MARKETING RELATIONSHIP: STUDENTS' LOYALTY INTENTIONS USING TRUST, SATISFACTION, COMMITMENT

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Abstract - The purpose of this study was to use marketing relationship theory to investigate empirically students' loyalty intentions of Sukhothai Thamathirat Open University's students by using three factors: trust, satisfaction and commitment. This study investigated whether the relationships among trust, satisfaction and commitment serve as the key variables of loyalty intentions. The instrument was a questionnaire composed of the measurement items relate to the constructs of trust, satisfaction, commitment and loyalty intentions. The population of the study is current bachelor degree students of Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University who are the leaders of students' associations. The questionnaire was distributed on August 31, 2018 when the leaders of students' associations stayed on campus to join the activities of Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University for the leaders of students' associations: training, presentation and next year planning. The 148 questionnaires was returned. The return rate was 100 %. The regression was use for data analysis the relationships among trust, satisfaction commitment and loyalty intentions. The results of this study concluded that there are a relationship among trust, satisfaction, commitment and loyalty intentions. Based on the results from this study, administrators can achieve the goal of enhancing student loyalty by developing key customer relationship attributes: trust, commitment and satisfaction. Attention to these focal points will lead to significantly improved competitive advantage in education services.

Index Terms - Commitment, Loyalty, Satisfaction, Trust

I. INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problems

Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University (STOU) is the only one university in Thailand which uses distance medias to teach students around Thailand and other countries. STOU sends many distance medias to students at their homes. The students study the medias by themselves. Most of them have never met their professor by face to face. Therefore, there possibly is a question, how much do the students have trust, satisfaction, commitment and loyalty to STOU? This study proposes a relationship marketing theory to answer the research questions. The research questions addressed in this research are derived from the students' perspective to what degree are STOU students' loyalty intentions influenced by trust, commitment and satisfaction.

There are four variables: trust, satisfaction, commitment and loyalty. Therefore the research questions are as follows:

1. Is there a relationship between trust and satisfaction?
2. Is there a relationship between trust and commitment?
3. Is there a relationship between trust and loyalty intentions?
4. Is there a relationship between satisfaction and commitment?
5. Is there a relationship between satisfaction and loyalty intentions?
6. Is there a relationship between commitment and loyalty intentions?

The Purpose of the Study

The objective of relationship marketing theory is to develop and maintain long-term, mutually beneficial relationships between education providers and students. Based on relationship marketing theory, this study seeks to empirically investigate students' loyalty intentions as dependent variables by studying the trust, satisfaction and commitment of STOU students as independent variables. Also, this study will investigate whether the relationships among trust, satisfaction, commitment and loyalty intentions.

Justification of the Study

This research will contribute to and extend prior research by confirmhow trust, commitment and satisfaction influence the loyalty intentions of STOU students. If increased customer loyalty leads to superior university performance, consistent with the findings of Reichheld (2003) that loyalty clearly affects growth and income, then the development of trust, commitment and satisfaction is a desirable goal for any organization. Thus, the findings of this study will help STOU as service providers to improve their marketing strategies to ensure that STOU students have confidence in which programs they want to attend. The mutual benefits to university and students will ensure the future success of STOU. A second contribution of this research involves STOU will developed to determine whether the relationship model fits STOU students. Properly understanding any differences in loyalty intentions of STOU students can help STOU to fine-tune core service strategies and relationship customization in their relationship marketing plans. Additionally, this research

contributes to academic field by offering model of relationship marketing theory. A formal model is constructed to explain what might be required to build student's loyalty. Highlight a section that you want to designate with a certain style, and then select the appropriate name on the style menu. The style will adjust your fonts and line spacing. Do not change the font sizes or line spacing to squeeze more text into a limited number of pages. Use italics for emphasis; do not underline.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Kotler (2008) stated that relationship marketing focuses on "Relationship marketing is the practice of building long-term satisfying relations with key parties—customers, suppliers, distributors—in order to retain their long-term preference and business." rather than concentrating on discrete, short term transactions. Relationship marketing refers to all marketing activities directed toward establishing, developing and maintaining successful relational exchange which constitutes a major shift in marketing theory and practice (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Relationship marketing increasingly focuses on efficient ways that to understanding and responding to customers' needs and preferences seemingly in order to build more meaningful connections with consumers than ever before. These connections promise to benefit the bottom line by reducing costs and increasing revenue (Fournier et al., 1998). In addition, relationship marketing creates not only opportunities for firms by lowering transaction costs, increasing income, but also helping them achieve above-average performance.

Customer trust

The construct of trust has taken on a more important role in the marketing literature over the last decade (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; McCole, 2002; Sirdeshmukh, Singh & Sabol, 2002; Brashear, 2003). Moorrman et al., (1993) define trust as "a willingness to rely on an exchange partner with whom one has confidence." Morgan and Hunt (1994) define trust as the belief that a party's word or promise is reliable and that a party will fulfill his/her obligations in an exchange relationship. Doney and Cannon (1997) define trust as "the perceived credibility and benevolence of a target." According to Morgan and Hunt (1994) defined trust as one party's confidence in an exchange partner's reliability and integrity.

Therefore, Trust can be interpreted as the expectations held by the consumer that the store, its people, and its products are dependable and can be relied on to deliver on their promises (Sirdeshmukh et al., 2002). According to marketing context, the factor of trust normally relates with expectation of consumers, relating to the company ability to maintain the promise take their obligations. Therefore, the expectation is based on the company's ability, trustworthiness, honesty and power. Competency of an organization shows the capacity which can take the transaction with the customer according to their expectation.

Customer satisfaction

Oliver (1997) defines satisfaction as the summary psychological state resulting when the emotion surrounding disconfirmed expectations is coupled with student's prior feeling about the consumer experience. Kotler (2000) defined that satisfaction is a person's feelings of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing a product's perceived performance or outcome in relation to his or her expectations. Customer satisfaction is the reply to the particular attention on the expectation of the experience and production of using services and consumption. Oliver (2010) stated that customer satisfaction is defined as a process of evaluation or as an outcome result of this process. Oliver (2010) also explained that customer satisfaction is the consumer's fulfillment response.

Customer satisfaction is the sentimental and emotional reaction or behavior of interactive recognizing and realizing. There are two different conceptualizations of customer satisfaction: transaction-specific satisfaction and cumulative satisfaction. The transaction-specific satisfaction is the evaluation of particular service encounter. The cumulative satisfaction is the overall evaluation of service provider. Parasuraman et al. (1994) researched satisfaction on a transaction level, implying that the overall satisfaction is a function of transactions.

Cumulative satisfaction presumes that individual judgements are combined to form an assessment of pleasurable fulfillment of needs (Oliver, 1997). Overall satisfaction is an aggregation of all previous transaction-specific evaluations and is updated after each specific transaction (Jones and Suh, 2000). The satisfaction construct in loyalty research is conceptualized as cumulative satisfaction, rather than a transaction specific satisfaction judgement (Harris and Goode, 2004). According to Parasuraman et al. (1994), overall satisfaction is relatively more stable than transaction-specific satisfaction. Customer satisfaction is now days most common and important measurement by customer perceived concept (Gupta and Zeithaml, 2007).

Lin and Wu (2011) explained that those customers who are not fully satisfied they take very less time to switch to the brand. Although service is not the only factor which responsible for the customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction and relationship marketing were pound to have positive association (Aelen,Dalen, Herik, & Walle, 2014).

Customer commitment

Customer commitment has been interesting since Morgan and Hunt's (1994) seminal work on the trust-commitment theory of relationship marketing. Bansal et al. (2004), Fullerton (2003) and Venetis and Ghauri (2004) stated that recent research has identified that customer commitment is a powerful predictor of various metrics related to customer retention, the same switching/staying intentions and repurchase intentions. Although previous research has found that there are several key determinants of relationship marketing outcomes, the constructs of commitment, trust and satisfaction seem to be the key. Commitment is recognized as an essential ingredient for successful, long-term relationships (Dwyer et al., 1987, Gundlash et al., 1995). Dwyer, Schurr and Oh (1987) define commitment as an "implicit or explicit pledge of continuity between relational partners". Also defined by Gundlash, Achrol and Mentzer (1995) "commitment is thought to be closely related to mutuality, loyalty and forsaking of alternatives, variables which are the core of the meaning of relationalism." A multi-dimensional view of commitment has been well established in the services marketing literature. The number of dimensions used, however, has only been moderately consistent. Many studies have alluded to two dimensions of commitment in marketing relationships:

1. Affective commitment, based upon feelings of identification, loyalty,and affiliation.
2. Continuance (or calculative) commitment, based upon anticipated switching costs such as Gilliland and Bello (2002), Harrison-Walker (2001) and Verhoef et al. (2002).

More recent studies such as Bansal et al. (2004) and Gruen et al. (2000) have used a three-dimensional model originating from the organizational behavior literature that also includes normative commitment; commitment based upon feelings of reciprocity or obligation.

Customer loyalty

The conceptualization of customer loyalty as a combination of behavioral and attitudinal dimension is additionally supported by many authors. Some authors add a cognitive dimension to conceptualizing customer loyalty referring to the brand's attributes evaluation in the buying decision-making process and to benefits from the repeat patronage (Caruana, 2002; Lee & Cunningham, 2001). Lenka et al. (2009) stated that customer loyalty at times has been operationalized as a behavioural measure and at other times as an attitude. Attitudinal loyalty is customers' favourable inclination towards a service relative to other firms offering the same service. If an alternative brand with better attributes and a cheaper price is available in the market, such customers are likely to defect. Behavioural loyalty is strong commitment of customers to purchase the product despite the availability of alternatives in the market. It represents the actual purchase behaviour of customers. The concept of customer loyalty is understood as a combination of customers' favourable attitude and the behaviour or repurchases. It is revealed through the willingness of customers to recommend that product to others and repeat purchases. Customer loyalty and customer retention are very closely related factors. Customer loyalty strengthen the customer retention. Bagram and Khan (2012) reported that customer loyalty and customer satisfaction was found to have positive relationship. In this approach we understand that loyalty is the attitude or behavior whenever a person purchases the specific brand or product continuously. It is actually difficult to understand the mind of customer that what the mental or psychological aspects are. Which attract and compel the consumer behavior toward the consumer loyalty for the company brand (Chen and Hu, 2010). When the company knows the mind of customer then it's easy to build the long term profitable relationship with their consumer and easily they could be loyal (Ina mullah, 2012). The importance of developing and maintaining enduring relationships with university' students using relationship marketing theory is generally accepted in the marketing literature. The question is then this relationship be applied to across diverge segments such as education. A key challenge for researchers is to identify and understand how managerially controlled antecedent variables influence important relationship marketing outcomes such as loyalty intentions. A key goal of relationship marketing theory is the identification of key drivers that influence important outcomes for the university and a better understanding of the causal relationship between the university and the outcomes. Relationship marketing outcomes, loyalty intentions: David (2003) discusses three attitudinal measures of loyalty which are: (1) the likelihood to continuing to do education, (2) the likelihood of expanding education and (3) the willingness to recommend or serve as a reference. Drawing from the attitudinally-based approach used by Jacoby, Chestnut and Fisher (1978), loyalty intentions can be represented on a continuum of learning that includes information-belief structure, state of affect, and behavioral intentions. Loyalty intentions are important in educational marketing because they serve as students' predictions of decision making. Loyalty intentions represent a willingness of someone, such as a student, employee or a friend, to make an investment or personal sacrifice in order to strengthen a relationship. For a student, it can mean remaining with suppliers who treat them well and who provide

good value in the long term, even if they do not offer the best price. Reichheld (2003) examined which survey questions had the strongest statistical correlation with referrals. He found one question was best for most industries: "How likely is it that you would recommend university to a friend or colleague?"

III. METHODOLOGY

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of this research is based on relationship marketing theory. This study proposes to test a model in which satisfaction and commitment are conceived as mediating the trust and outcome variable of loyalty intentions. Four variables encompassing loyalty intentions such as relationship marketing outcomes and the three constructs of trust, commitment and satisfaction will be empirically tested to verify the significance of relationship marketing theory. This study adopts the work of Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner and Gremler (2002) by positioning satisfaction and commitment as mediators to the understanding of relationship marketing outcomes :loyalty intentions. Hennig-Thurau et al. (2002) found significant relationships between the mediators of satisfaction and commitment and customer loyalty between students and service employees/firms Factors that affect student loyalty intentions are trust, satisfaction and commitment (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2002).

The consequences of trust have been studied by Swan et al. (1999), who found that trust has a positive relationship to satisfaction, favorable student attitudes, purchase intentions and purchase behaviors. Based on these research studies, this research forecasts a positive relationship between trust and satisfaction and a positive relationship between trust and loyalty intentions.

It is anticipated that this study will also support the work of Morgan and Hunt (1994) which shows that trust drives commitment. Studies by Anderson et al. (1994) and Rust and Zahorik (1993) Iidentified satisfaction as a leading factor in determining loyalty. Drawing on the work of Hennig-Thurau and Klee (1997) and Hennig-Thurau et al. (2002), this study suggests a positive relationship between satisfaction and commitment.

IV. POPULATION

The population of the study are bachelor degree students who are the leaders of STOU associations all provinces who joined the activities on campus on August 31, 2018 for training, presentation for the last year activities and planning for the next year activities. There are 148 leaders of STOU associations who joined the activities.

V. INSTRUMENT DEVELOPMENT

The instrument is composed of 23 measurement items. The measurement items relate to the constructs of satisfaction, trust, commitment and loyalty intentions. Satisfaction, trust, commitment and loyalty intentions constructs will be measured to test the hypotheses. This study used items which have effectively measured these constructs based on their high level of reliability and validity in previous research. However, modifications have been made on certain measures to make them more appropriate for the context of this study. All constructs are operationalized by multi-item measures. A 5 - point Likert scale, ranging from "1 = strongly disagree" to "5 = strongly agree" will be used.

Satisfaction

Overall program satisfaction was measured, using the following items.

1) My choice to attend this program is a wise one.
2) Attending this program is a good experience.
3) I think I did the right thing when I decided to attend this program.
4) Overall, I am satisfied with this program.

Trust

The following seven items were used to measure trust:

1) Integrity is a word I'd use when describing the university staff.
2) I was sure that the university staff members are always acting in my best interest.
3) I trust the university staff completely.
4) University staff members always keep their promises to me.
5) I have great confidence in university staff.
6) The university staff can be relied upon.
7) The university staff cannot be trusted at times. (reverse- coded item)

Commitment

The following seven items were used to measure the students' commitment.

1) My relationship with university staff is one that I am very committed to.
2) My relationship with university staff is very important to me.
3) My relationship with university staff is one that I really care about.
4) My relationship with university staff deserves my maximum effort to maintain.
5) My relationship with university staff is one that I would like tomaintain for a long time.
6) My relationship with university staff is one toward which I can develop a warm feeling.

7) My relationship with university staff has a great deal of personal meaning for me.

Loyalty Intentions

Five items are adapted from Hennig-Thurau et al. (2001) and Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman (1996) was used to measure the students' commitment.

1) I'd say positive things about my program to other people.
2) I'd recommend my program to someone who seeks my advice.
3) I'd encourage friends and relatives to attend my program.
4) If I was faced with the same choice again, I'd still choose the same program.
5) I'd become a member of any alumni organizations at my old university or faculty.

Table 1 Reliability

Variables	Reliability
Trust	0.876
Satisfaction	0.862
Commitment	0.938
Loyalty Intension	0.821

VI. DATA ANALYSIS

The idea of minimizing costs and maximizing rewards determine human behavior was put forward by empirical support across multiple investigations (Landes, 2003; Matzler & Sauerwein, 2002) The elements of social exchange theory - satisfaction, commitment and trust – have been investigated extensively in the relationship marketing literature (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner & Gremler, 2002; Garbarino & Johnson, 1999; Moorman, Deshpande, & Zaltman, 1993; Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Relationship marketing implies an ongoing process. Therefore, the recognition of a future, long-term orientation to relationship marketing provides a theoretical, rational basis for the current study. This study will examine the relationships between three social exchange antecedents (satisfaction, trust, commitment) and one marketing outcome (loyalty intentions).

Relationship between Trust and Commitment

H1: Trust is positively related to commitment

Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University's student commitment to the university because they trust the university staff completely. They sure that the university staff members are always act in their best interest. They believe that the university staff is reliability and integrity.

Relationship between Trust and Satisfaction

H2: Trust is positively related to satisfaction

Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University's student satisfy the university because they trust the university staff completely. They sure that the university staff members are always act in their best interest. They believe that the university staff is reliability and integrity.

V. DATA COLLECTION

The data were collected from the population who are the leaders of STOU associations who stayed on campus for the leaders of STOU associations' activities. This research requested the president of STOU to collect data and requested the Director of the Office of Services to collect data from the population, the leaders of STOU associations who stayed on campus for the leaders of STOU associations' activities, 148 students. The respond rate is 100%.

Pilot Test

The purpose of the pilot test is to check the reliability of items, to evaluate the clarity of instruction and statements, and to identify the appropriate items to measure the four constructs. The pilot test computed from 30 students.

Table 2. Correlation

Independent variables	Dependent variables	Correlation
Trust	Commitment	0.539
Trust	Satisfaction	0.449
Trust	Loyalty	0.474
Satisfaction	Commitment	0.618
Satisfaction	Loyalty	0.695
Commitment	Loyalty	0.473

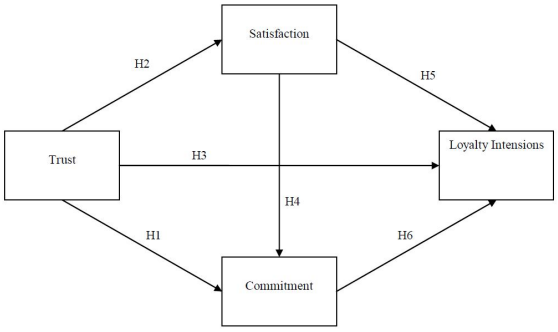


Figure 1 Hypothesized model

Relationship between Trust and Loyalty Intentions

H3: Trust is positively related to loyalty intentions.

Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University's student loyalty to the university because they trust the university staff completely. They sure that the university staff members are always act in their best interest. They believe that the university staff is reliability and integrity.

Relationship between Satisfaction and Commitment

H4: Satisfaction is positively related to commitment.
Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University's student commitment tothe university because they satisfy their program. They think I did the right thing when I decided to attend this program. Attending this program is a good experience. Their choice to attend this program is a wise one.

Relationship between Satisfaction and Loyalty Intentions

H5: Satisfaction is positively related to loyalty intentions. Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University's student loyalty to the university because they satisfy their program. They think I did the right thing when I decided to attend this program. Attending this program is a good experience. Their choice to attend this program is a wise one.

Relationship between Commitment and Loyalty Intentions

H6: Commitment is positively related to loyalty intentions.
Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University's student loyalty to the university because their relationship with university staff is one that they are very committed to. Their relationship with university staff is very important to them. Their relationship with university staff is one that they really care.Their relationship with university staff is one toward which they can develop a warm feeling. Their relationship with university staff has a great deal of personal meaning for them. They will deserves their maximum effort to maintain their relationship with university staff for a long time.

CONCLUSION

The Summary of Research Hypotheses:

Table 1. Summary of 6 Research Hypotheses

Hypotheses Code	Description
H1	Trust is positively related to commitment.
H2	Trust is positively related to satisfaction.
H3	Trust is positively related to loyalty intentions.
H4	Trust is positively related to commitment.
H5	Satisfaction is positively related to loyalty intentions.
H6	Commitment is positively related to loyalty intentions.

Drawing on a broad-based view of the relationship marketing literature, Morgan and Hunt (1994) theorize that trust and commitment are key mediating constructs in successful relational exchange. Garbarino and Johnson (1999) conclude that trust and commitment, rather than satisfaction, are the mediators between component attitudes and future intentions in the context of theater. Hennig-Thurau et al. (2002) confirm that the role of satisfaction and commitment as mediators between trust and relationship marketing outcomes e.g. customer loyalty is generally supported by the data. Their findings suggest that the constructs of customer satisfaction, commitment and trust are dimensions of relationship quality that influence customer loyalty. On the basis of these theories, this study hypothesizes that satisfaction and commitment, rather than trust, are focal intermediate constructs in the latent structure models. Thus, trust is an exogenous construct and satisfaction, commitment and loyalty intentions are an endogenous constructs. Satisfaction and commitment also treated as key mediators between trust and loyalty intentions in this study.

SUGGESTIONS

The regression of satisfaction and commitment and the regression of trust and loyalty is higher than the regression of other. Therefore, satisfaction is the key variable for commitment and loyalty. STOU should find how to create the satisfaction of students but keep the quality under the rule of the public university.

FUTURE RESEARCH

The future research should 1) collect data from Master Degree and Doctoral Degree students. 2) collect date from the students who are not the leaders of students' associations.

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