and customer satisfaction with the bank and in total evaluation of relationship quality by customer cause that Customer Proselyte for bank free and continue relationship with the bank and show his loyalty to bank by using its service in long term.

However, a closer examination of results reveals that the effect of quality relationship on customer share is less In comparison with loyalty and word of mouth. Of course, this result was predicted because customer of share is closely related to behavior to customer and constantly customer behavior is not consistent with the customer's attitude. Most items relating to word of mouth and loyalty are attitudinal aspects and it is obvious what the customer is saying, he does not do in practice completely and this theory under the title of "cognitive dissonance" on issues of organizational behavior is presented. This issue shows that Iran banking industry requires more attract commitment, trust and satisfaction customer for increasing share of consumer. In this section, comparing the present results with literature can be confirmed and most studies which have evaluated the effect of quality of relationship on loyalty, word of mouth and customer share show effect of relationship quality on customer share are less loyalty and word of mouth[6,16].

Comparison of results with previous studies shows results of this study About of the effect of relationship quality On customer's word of mouth entirely are consistent with previous research such Chen et al.[6], Aisyah Salim[2], Rajaobelina and Bergeron[17], Castellanos-Verdugo et al.[33], Macintosh et al.[16], Palmatier et al.[4] and Kim and Cha[14]. Also results of this study about effect of relationship quality on customer loyalty is consistent with the results of such research Chen et al.[6], Chung

and Shin[29], Naoui and Zaiem[12], Ndubisi et al.[8], Shammout[27] and Kim and Cha[14].

There are theoretical and empirical supports about effect of relationship quality on share of customer in the study that it was approved in research Castellanos-Verdugo et al.[33], Begalle[31]and Palmatier et al.[37]

According to results, it can be stated that most Iranian customers who evaluated quality of the relationship with the bank at high level show more loyalty to banks in addition to the bank advertising for free and they try to provide the majority of banking services from desired bank. These findings are consistent with findings of Crosby et al.[15] that states quality of relationship is the best predictor for continuity of relationship with suppliers of services in the future.

Finally, based on the research findings, the following management recommendations are presented: i. Development of investment strategy on relationship with priority of Investment in The structural, social and financial bonds: By considering the meaningful effect of financial, social and structural investment on relationship quality, it is offered to bank manager in order to regard structural and social bonds for maintaining long-term relationships with customers. Although financial bonds and presented financial benefits on the customer trust, commitment and satisfaction are more effective in the short terms, structural and social bonds have the most effect on customer retention and loyalty in the long terms. Therefore, in order to making loyalty in customers, banks should focus more on structural and social programs. In other words, considering customers' specific needs and making dependency of them, customer of loyalty programs should be in the priority through process and organizational systems to banks. The banks with implementing customer relationship management (CRM) and identify the specific needs of customers, especially significant customers, in addition to presented specialized services to them, some of them can depend on banks and it is possible to avoid the leaving the customers and their willingness to use the services of other banks. ii. Development of expertise of employees in order to establish, maintain and grow relationships with customers: Regarding the competence and expertise of employees has effect on perceived quality of relationship by customer and also often the implementation of relationship marketing strategy like development of communication, conflict management, and social bonds is possible by qualified employees in the service sector, particularly in banking industry, then promoting of expertise of bank employees should be placed in relationship marketing priorities. In this case, it is recommended that banks need to invest in the selection, training and retention of employees through expert and qualified staff to provide long term relationship with their customers. iii. Development of relationships with bank customers through the use of modern communication technologies: Results of the research revealed that communication has a positive effect on the perceived quality of relationship by customers. Therefore development of communication and provide valuable information to customers in order to build trust, commitment and satisfaction are important and in this way bank can achieve customer loyalty. In this regard, it is recommended that banks use of all modern communication channels such as the Internet, telephone banking, mobile banking, social networks and for communicating effectively and providing necessary information to customers. It is obvious that investment of bank in the field of IT can be effective in effectiveness of relationship marketing programs.

Limitation and Future Research: Like other studies the research was confronted with some limitations as follows: Sheth and Parvatiyar[38] express that different culture affect customer attitude towards to relationships. Therefore for generalizability of the results in this research toward other cultures should be care. The results of this study reflect Iranian customer's perspective and it is recommended to carry out this research in other developing countries.

One of the major limitations of the research is Statistical sample selection. Statistical sample of the research is limited to customers with a current account in bank and other customers with deposit accounts and other account were not in statistical society. Thus, for the generalizability of the results to all bank customers in banking industry should be careful and it is recommended to conduct similar studies with larger statistical society customers including customers with bank accounts in order to do more reliable results that can be generalized to the entire Iranian banking industry customers.

In the present study, the research model will suffice to the effect of the four strategies of conflict management, communication, Seller expertise and relationship Investment among the various relationship marketing strategies and obviously, except for the four variables in the relationship marketing literature, there are other variables such as dependency of the customer on the vendor and relationship duration, and …that have an impact on relationship quality, thus It is recommended that future research studies the effectiveness of other relationship marketing strategies.

In this study, investments were considered in higher-order construct includes investments in financial, social and structural. It is better that future researches study separate effects of each variable investment on relationship quality and performance of customer. Also in the present study, quality of relationship like investment in relationship was considered in higher-order construct Including trust, commitment and satisfaction of relationship. Although it was argued in the literature that relationship quality as a higher-order construct has attracted many fans in the field of relationship marketing and often studies it from this perspective, for achieving more accurate results, future research could study separate the effects of each variable relationship quality (commitment, trust and satisfaction of relationship) on the customer performance (loyalty, word of mouth and customer share).

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