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A Systematic Literature Review of the Antecedents and Consequences of Relationship Quality in Online Activity Context

Ardy Wibowo¹

¹Department of Management, Faculty of Economic and Business,

Alma Ata University, Indonesia

Email: ardywibowo@almaata.ac.id

Abstract

Relationship quality is widely practiced across many business and marketing research. In the online activity context, relationship quality is an important thing to maintain the relationship among the customer and service provider because of the lack of face-to-face interaction, uncertainty, and intangibility. Understanding what is the antecedents and consequences that conceptualize into relationship quality construct can guide the researcher to design an analytical framework or model to achieve high-quality research paper in the future. This study reviewed 21 studies in the recent 10 years and find out 29 antecedents and 12 consequences of relationship quality that exhibits significant relationships. Finally, the article concluded the conclusions and future research direction.

Keyword: Relationship Quality, Online Activity, Antecedents and Consequences.

INTRODUCTION

Relationship quality is widely practiced across many business and marketing research. The relationship between buyer and seller becomes the most important and well recognized as the foundation in the marketing theory (Alderson, 1965). Relationship quality becomes an important role to retain existing customers because obtaining new customers costs more time and effort (Tsai & Huang, 2007). In the online activity context, relationship quality is an important thing to maintain the relationship between the customer and service provider because of the lack of face-to-face interaction, uncertainty, and intangibility.

In order to a deep understanding about the term of relationship quality, currently, there is no integrated review available about what is the construct that might influence relationship quality. This paper trying to provide the direction and literature review for future research regarding relationship quality in the context of online activity. By arranging some famous important literature about relationship quality in the recent 10 years, it was found that in general, relationship quality is conceptualized as a mediator in research models between selected antecedents and consequences. One of the prior researches indicated that relationships quality plays a role as the mediator between social support and social commerce intention (Hajli, 2014). Another researcher finds out that the relationship quality mediates the relationship of information system quality and perceived value to the continuance intention on the E-Tourism context (Masri et al., 2020).

This study contributes by providing a brief integrated literature review of the relationship quality and conceptualizes a new research framework of relationship quality in the context of online activity. In future work, researchers can use this research paper as the reference to conduct an empirical study about relationship quality by developing a research model based on the suggested framework.

RELATIONSHIP QUALITY

Relationship quality refers to the overall assessment of the strength of a relationship between two parties (Palmatier et al., 2006). Relationship quality is conceptualized as a composite or multidimensional construct and identified has three distinct yet related components, trust, satisfaction

and commitment (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999; Palmatier et al., 2006). This research focused on the relationship quality in the context of online activity such as e-commerce, social commerce, mobile banking, e-tourism etc.

Previous research has been done exploring the relationship quality. Most of them conceptualize relationship quality as the mediator between its antecedents and consequences. A study found that the quality of relationship between user and the social networking Web site mediates the influence of social support and website quality toward the intention to use social commerce and continuance to using social networking sites (Liang et al., 2011). Another research demonstrated the relation of the buildup construct of the relationship quality (customer satisfaction and trust), information system quality, perceived value, and customers' intention to continue intention in the e-tourism context (Masri et al., 2020) found that customer satisfaction has a positive effect on continuance intention. Information system quality has a positive relationship with customer satisfaction, trust, and customer continuance intention. Furthermore, the perceived value has an effect on customer satisfaction and trust. However, the perceived value is partially related to customer continuance intention through customer satisfaction.

After a rigorous survey of a literature relevant to relationship quality, table 1 illustrates the research papers and the most common dimensions of relationship quality in the context of online activity.

DATA COLLECTION

Several data collection strategies were used to identify the research set of relevant published studies. An initial search for studies was conducted through Google Scholar using the terms relationship quality, online activity, internet, and combinations of these terms. The next step was to search for studies within JSTOR, Emerald, SpringerLink, and ScienceDirect databases using the same terms. These databases were selected because they have a relatively high density of information systems, marketing, and communication articles and papers in which relationship-quality-related studies would likely be found.

In order to ensure novelty and up-to-date study, the recent 10 years paper research was included. The literature search resulted in 34 articles and papers reporting empirical studies that incorporated relationship quality. However, 14, some studies that relationship quality were excluded from this systematic literature review. Studies were excluded because they conceptualized relationship quality not on the online activity context. Consequently, 13 papers were excluded for this reason and resulted 21 research paper that meet the criteria in this study.

Table 1. The research papers and most common dimensions of relationship quality in the context of online activity.

Author	Article Title	Journal Title	Dimension
Sun (2008)	Transferring Attributes of E-Commerce System into Business Benefits: A Relationship Quality Perspective	Journal of Electronic Commerce Research	Trust and Satisfaction
Chung, Shin (2010)	The antecedents and consequents of relationship quality in internet shopping	Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics	Customers Satisfaction, E-Trust, and E-Commitment
Zhang, Fang, Wei, Ramsey, McCole, Chen (2011)	Repurchase intention in B2C e-commerce - A relationship quality perspective	Information & Management	Trust and Satisfaction
Liang, Ho, Li, Turban (2011)	What Drives Social Commerce: The Role of Social Support and Relationship Quality	International Journal of Electronic Commerce	Trust, Satisfaction and Commitment
Chen (2012)	To use or not to use: understanding the factors affecting continuance intention	International Journal of Mobile Communications	Trust and Satisfaction

Rafiq, Fulford, Lu (2013)	of mobile banking Building customer loyalty in online retailing: The role of relationship quality	Journal of Marketing Management	E-Trust, E-Relationship Satisfaction, E-Affective Commitment
Clark & Melancon (2013)	The Influence of Social Media Investment on Relational Outcomes: A Relationship Marketing Perspective	International Journal of Marketing Studies	Trust, Satisfaction and Commitment
Chen, Liu, Li, Yen (2013)	Understanding the Mediating Effects of Relationship Quality on Technology Acceptance: An Empirical Study of E-Appointment System	Journal of Medical System	Trust and Satisfaction
Al-alak (2014)	Impact of marketing activities on relationship quality in the Malaysian banking sector	Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services	Trust and Satisfaction
Hajli (2014)	The role of social support on relationship quality and social commerce	Technological Forecasting & Social Change	Trust, Satisfaction and Commitment
Wang, Hajli (2014)	Co-Creation in Branding through Social Commerce: The Role of Social Support, Relationship Quality and Privacy Concerns	Twentieth Americas Conference on Information Systems	Trust, Satisfaction and Commitment
Chen, Jong, Lai (2014)	Assessing the Relationship between Technology Readiness and Continuance Intention in an E-Appointment System: Relationship Quality as a Mediator	Journal of Medical System	Trust and Satisfaction
Lai (2014)	The Role of Service Quality, Perceived Value, And Relationship Quality in Enhancing Customer Loyalty in The Travel Agency Sector	Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing	Trust, Satisfaction and Commitment
Zhang, Benyoucef, Zhao (2016)	Building brand loyalty in social commerce: The case of brand microblogs	Electronic Commerce Research and Applications	Trust, Satisfaction and Commitment
Dashti, Sanayei, Dolatabadi, Moshrefjavadi (2016)	An Analysis of Factors Affecting Intention to Purchase Products and Services in Social Commerce	Modern Applied Science	Trust, Satisfaction and Commitment
Hsu, Chen, Kikuchi, Machida (2017)	Elucidating the determinants of purchase intention toward social shopping sites: A comparative study of Taiwan and Japan	Telematics and Informatics	Trust, Customer Satisfaction and Commitment
Tajvidi, Wang, Hajli, Love (2017)	Brand value Co-creation in social commerce: The role of interactivity, social support, and relationship quality	Computers in Human Behavior	Trust, Satisfaction and Commitment
Tajvidi, Richard, Wang, Hajli (2018)	Brand co-creation through social commerce information sharing: The role of social media	Journal of Business Research	Trust, Satisfaction and Commitment

Hsu, Chen, Kumar (2018)	How social shopping retains customers? Capturing the essence of website quality and relationship quality	Total Quality Management & Business Excellence	Trust, Customer Satisfaction and Commitment
Masri, You, Ruangkanjanases, Chen, Pan (2020)	Assessing the Effects of Information System Quality and Relationship Quality on Continuance Intention in E-Tourism	International Journal of Environment Research and Public Health	Satisfaction and Trust

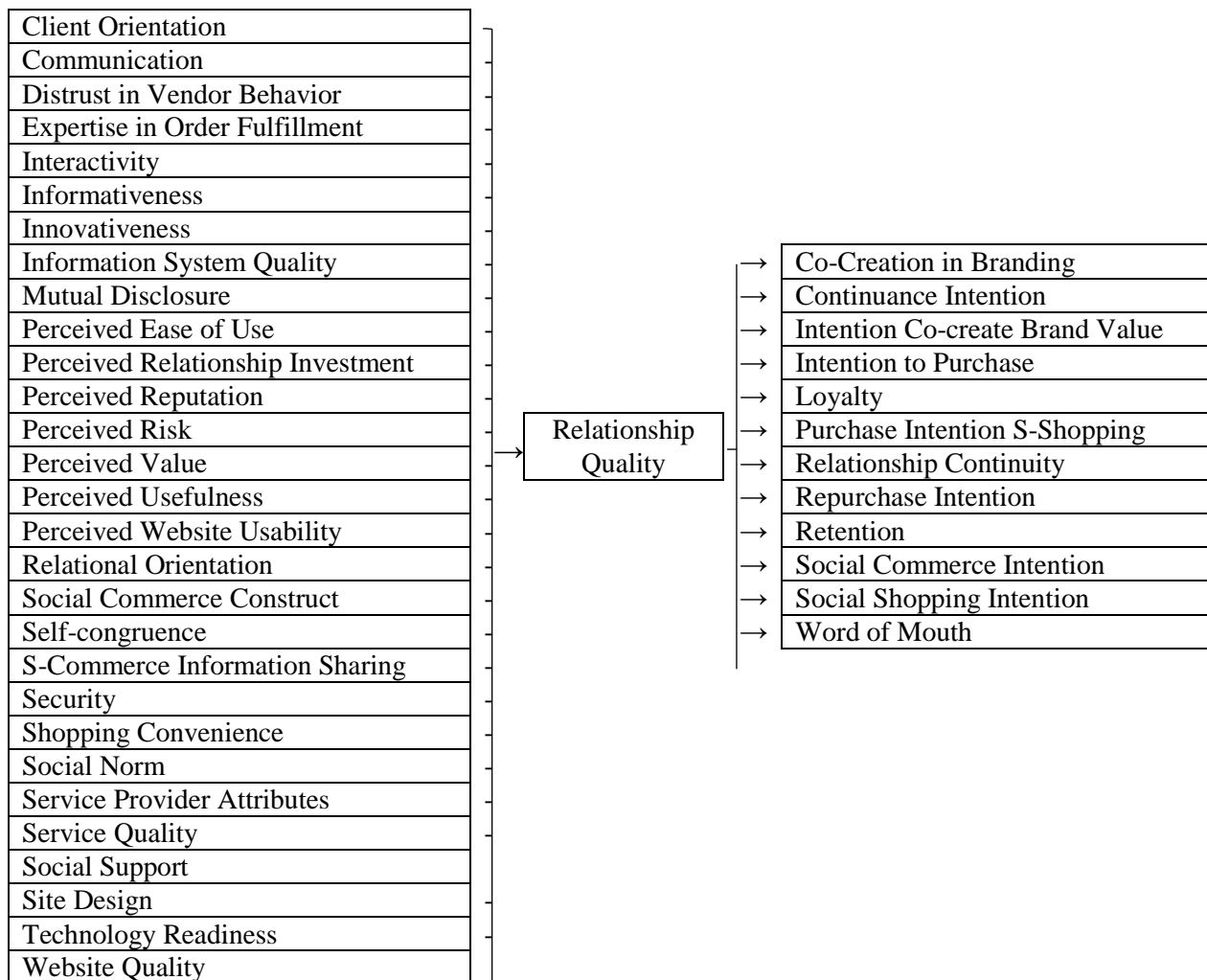
DISCUSSION

The antecedents and consequences of relationship quality in the online activity context has been investigated. Figure 1 shows a brief summary of 21 research paper related to relationship quality in the online activity context. There are 29 antecedents and 12 consequences of relationship quality that exhibits significant relationships in the recent 10 years that applied in various online activity context.

In general, these articles put the relationship quality as a mediator by integrating it with its antecedents and consequences based on their respective contexts or fields. Chung & Shin (2010) proposed a model to evaluate the significance of relationship quality factors (customer satisfaction, e-trust, and e-commitment) on positive word of mouth (WOM) in e-retailing and combine it with shopping convenience, site design, informativeness, security and communication as antecedents. Zhang et al. (2011) demonstrated a framework to explain B2C user repurchase intention from the perspective of relationship quality with its antecedents is perceived website usability, expertise in order fulfillment, perceived reputation, distrust in vendor behavior. Chen (2012) examined the model to find out the determinants that affect the customers in mobile banking by conceptualizing the formation of relationship quality and continuance intention towards m-banking and considering service quality, perceived risk, and technology readiness as antecedents. Clark & Melancon (2013) conceptualized social media as relationship investment and examined for its influence on satisfaction, loyalty, and word of mouth behaviors through the mediator of relationship quality. Hajli (2014) proposed a model in the context of social commerce that investigates the role of social factors (emotional support and information support) as antecedents and its impact on relationship quality and social commerce intention, as well as, Liang et al. (2011) proposed a model to investigate how social factors and relationship quality affect the user's intention of future participation in social commerce. Zhang et al. (2016) suggest brand loyalty as an outcome of the relationship quality which is further influenced by self-congruence, social norms, information quality and interactivity in the context of brand microblogs. Hsu et al. (2017) exploring the determinants that affecting consumers' purchase intention toward social shopping sites (SSS) in different countries and to figure out these differences from a cross-cultural perspective.

They proposed a model that put the relationship quality as the determinant of social shopping purchase intention. Tajvidi et al. (2017) suggested an analytical framework to investigated brand value co-creation that primarily determined by relationship quality, which is further influenced by customer interactivity and social support. Hsu et al. (2018) realize that providing an excellent quality website experience is crucial to support online customers. Thus, they conduct an empirical study to investigate the factor that influences the purchase intention of social shopping, which is including website quality and relationship quality. Masri et al. (2020) suggested a research framework to examine the customers' intention to continue in the e-tourism environment which initially influences by relationship quality formation (customer satisfaction and trust) which is further influenced information system quality and perceived value.

Figure 1. The antecedents and consequences of relationship quality in online activity contex



Overall, this paper figure out the construct that conceptualizes as antecedents that significantly influence the role of relationship quality, including client orientation (Al-alak, 2014), communication (Chung & Shin, 2010), distrust in vendor behavior and expertise in order fulfillment (Y. Zhang et al., 2011), interactivity (K. Z. K. Zhang et al., 2016), informativeness (Chung & Shin, 2010), innovativeness (Chen et al., 2014), information quality (Sun, 2008; K. Z. K. Zhang et al., 2016), information system quality (Masri et al., 2020), mutual disclosure (Al-alak, 2014), perceived ease of use (Chen et al., 2013), perceived relationship investment (Rafiq et al., 2013), perceived reputation (Y. Zhang et al., 2011), perceived risk (Chen, 2012), perceived value (Lai, 2014; Masri et al., 2020), perceived usefulness (Chen et al., 2013; Dashti et al., 2016), perceived website usability (Y. Zhang et al., 2011), relational orientation (Al-alak, 2014), social commerce construct (Dashti et al., 2016; Wang & Hajli, 2014), self-congruence (K. Z. K. Zhang et al., 2016), s-commerce information sharing (Tajvidi et al., 2018), security and shopping convenience (Chung & Shin, 2010), social norm (K. Z. K. Zhang et al., 2016), service provider attributes (Al-alak, 2014), service quality (Chen, 2012; Lai, 2014; Sun, 2008), social support (Hajli, 2014; Liang et al., 2011; Tajvidi et al., 2017, 2018; Wang & Hajli, 2014), site design (Chung & Shin, 2010), technology readiness (Chen, 2012), and website quality (Liang et al., 2011).

Besides, the outcomes or consequences that significantly influence by relationship quality are co-creation in branding (Tajvidi et al., 2018; Wang & Hajli, 2014), continuance intention (Chen, 2012; Chen et al., 2013, 2014; Liang et al., 2011; Masri et al., 2020), intention co-create brand value (Tajvidi et al., 2017), intention to purchase (Dashti et al., 2016), loyalty (Lai, 2014; Rafiq et al., 2013;

K. Z. K. Zhang et al., 2016), purchase intention social shopping (Hsu et al., 2018), relationship continuity (Al-alak, 2014), repurchase intention (Y. Zhang et al., 2011), retention (Sun, 2008), social commerce intention (Hajli, 2014; Wang & Hajli, 2014), social shopping intention (Hsu et al., 2017) and word of mouth (Al-alak, 2014; Chung & Shin, 2010).

LIMITATION

This systematic literature review is not without limitations. First, the research papers that collected are not all published in the top-tier journal. This is indicating that the quality of the research paper cited in this paper was uneven.

Second, all of the research papers that cited in this study are empirical research. Some of the research papers conceptualizing and drawing the relationship quality construct into the analytical framework differently. This study finds out that most of the researcher conceptualize the relationship quality as one construct that has three second-order constructs (i.e. trust, satisfaction, and commitment), and the other, they split each dimension of relationship quality and each of them has the influence or influenced by antecedents or consequences. For instance, Hsu et al. (2017), their research framework split the formation of relationship quality into commitment, trust and satisfaction and each of them influenced by website quality, as well as, become the influence of purchase intention of social shopping, even they influence each other (e.g. satisfaction has an influence on trust). This is demonstrated that the prior authors have different perceptions of how to conceptualize the relationship quality in the research framework.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The future of online activity would be tenuous without relationship quality. The characteristic of online activity which is uncertain and intangible requires the researcher to have a deep understanding of relationship quality that becomes one of the ways to maintaining a good relationship between buyer and seller. Therefore, relationship quality will continue to be an important aspect of online activity even though the Internet has evolved considerably over time. Establishing good consumer relationship quality presents a challenge for e-seller or e-service provider and as a subject that generates continuous interest and research.

The present systematic literature review provides new insights regarding the direction and literature review for future research of relationship quality in the context of online activity. The present research has also taken a step toward explaining the variance in relationship effect sizes observed across studies. Overall, in the future work, researchers can use this study as the reference to conduct an empirical study about relationship quality by developing a research model involving relationship quality and selected antecedents and consequences.

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