



Investigating the effects of relationship marketing mechanisms of Shammut model on customer loyalty

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

*Relationship Marketing,
Financial Mechanism,
Relationship Quality,
Customer Sentiment,
Customer Loyalty*

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This study was constructed to investigate the effects of relationship marketing mechanisms of on customer loyalty in Yazd hotels. Relationship marketing mechanisms include financial, social, and structural mechanisms. The present paper is an applied research adopting a descriptive-correlational method and survey design. The statistical population of this study consisted of the customers who stayed in Yazd 3-star hotels. Through using a pre-test, the population variance was estimated and then the sample size was calculated using unlimited population formula. A questionnaire was used for data collection. In addition to descriptive statistics, the correlation coefficient test and path analysis were used to determine the strength of the relationship between variables and model structural equation of the study to verify the hypotheses, respectively. The results of the study showed that none of relationship marketing mechanisms including financial, social, and structural ones did not have significant impact on the sentiments. Although financial mechanism did not have significant impact on relationship quality, social mechanism influenced on the relationship quality. Moreover, structural mechanism did not affect the quality of the relationship. A qualified relationship has many benefits such as customers' loyalty, customers' satisfaction of the customer service organizations, and introducing them to others.

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In the most recent research on marketing, relationship marketing is represented as a fundamental transformation in the field of marketing that requires a new theory and language. Relationship marketing tries to build strong relationships with target customers to buy their

products again in the future and encourage others to do so. The best way to keep customers is to achieve higher customer satisfaction and pay attention to what seems to be worthy in order to strengthen their loyalty to the company (Ndubisi, 2012). With transition from traditional to modern economy, customer role has changed and become the central pillar of all activities of company. Therefore, from the competitive perspective, the survival of the organizations depends on identifying and attracting the new customers as well as retaining the existing ones. One of the main concerns of the companies is to investigate the effects of marketing tactics that increase the sales and establish a long-term customer relationship with their consumers. In practice, relationship marketing as a new approach is one of the most successful approaches (Lin & Lu, 2010). Relationship marketing seeks to establish long-term relationships with its target customers who will buy their products again in the future or receive services and therefore encourage others to do so. The best way to keep customers is to create or increase their satisfaction and pay close attention to what strengthens the loyalty of their customers (Ndubisi, 2012). In fact, relationship marketing enables the companies to benefit from competitive advantages such as reduced marketing expenses, increased buy rate, positive effects of oral marketing, and reduction of marketing failure costs (Jang, Olfman, Koh, & Kim, 2007). The researchers found out that the organizations could increase their profit up to 100 per cent by retaining almost 5 per cent of their customers (Iglesias, Sauquet, & Montaña, 2011). Over the past few years, relationship marketing has forced brand managers to seek more creative ways in order to build a relationship with their customers based on bilateral benefits. Despite the importance of these relations in the organizations' success, in our country not much attention is paid to them. Thus, given that relationship marketing plays an important role in the success of manufacturing and service organizations today, many organizations such as hotels are unaware of its impact on their profitability and the influence that it can have on the brand loyalty of their customers. This paper aims to investigate the effects of relationship marketing mechanisms on customer loyalty in hotels in Yazd through applying a multidimensional study of relationship marketing to implement strategies successfully in these centers.

Shammut's Model of Relationship Marketing Mechanisms

Shammut (2007) described the relationship marketing as follows:

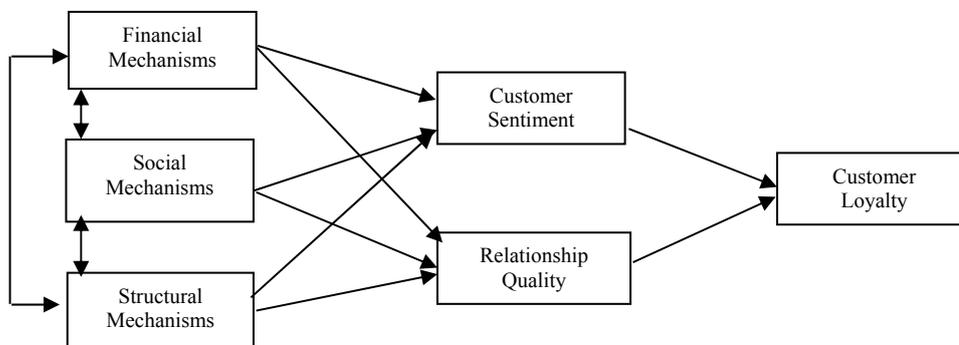


Figure 1. Shammut's relationship marketing model

Financial mechanisms usually refer to the preservation and maintenance of marketing, where service providers use economic benefits such as prices, discounts, and other financial

incentives to build and guarantee the loyalty of customers (Lin, Weng, & Hsieh, 2003). Stone (1954) revealed the importance of social exchange and outlined the shoppers who have personal contact information in the shop. In relationship marketing, the root of this mechanism is derived from business literature where it is used to show the good personal relationships (Smith, 1998). Social mechanism refers to the extent to which a buyer and seller as a person (in terms of sentiments) are close together (Han, 1991). This definition emphasizes the importance of relationship between social links and sentiments. Berry and Parasuraman (1991) and Berry (1995) defined social mechanism as level two relationship marketing in securing customers' loyalty. Service providers try to improve their relationships with customers without considering the financial incentives in the competitive market. They claim that customers who served personally must have stronger reasons to change the company, although social mechanism has nothing to do with the price differences or any weaknesses in the provision of services (Berry & Parasuraman, 1991).

In addition to these two types of mechanisms, structural mechanism is also used to check customer loyalty. Previous studies have stressed that customer loyalty often increases financial bond, social bond, and structural bond, respectively (Peltier & Westfall, 2000). Structural bond is usually seen in relation to the structure, governance, and institutionalized norms. Laws, policies, practices or agreements, norms or procedures that prevail in the form of informal transactions, and organizational systems and technology such as email or electronic data exchange that facilitate the trading process all can create psychological, legal, and physical relations between two parties (Lin et al., 2003). Relationship quality is an overall assessment of power relations and refers to the extent to which the parties' expectations and needs have been met based on chronological order of events (Smith, 1998). In other words, the quality of the relationship suggests how much this relationship meets the needs, objectives, and the demands of the customers. The concept of trust is widely discussed in the literature in relation to long-term buyer-seller relationships (Wong & Sohal, 2002).

The Relationship between Relationship Marketing Mechanisms with Customers' Sentiments

The researchers were looking for to answer the question of whether relationship marketing orientation affects the customers' satisfaction or not. Hence, researchers distributed their questionnaires among 174 business executives from different businesses in Vietnam. After analyzing the collected data, the researchers found out that the factors such as trust, having a mechanism, common values, and conflict have positive impacts on customers' satisfaction while other factors such as relationship and empathy did not have any impact on customers' satisfaction. The effects of trust and having a mechanism were more than the effects of common values and contrast on satisfaction (Hau & Ngo, 2012). In this research, it is found that financial mechanisms influence on consumers' sentiment. Financial mechanisms refer to preserving and maintaining marketing where service providers use economic benefits such as price, discount, other beneficial financial incentives to guarantee the loyalty of their customers (Berry 1995; Lin et al., 2003; Hsieh, Chiu, & Chiang, 2005).

Lin (2003) believed that structural mechanisms that propose some innovative services are coherent ones and recommended by the organization to satisfy the customers' needs. Structural mechanisms are necessary for the organizations because they provide added value

for customers that are not readily available in other places, strengthen their relationships, and thereby offer more expected value to the customers. Due to high cost of change, rivals could hardly compete with the company (Lin et al., 2003). Chu (2009) found out that financial benefits, social factors, and structural mechanisms could improve the consumers' values and thus lead to increased customer loyalty. According to Ghazizadeh, Beiginia, Abbaspoor, and Anbari (2011), financial interests affect the customers' sentiments. In comparison with other variables, social factors have a greater impact on sentiments and therefore special attention must be paid to them in service especially in the insurance industry. Moreover, the results show that structural mechanisms, after social factors, have the greatest impact on customer sentiment. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H₀₁: Financial mechanisms have a significant impact on consumers' sentiments.

H₀₂: Social mechanisms have a significant impact on consumers' sentiments.

H₀₃: Structural mechanisms have a significant impact on consumers' sentiments.

The Relationship between Relationship Mechanisms with the Quality of the Relationship

Ranjbarian and Barari (2009) in their study studied the effect of relationship marketing based on commitment, trust, relationship, and conflict management. In order to investigate the importance of each variable from the customers' perspectives and loyalty and the extent of its influence on the success of banks, 312 customers of state and a private banks in Isfahan were selected. A questionnaire was used for data collection and then the data was analyzed using multiple regression analysis. The results of this study showed that these four bases of relationship marketing had a significant positive impact on customers' loyalty in the state banks. In private banks, the variables other than relationship variable had significant positive effects on customer loyalty. Sweeny and Swait (2008) noted that the model of tendency to change and verbal recommendations derived from social exchange and therefore are the basis for these two impulses including past-oriented and future-oriented motives. Past-oriented motives meet the benefits that the customers can receive by virtue of their relationship while future-oriented motives consider other interests for maintaining the relationship. Moreover, in this model, two dimensions of commitment including emotional and continuous are focused. Emotional commitment like pledge of allegiance is a positive commitment that shows the psychological dependence on the relationship partner (Dehdashti Shahrokh, Taghavifard, & Rostami, 2010). Continuous commitment shows the cognitive evaluation of the costs associated with leaving the organization and identifying the needs that lead to maintaining the relationship and transferring costs. Ndubisi (2007) in his study referred to the ability to build a relationship as a factor to increase trust and quality of the customer relationship. According to Ghazizadeh, Beiginia, Abbaspoor, & Anbari (2011), the financial interest had a significant impact on the quality of the customer relationship and if the service provider provides greater benefits for the customers, he can improve customer loyalty and customer relationship with the organization. In addition, social factors affect the quality of customer relationship. The results showed that structural mechanism affects the quality of the customer relationship due to the

amount of overall path coefficient compared to other mentioned variables. This factor had significant effect on the quality of the customer relationship and therefore must be given special attention. According to the above-mentioned explanations, the following research hypotheses are proposed.

H₀₄: Financial mechanisms have a significant impact on the quality of the relationship.

H₀₅: Social mechanisms financial mechanisms have a significant impact on the quality of the relationship.

H₀₆: Structural mechanisms financial mechanisms have a significant impact on the quality of the relationship.

The Relationship between Customer Sentiments with Quality of Customer Relationship

Varela-Neira et al. (2008) emphasized the effect of emotions on customers' cognitive assessment and satisfaction that revealed that sentiments had a direct impact on overall customers' satisfaction through conducting cognitive assessments. The results of study which established by Ghazizadeh et al. (2011) in Mellat insurance company showed that sentiments have huge impacts on the quality of customer relationship. Therefore, the quality of the relationship increases as the customer finds a positive feeling in dealing with insurance company representatives. According to these results and researcher's reasoning, the seventh hypothesis is formed:

H₀₇: Customer sentiments have significant impact on relationship quality.

Customers Sentiments Relationship with Customer Loyalty

Marketers have always aspired to achieve their customers' mind map. Nowadays, one part of this map as an endless treasure is available to them by neuromarketing professionals. Neuromarketing is a new field of marketing and the brainchild of science and business. This emerging knowledge provides the customers' mind map for the industry owners and marketers. What people put into language does not necessarily match with what is going on in their minds. The results of years of research in this field indicate about our decisions rather than testing the rational basis and reasoning that occur unconsciously. Moreover, taking rational decisions will never be possible without involving emotional aspects. This is the strong point of neuromarketing that is able to penetrate into our subconscious. Neuromarketing is the knowledge that tried to examine human decisions that often occur unconsciously in the brain. In neuromarketing, there is no need to ask the person to understand his decisions, but the goal is to get deeper into the minds of the audience. As we know, human brain as the command center of the body has many responsibilities such as decision-making. Moreover, marketers and market researchers have been in a constant effort to influence consumers' decision-making processes and understand them. Decision-making is an important part of our personal life and career. The brain is responsible for all our consumers' behaviors and we need it for having proper functions. Although brain makes up only 2 percent of total body weight, but burns about 20 per cent of body calories. Many of the activities that we do throughout the day by the brain happen unconsciously. The rest parts of brain burn about 80 per cent of the energy consciously. The results of research also indicate that about 85 to 95 per cent of human decisions happen on a subconscious level. Discovering

what is happening in our brains in a way that we prefer one brand or product to another one, what kind of information passes through the filter of our brain, what information is not allowed to log into the memory and therefore is forgotten are the key questions for building effective and powerful brands in the future. Neuromarketing is the key factor in opening the thoughts, emotions, and unconscious impulses that trigger us to buy. New scientist magazine acknowledges that neuromarketing has actualized the marketers' dream to enter the inner world and brain (Barahooii & Hashemi, 2013). According to Seyed Javadein, Amini, and Amini (2010), customer loyalty is one of the factors that in relationship marketing gains considerable attention particularly in the industrial markets. One of the factors that plays an important role in shaping loyalty is the trademarks. Thus, their study has examined the relationship between customer loyalty and brand. According to the conceptual model of their research which investigate the relationships between satisfaction, value, resistance to change, feeling, trust, customer loyalty, and brand equity, the research hypotheses were formed. The data were randomly collected using the population of distribution centers from 22 districts of Tehran. The data were analyzed using Spearman correlation coefficient and structural equation model. The results indicate that brand equity and trust are the most important factors affecting the behavior and attitude of customer loyalty patterns. Their study showed that customers' evaluation of services are highly correlated with the expression of sentiments during interaction. The sentiments can even affect the consumers' attitudes even if the customers cannot trust the products. Overall, sentiments are presented in all marketing issues that can be identified through indirect reactions to appeal the persuasive incentives and measure the impact of marketing stimuli, target - driven behaviors, and consumer welfare. However, the role of emotions in the interaction and marketing relationship is ignored by marketers. Based on this literature, hypothesis eight was formed.

H₀₈: Customers' sentiments have a significant impact on customers' loyalty.

The Relationship between Relationship Quality and Customer Loyalty

To collect data, library resources as well as interviews and questionnaires were used. Due to the research limitations, a sample of 102 companies that benefit from the services of Shahid Rajai Port were selected. Pearson correlation coefficient was used to test the six hypotheses. The results indicated that the quality of services had a positive relationship with customers' satisfaction and their perceptions of service quality and customers' loyalty (Haj Karimi, Makkizadeh, & Jamaliyeh Bastam, 2009). Haghghi Kafash and Akbari (2011) prioritized the factors which influenced the customers' loyalty in Shirin Asal Company. In this study, researchers used the European model of customer satisfaction. In this research, customer satisfaction, perceived image of the company, and the perceived quality of the software affect the customers' loyalty. In this study, 420 questionnaires were distributed among the consumers of the company in Tehran and only 385 of them were collected. The results of the study showed that at 95 per cent level of confidence, all known factors affected the two main indicators of loyalty including repeating purchase and introducing the products to customers. Through examining the relationship between customers' satisfaction and loyalty, other researchers also concluded that there were close relationships between customers' behavioral loyalty, employees' close relationship with the customers, and their tendency to be loyal, and their satisfaction of the companies' services (Guenzi & Pelloni, 2004). In a study which titled

"Model of customer loyalty to store: received value in marketing actions" a model of customer loyalty were offered to store the retail market including value-driven market actions, employee performances, and customers' satisfactions. This model in the retail industry in Taiwan was studied using a dual approach to collect data. For each service provider, a random sample of hairdressing salons in Taiwan including their customers and employees were investigated. The results showed that the received value from the client perspective is just as effective as customer retention in the context of market-oriented organization. Moreover, activists in the field of marketing must consider the customers' satisfaction and perceptions in the field of education through implementation of market orientations to gain loyalty of their important customers (Chen & Quester, 2006). In another study entitled "studying the effects of market orientation of a buyer industrial company on attitudinal loyalty of a supplier," the effects of the company's market orientation were examined. Two structured surveys have been conducted on 141 industries. The results indicated that market orientation had a negative direct effect on customers' loyalty. However, the positive indirect effects are approved through communication, conflict, satisfaction, and trust (Sanzo, Santo, Alvarez, & Vazquez, 2007). Based on this literature, hypothesis nine is presented.

H₀₉: Relationship quality has a significant impact on customers' loyalty.

The Relationship between Opportunistic Behavior of the Organization and Marketing Mechanisms

In opportunism, people who are seeking personal gain do not trick. This means that even if a game has certain laws, these laws may be violated. In this way, lying, stealing, fraud, and other subtler forms of opportunism enter this pattern. Trust formation in the relationship is that each involved party should be sure of the true promise of opposite side (Hansen & Riggle, 2009). When the customer observes respecting ethical principles in the conduct of the organization, he will believe that the actions of organization are reliable and organization does not use opportunistic behavior. As a result, they will have more tendency to continue the relationships (Roman, 2003). Trust between the parties, which have the common values and do not engage in opportunistic behaviors will increase the valuable relationships (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Moreover, the higher level of trust between buyer and seller will increase the likelihood of relationship continuation (Sin, Tse, Yau, Lee, & Chow, 2002). Commitment to relationship can be described as the sustainable desire to maintain valuable relationships by each of the parties. In other words, each party should believe in the importance of the relationship and try its best to ensure the maintenance or improvement of the relationship quality (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). The relationship commitment leads the parties to be more willing to cooperate to meet the requirements of the other parties, share the information, and solve common problems (Vasudevan, Gaur, & Shinde, 2006). Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H₀₁₀: Opportunistic behavior moderates the effects of the financial mechanisms on the quality of the relationship.

H₀₁₁: Opportunistic behavior moderates the effects of the social mechanisms on the quality of the relationship.

H₀₁₂: Opportunistic behavior moderates the effects of the structural mechanisms on the quality of the relationship.

The examined variables in this study include mechanisms of relationship, customers' sentiments, relationship quality, customer loyalty, and the conceptual model based on theoretical connections between them.

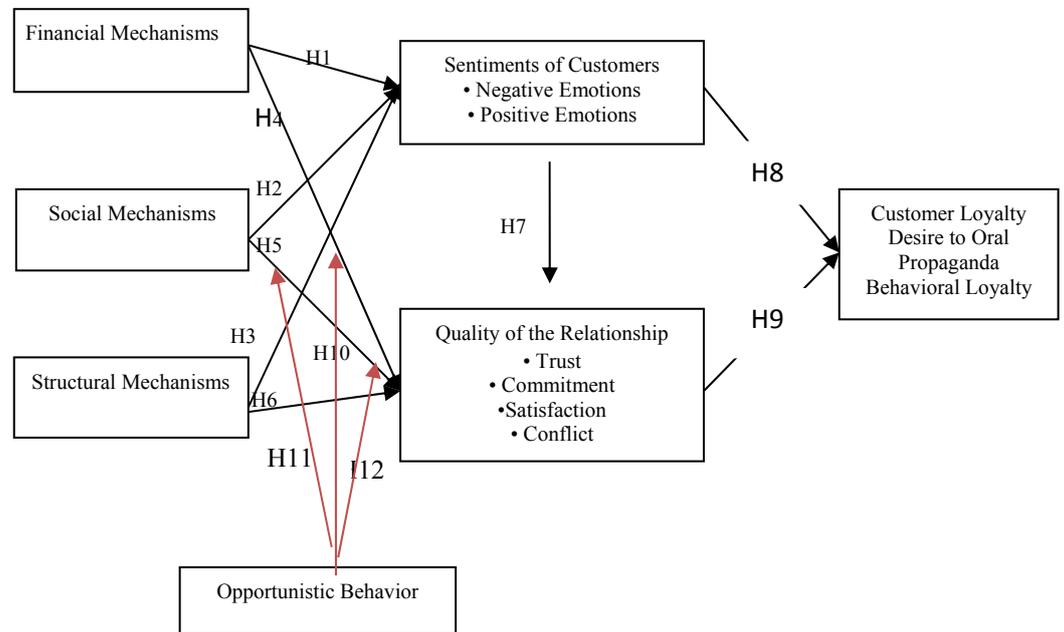


Figure 2. The conceptual model

Method

This study was an applied research adopting a correlational method and survey design. The statistical population of this study consisted of the customers who stayed in Yazd 3-star hotels. According to the surveys conducted, these hotels were Safaieh Hotel, Daad Hotel, Moshiralmalk Garden Hotel, Laleh Hotel, and Caravanserai Moshir Hotel. Therefore, the population variance was estimated based on the obtained data from pre-test.

To achieve the goal of the research, both library and field studies were conducted. Accordingly, the research questionnaire was designed and data for 2014 were collected through field method. The questionnaire consisted of two parts including demographic variables such as age, education, gender, frequency of use of these hotels had been questioned and the relevant questions related to research objectives. This questionnaire was derived from

the work by Shammut (2007). This questionnaire consisted of 82 questions based on five-point Likert scale. Dimensions and questions related to each of the dimensions of the questionnaire are as follows:

A) Relationship marketing mechanisms include the following three aspects:

Financial mechanisms: Questions 1 to 5

Social mechanisms: Question 6 to 10

Structural mechanisms: Questions 11 to 18

B) Quality of the relationship: three aspects as follows:

Trust: Questions 19 to 23.

Satisfaction: Questions 24 to 26

Commitment: Questions 27 to 30

Conflict: Questions 31 to 35

C) Loyalty: includes two dimensions are as follows:

Behavioral: Questions 36 to 38.

Attitude: Questions 39 to 44

D) Opportunistic behavior: Questions 45 to 52

E) Emotions: Questions 53 to 61

To confirm the validity of questionnaire, the researchers asked some experts in the field to rate the instrument's efficacy in terms of how effectively it measures the participants' answers according to their views about the hotel environments. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used for estimating the reliability of the questionnaire. To measure the reliability of the questionnaire, the initial questionnaire was distributed among 30 participants and then based on the data gathered, the reliability coefficient alphas were calculated through Cronbach alpha to be 0.98.

Table 1

Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient

Variables	Number of Questions	Cronbach's Alpha
Financial Mechanism	5	0.90
Social	5	0.90
Structural	8	0.89
Quality Relationship	17	0.94
Loyalty	9	0.96
Opportunistic Behavior	8	0.75
Customers' Sentiments	9	0.79
The Entire Questionnaire	61	0.98

According to the results presented in Table 1, the calculated reliability coefficient for each of the components was more than 0.7 and with regard to the recommended minimum reliability coefficient was 0.7. It showed that the questionnaire enjoyed an acceptable level of reliability and then the type and the intensity of relationship were determined. To verify the hypotheses of the study and evaluate the variables of the study, path analysis and structural equation modeling were run.

Results

Table 2 presents the results of the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient test.

Table 2

The Overall Results of the Pearson Correlation Test

Indices	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Financial Mechanisms	1	0.40 **	0.328 **	0.45 **	0.30 **	0.16 **	0.05
Social Mechanisms		1	0.76 **	0.64 **	0.61 **	-0.04	0.07
Structural Mechanisms			1	0.65 **	0.55 **	-0.12	0.08
Relationship Quality				1	0.71 **	0.11	0.16*
Loyalty					1	-0.07	0.19**
Opportunistic Behavior						1	-0.07
Sentiments							1

** At 99 percent level of confidence

* 95 percent level of confidence

The structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to assess the variables. For this purpose, each variable was examined by exploring the values of t-statistics, which were less than |1.96|.

Table 3

T-values of the Marketing Mechanism Variables

Variables	Items	T-Statistics	P-Value	RMSEA	Chi-Square	
Financial Mechanism	Question 1	7.42		0.21	1489.24	
	Question 2	2.50				
	Question 3	10.21	0.00			
	Question 4	7.60				
	Question 5	-1.18				
	Question 6	7.73				
Social Mechanism	Question 7	10.70				
	Question 8	14.86				
	Question 9	16.25				
	Question 10	2.86				
	Question 11	11.98				
	Question 12	11.83				
	Question 13	10.32				
	Question 14	6.56				
	Question 15	12.08				
	Question 16	0.95				
Structural Mechanism	Question 17	2.08				
	Question 18	6.48				
	Question 19	8.51				
	Question 20	9.68				
	Question 21	10.94				
	Question 22	10.53				
	Question 23	10.23				
	Question 24	13.93				
	Question 25	15.37				
	Question 26	12.75				
	Quality Relationship	Question 27	10.78	0.00	0.22	0.75
		Question 28	9.75			
		Question 29	7.31			
		Question 30	11.90			
Question 31		8.80				
Question 32		7.88				
Question 33		10.63				
Question 34		7.79				
Question 35		7.92				

According to Table 3, the items 5 and 16 of financial and structural mechanisms were less than the absolute value (|1.96|; T = |1.18|) in Table 4, they were not be used in hypotheses

testing. All items of social mechanism were located at high levels except for the t-statistic of item 16 which was less than the absolute value ($|1.96$; $T=|0.95|$). Table 3 represents the quality of relationship. Also according to the results of Table 3, all question items concerning the quality relationship were significant. Table 4 manifests the t-values of customer loyalty.

Table 4
T-Values of Customer Loyalty

Variables	Items	T-Statistics	P-Value	RMSEA	Chi-Square
Customer Commitment	Question 36	9.23	0.00	0.22	331.98
	Question 37	11.95			
	Question 38	13.56			
	Question 39	13.43			
	Question 40	14.07			
	Question 41	14.30			
	Question 42	6.83			
	Question 43	5.67			
	Question 44	6.79			

According to the results of Table 4, the t-statistics for each item related to customer loyalty was at significant level. The t-value for item 49 was less than the absolute value $|1.96|$. Table 5 and Table 6 show the t-values of opportunistic behavior and customer sentiment, respectively.

Table 5
T-Values of Opportunistic Behavior

Variables	Items	T-Statistics	P-Value	RMSEA	Chi-Square
Opportunist Behavior	Question 45	9.00	0.00	0.22	414.85
	Question 46	9.09			
	Question 47	15.25			
	Question 48	15.23			
	Question 49	1.17			
	Question 50	2.83			
	Question 51	3.25			
	Question 52	2.38			

Table 6 shows that the amount of t-value for item 6 is less than the absolute value $|1.96|$.

Table 6
T-Values of Customer Sentiment

Variables	Items	T-Statistics	P-Value	RMSEA	Chi-Square
Customer Sentiment	Question 53	11.38			
	Question 54	17.72			
	Question 55	15.60			
	Question 56	10.99			
	Question 57	10.26	0.00	0.19	247.02
	Question 58	-2.55			
	Question 59	-1.98			
	Question 60	-5.62			
	Question 61	-1.87			

Then, path analysis was used for evaluating the hypotheses. According to results of path analysis, only hypotheses fifth, seventh, and ninth are significant and in the contrary the other hypotheses including the first, the second, the third, the fourth, the sixth and the eighth are not significant and therefore these hypotheses were rejected.

Table 7 shows the results of fitness indices of path analysis.

Table 7
Fitness Indices of Path Analysis

Index	χ^2/df	RMSEA	GFI	AGFI	CFI	NFI	NNFI	SRMR	P-Value
The Reported Amount	3	0.01	0.93	0.96	0.95	0.92	0.96	0.04	0.00

According to Table 8, structural model of the study shows relatively good fitness. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) for the structural design of the study was between 0 to 0.05. The degree of freedom between 1 and 3 represents the good fitness of the model. CFI, GFI, AGFI, NFI, and NNFI should be higher than 0.90 to be considered as desirable ones. Therefore, this model had a good fit with data for testing the hypotheses. Table 8 presents the t-values and path coefficients of the tenth to the twelfth hypotheses.

Table 8
T-Values & Path Coefficient for the Tenth to Twelfth Hypotheses

Hypotheses	T	Path Coefficient	Criterion Error
Hypothesis 10: The role of opportunistic behavior on the relationship between the financial mechanism and relationship quality	1.37	-0.27	0.19
Hypothesis 11: The role of opportunistic behavior on the relationship between social mechanism and relationship quality	0.41	-0.04	0.11
Hypothesis 12: The role of opportunistic behavior on the relationship between structural mechanism and relationship quality	0.64	0.06	0.10

Figure 3 shows the overall path analysis of test results.

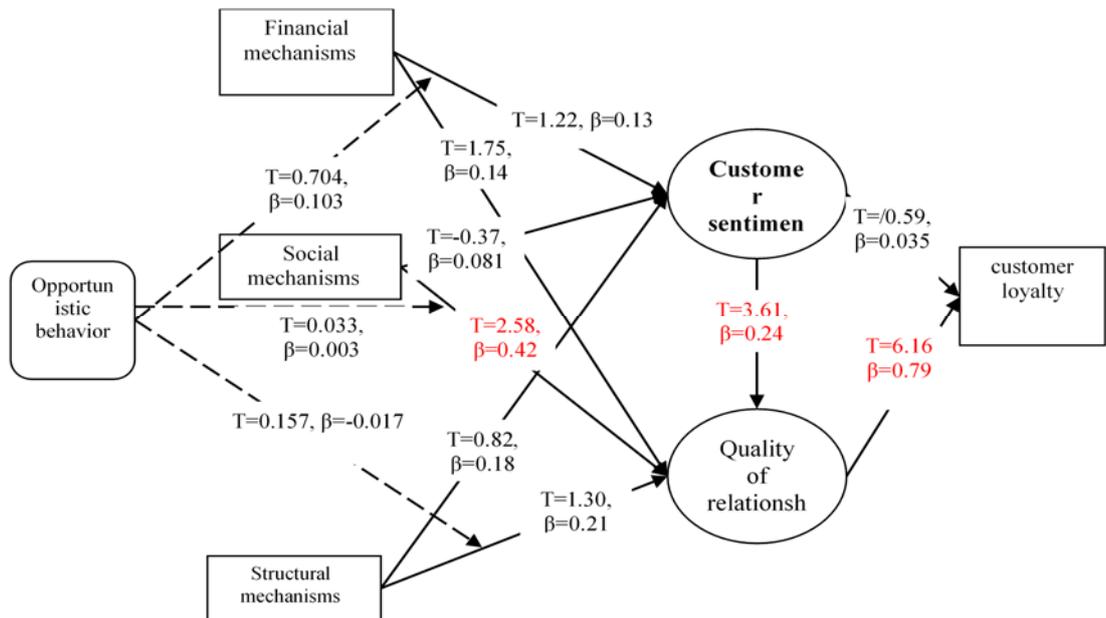


Figure 3. The overall path analysis of test results

Discussion and Conclusion

The main purpose of the research study was to investigate the mechanisms of relationship marketing and their impact on customer loyalty in Yazd hotels. Relationship marketing

mechanisms are financial, social, and structural. To test the hypotheses of this study, structural equation modeling was used. The results of study showed that the financial mechanism did not impact on the sentiments. The results were consistent with the results of Shammut's study (2007). On the other hand, the findings of this study were contrary to the findings of Berry (1995), Lin et al. (2003), and Hsieh, Weng, and Hsieh (2005). In their opinion, financial service providers use financial mechanisms such as price, discounts, or other benefits or financial incentives to guarantee the loyalty of their customers. It is therefore recommended that hotel owners and hoteliers offer discount rates per visit, offer, and additional service to affect their positive emotions. Social and structural mechanisms had no impact on sentiments. This result was in contradiction with the result of Shammut (2007). It is recommended that hotel managers try to utilize financial incentives to improve their relationships with their customers. The proposal complies with views of Berry and Parasuraman (1991). Moreover, continuous communication with customers and informative hotel programs can arouse positive and relevant emotions in customers through enterprise information systems such as email or electronic exchange of data. According to Ghazizadeh et al., (2011) in Mellat Insurance Company financial interests and social factors had a significant impact on customer sentiments compared to other variables. Financial mechanism did not have significant impact on the relationship quality, but social mechanism influenced on the relationship quality (Path Coefficient = 0.42). These findings were consistent with the findings of Shammut (2007). The structural mechanism did not affect the relationship quality. Lin and Chung (2013) argued that the mechanisms of relationship marketing including financial, social, and structural had a significant impact on relationship quality. The results indicated that customer sentiment could affect the quality of the relationship, but did not have significant impact on customer loyalty. The results of Shammut (2007) indicated that customer sentiment could influence on the relationship quality and customer loyalty. In this study, the role of opportunistic behavior as a moderating variable on the relationship between the mechanisms of relationship marketing and relationship quality was evaluated. The results showed that opportunistic behavior did not moderate the mechanisms of relationship marketing and quality. Iranzadeh, Ammari, and Mirweisi (2009) argued that there was a positive relationship between customer and trust opportunistic behavior of the customers because trust was considered as a component of relationship quality. They stated that the opportunistic behaviors were highly risky in a way that could decrease the level of trust in an electronic banking system. Therefore, it is necessary to create the control systems within an electronic banking system to prevent opportunistic behaviors and increase customers' trust and commitment. Quality relationship has a positive and significant impact on customer loyalty. According to Rahimnia, Harandi, and Fatemi (2012), the quality of relationship with customers could affect the factors such as quality and customer loyalty that had mental effect and can lead to a sustainable competitive advantage in organizations especially in the service sectors. Generally, a high quality relationship has many benefits for service organizations. Therefore, other areas such as increasing customer loyalty, organizational capacity in critical conditions, higher profit margins, customer perceived quality, and positive customer reaction towards the products, and introducing to the others can be mentioned. Rahimnia et al. (2012) stated that the quality of the relationship with the customers had a significant impact on customers' perceived quality and loyalty.

In sum, financial and structural mechanisms had no significant impact on the quality of the relationship. In the interaction between customers and hotel employees, close relationship had a great importance from customers' perspectives because it seems to motivate the customers based on their past experiences (Sweeny & Swait, 2008). Attention to the problems which caused by the hotel customers can be effective in increasing the quality of communication through ensuring their welfare and dealing with their complaints. Ghazizadeh et al. (2011) showed that financial interest had a significant impact on the quality of the customers' relationship. The service providers can improve the customers' loyalty and customer relationship, if it can provide greater benefits for the customers. Through using the relationship marketing mechanisms and changing the hotel managers' views towards transactional and traditional marketing to attract or maintain customers, the managers want to improve the profitability rate.

Hence, they should try to involve the customers, suppliers, and other important partners in hotel's economic development marketing activities. Such kind of approach leads to the development of close cooperative relationships with suppliers, customers, and other partners in the economic value chain. Despite of different parties' autonomy, this issue reflects the mutual dependence rather than competition and conflict among market participants. It also stated that the customers' sentiments influenced the customers' relationship quality. The results suggested that customers' sentiment had a significant positive impact on customers' relationship quality. However, Pearson correlation test results indicated that customers' sentiments did not have significant impact on their relationship quality. According to Seyed Javadin et al. (2010), sentiments could be identified across all marketing issues through reacting indirectly to persuasive appeals, measuring the effects of marketing stimuli, emerging target-driven behaviors, and evaluating consumer welfare. Ghazizadeh et al (2011) argued that the sentiments had a huge impact on the quality of customers' relationship. Therefore, as a customer found a positive feeling in dealing with a representative company, the relationship quality increased. It is suggested that hoteliers seek to establish such relationships by using relationship marketing strategies, making them to apply in the hotel, and encouraging others to do them. Therefore, the best approach to maintain customer is to build customers' satisfaction and pay attention to their values, so that their loyalty to the company becomes stronger. The findings of this study also showed that the relationship quality had a significant impact on the customers' loyalty. The value of this impact indicated its importance. Paying attention to hotels' branding and developing hotel brand trust among customers could have a great impact on customers' behavioral patterns and loyalty. This result is consistent with findings of Seyed Javadin et al. (2010). The quality of facing customer services had a positive impact on customers' satisfaction and their perceptions of service quality. It also had a positive relationship with customer loyalty. In order to keep loyal customers satisfied, the hotel employees need to go beyond their responsibilities or the customers move towards other suppliers based on the quality of products and services that they have received from competitors in order to change the idea of other customers. Improving the quality of communication can increase the customers' retention through developing and maintaining long-term relationships with them.

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