



The Mediating Role of Relationship Quality On The Relationship Between The Corporate Brand And Repurchase Intention

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ABSTRACT

Purpose:

Intense competition in automotive sector compels companies to fortify and strategically position their corporate brand in customers' minds. Consequently, cultivating robust and enduring relationship quality with customers has become imperative. The objective of this study was to investigate the mediating role of relationship quality on the relationship between the corporate brand and repurchase intention in the automotive sector. Grounded in the resource-based view theory, the assumption is that relationship quality serves as a mediator between the corporate brand and repurchase intention. The proposed conceptual framework includes variables three of relationship quality is hypothesized to mediate the relationship between the corporate brand and repurchase intention. Data were collected via a survey method using a personally administered questionnaire received from 322 customers of automotive companies in Sudan. The responses were obtained and analyzed through quantitative method using SPSS. The results showed that the three components of relationship quality including trust, satisfaction and commitment mediated the relationship between the corporate brand and repurchase intention. Each relationship quality component exhibits distinct mediation patterns. These results contributed a unique addition to academic knowledge and offer valuable insights for decision-makers in the marketing field.

Keywords: Corporate brand, Relationship quality, Repurchase intention, Automotive, Consumer behavior

JEL Classification: **M370** Advertising, **M310** Marketing

Introduction:

Success and survival in today's business landscape demand adaptation to the evolving marketing paradigm. In today's fiercely competitive environment, businesses are driven to fortify their customer relationships (Gilaninia et al., 2011). Establishing relationships with customers provides valuable marketing intelligence, enhancing strategic marketing planning (Ndubisi, 2007). Relationship quality represents the satisfaction, trust, commitment and fulfillment experienced within a relationship. Maintaining customer repurchase intentions and deterring significant switching behavior is crucial for sustained operations and gaining a competitive advantage (Kuo et al., 2013). Emami et al. (2013) highlight that the cost of acquiring new customers outweighs preserving current ones. Moreover, attracting new customers is more challenging than retaining existing ones (Chang et al., 2014). Hellier et al., (2003), highlights the importance of understanding and continuously creating value for customers to attract and retain long-term customer relationships and to foster customer retention.

Despite previous researches efforts investigated the relationship between brand and repurchase intention in service industry such as banking and hospitality (Sohaib,2022, Putu,2017) a, but they ignore examining the mediating role of relationship quality across three components between the corporate brand and repurchase intention in automotive industry .Moreover, most of the previous researches examined two variable such as

trust and satisfaction (Utama I Putu et al., 2017, Lujun Su et al., 2016). Moreover few research explores trust and commitment roles as mediators under different research settings (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Therefore, this paper aims to investigate this mediating role, validating the measurement of relationship quality across three dimensions. Additionally, it seeks to explore the mediating effect of relationship quality on the association between the corporate brand and repurchase intention in automotive industry. Thus, this research contributes academic value to the theory of planned behavior, aiding practitioners in understanding the theoretical formation of an individual's repurchase intention and the empirical factors influencing this process. Furthermore, for managers, comprehending the factors driving repurchase intention is pivotal in maximizing customer loyalty and repurchase behavior (Frank et al., 2014) in automotive industry.

Literature Review:

Previously, marketing strategies primarily focused on the selling concept, neglecting relationship quality, corporate brand and consumer behavior. But now understanding consumer behavior, branding and relationship quality has become a focal point in marketing literature. Consumer behavioral intentions, have gained considerable attention due to their role as reliable predictors of actual behavior. Described by Ki and Hon (2012), behavioral intentions encapsulate subjective judgments about future behavior, significantly shaping consumer decisions. Among these components, repurchase intention stands out as critical in today's competitive market. The concept of customer repurchase intention refers to an individual's personal inclination to buy a particular product again Hajar, 2023. Managers' understanding of factors driving repurchase intention is crucial for maximizing customer retention and loyalty (Frank et al., 2014). The repurchase decision-making theory (TRD) suggests that satisfaction and commitment significantly contribute to customers' decisions to repurchase (Han & Ryu, 2012). It reflects consumer approval and willingness to reuse a product or service (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004). Recent practices, driven by intense market competition and the high costs associated with attracting new customers and acknowledge the significance of existing customers as the pathway to success (Hafeez & Muhammad, 2012). Customer retention plays a pivotal role, where relationship satisfaction significantly impacts this retention (Eriksson & Vaghult, 2000). Moreover, repurchase intentions are influenced by several factors rooted in preceding purchases and individual decision-making processes such as corporate brand and relationship quality.

A corporate brand represents the identity, image, and perception of a company in the eyes of its audience, encompassing its mission, values, reputation in the market. It's the essence and personality of the organization, reflecting how it wants to be perceived by customers, stakeholders, and the public. Therefore, a strong corporate brand creates trust, loyalty, and recognition, influencing consumer behavior and impacting the company's success and competitiveness within its industry. The corporate brand has emerged as a critical financial asset, complementing its marketing significance by attracting more customers and mitigating the cost of customer defection to competitors. Thus, corporate branding empirical researches have witnessed significant growth in interest (Rindell and Strandvik, 2010; Abratt and Klein, 2012; Schultz and de Chernatony, 2002; Anisimova, 2013). Therefore, the corporate brand is considered one of antecedents of behavior intention. (Hsu et al., 2010) reported that the influences of corporate images on behavioral intentions must go through the mediators, commitment and trust. Based on Tu et al., (2013) it is found that the direct influence of corporate image on consumers' behavioral intention increased with existent of customer commitment. Corporate brand positively influences consumer attitudes towards the company (Bravo et al., 2012). Corporate brand is defined by Hatch and Schultz (2003) as a set of interpretive symbols for stakeholders, differentiates and connects organizations with stakeholders. (Harris and de Chernatony, 2001, encompassing elements like corporate image, reputation, and familiarity, shaping consumers' perceptions. the corporate brand positively influences consumer attitudes towards the company (Bravo et al., 2012). Following the conceptualization of previous research, relationship quality can be regarded as a meta construct composed of several key components reflecting the overall nature of relationships between companies and consumers (Henning-Thurau et al., 2002). The evaluation of interactions between buyers and sellers heavily relies on the concept of relationship quality, serving as a fundamental determinant in categorizing the nature of the relationship as positive or negative. This assessment comprises multiple dimensions that gauge the overall quality of their engagement. Santouridis and Veraki (2017) highlight interconnected components within the relationship quality framework, including customer satisfaction, the strength of the relationship, its longevity, and the profitability derived from the customer relationship. The idea of relationship quality encapsulates consumers' voluntary commitment to their association with a company (Roberts et al., 2003). Building upon previous research (De Canniere et al., 2010; Ulaga and Eggert, 2006; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2002; Yang et al., 2011, this paper specifically emphasizes trust, satisfaction, and commitment as pivotal elements of relationship quality. It's worth noting that the significance of these components might vary across different industries (citing Bloemer et al., 1998, as referenced in De Canniere et al., 2010). The literature suggests a strong association between trust, beliefs, and favorable attitudes towards a corporate entity, leading to increased tendencies for repurchase (Mosavi and Ghaedi, 2012; Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Key antecedents such as commitment and trust have been identified as pivotal factors influencing repurchase intentions (Zboja and Voorhees, 2006). Moreover, a consensus across studies demonstrates a positive link between customer satisfaction and the likelihood of repeat purchases (Chang et al., 2014; Pappas et al., 2014). This underscores the correlation between customer expectations, intentions, and

actual buying behaviors (Söderlund and Vilgon, 1999). Notably, relationship quality emerges as a superior predictor of behavioral intentions (Roberts et al, 2003; Foster & Cadogan, 2000; Petzer & van Tonder, 2019). Morgan and Hunt's theory (1994) posits trust and commitment as pivotal mediating variables that shape the outcomes of building enduring customer relationships. The quality of a relationship is often gauged by the level of fulfillment, happiness, and harmony experienced by those involved. It's not just about the absence of conflict but also the presence of positive interactions and meaningful connections that contribute to a strong, enduring bond. Consequently, this study seeks to delve into the mediating role of relationship quality in the correlation between corporate branding and repurchase intentions. Understanding how the strength and dynamics of customer-brand relationships influence purchasing behaviors holds immense potential for shaping marketing strategies. Such insights can facilitate the cultivation of enduring customer connections and the augmentation of intentions to repurchase, thereby fostering long-term brand loyalty.

Research Hypothesis

Based on the above literature the following hypotheses are generated:

H1 -Relationship quality mediates the relationship between the corporate brand and repurchase intention.

H1.1 customer trust mediates the relationship between corporate image and repurchase intention

H1.2 customer trust mediates the relationship between corporate reputation and repurchase intention

H1.3 customer trust mediates the relationship between corporate familiarity and repurchase intention

H1.4 customer commitment mediates the relationship between corporate image and repurchase intention

H1.5customer commitment mediates the relationship between corporate reputation and repurchase intention

H1.6 customer commitment mediates the relationship between corporate familiarity and repurchase intention

H1.7 customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between corporate image and repurchase intention

H1.8 customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between corporate familiarity and repurchase intention

H1.9 customer satisfaction mediates the relationship between corporate reputation and repurchase intention.

Materials and Methodology:

In line with Sekaran (2003), this study employed a cross-sectional descriptive survey research design. The primary instrument utilized for data collection was a personally administered questionnaire employing the survey method. The study aimed to establish relationships between variables, employing an explanatory research design to emphasize studying and explaining the correlations between the corporate brand, repurchase intention among customers of automotive companies in Sudan, and the mediating role of relationship quality between the corporate brand and repurchase intention. The measurement of various dimensions and constructs drew from existing literature. Variables were assessed using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strong agreement to strong disagreement (Sekaran, 2003). To tailor the questionnaire to the automotive industry, items were adapted from various sources. Specifically, the research employed five items for corporate image (Souiden et al., 2006), seven items for corporate reputation (Souiden et al., 2006), four items for corporate familiarity (Souiden et al., 2006), three items for corporate familiarity (Zboja and Voorhees, 2006), eight items for corporate trust (Morgan and Hunt, 1994), five items for customer satisfaction sourced from Grace and O'Cass (2005), Taylor and Baker (1994), and Oliver (1980) as cited in Sondoh et al. (2007), and finally, five items for customer commitment sourced from Pappu et al. (2005) and Kim and Kim (2005)



Source: Prepared by author (2023)

Table 1: Mediation Effect of Relationship Quality

The hierarchical regression analysis investigated the mediation effect of customer commitment on the association between corporate image, reputation, corporate familiarity, and repurchase intention. Table 1 showed the results of the hierarchical regression testing the mediation effect of customer commitment on the relationship between corporate image and reputation, corporate familiarity, and repurchase intention. In model 1, the results showed that corporate image and reputation, and corporate familiarity affect repurchase intention. Significantly influence repurchase intention with the beta coefficient for corporate image and reputation ($B = .476, p < 0.01$), corporate familiarity ($B = .179, p < 0.01$). In model 2, corporate image and

reputation ($B = .227$, $p < 0.01$). corporate familiarity ($B = .103$, $p < 0.01$). Concerning the mediating role of customer commitment on the relationship between corporate image, reputation, and corporate familiarity with repurchase intention. The results showed that the value of corporate image and reputation, and corporate familiarity were significantly reduced (in model 2) this indicated that, relationship quality partial mediated the relationship between corporate image and reputation, corporate familiarity, and repurchase intention.

Table 1 Hierarchical Regression: The mediation effect of the relationship quality on the relationship between corporate brand and repurchase intention.

Variables	Repurchase intention	
	Model 1	Model 2
Corporate image and reputation	.476	.227***
Corporate familiarity	.179	.103**
Mediating customer commitment		.553***
R ²	.347	.565
ΔR^2	.347	.218
F change	82.359***	155.043***

Source: Prepared by author (2023)

Table 2 showed the results of the hierarchical regression testing the mediation effect of the relationship quality component (customer satisfaction) on the relationship between corporate image and reputation, corporate familiarity on repurchase intention in model 1, the results showed that corporate image and reputation, corporate familiarity effect on repurchase intention. Significantly influence repurchase intention with the beta coefficient for corporate image and reputation, in model 1, ($B = .477$, $p < 0.01$). corporate familiarity ($B = .179$, $p < 0.01$). In model 2, corporate image and reputation ($B = .275$, $p < 0.01$). corporate familiarity ($B = .083$, $p < 0.01$). The results showed that the value of corporate image and reputation, and corporate familiarity were significantly reduced (in model 2) this indicated that, relationship quality partially mediated the relationship between corporate image and reputation and repurchase intention, and fully mediated the relationship between corporate familiarity, and repurchase intention.

Table 2

Variables	Repurchase intention	
	Model 1	Model 2
Corporate image and reputation	.477***	.275***
Corporate familiarity	.179***	.083
Mediating customer satisfaction		.405***
R ²	.347	.442
ΔR^2	.347	.094
F change	82.683***	52.461***

Source: Prepared by author (2023)

Table 3 showed the results of the hierarchical regression testing the mediation effect of the relationship quality component (customer trust) on the relationship between corporate image and reputation, and corporate familiarity on repurchase intention. In model 1, the results showed that corporate image and reputation, and corporate familiarity affect repurchase intention. Significantly influence repurchase intention with the beta coefficient for corporate image and reputation, in model 1, ($B = .477$, $p < 0.01$). corporate familiarity ($B = .179$, $p < 0.01$). In model 2, corporate image and reputation ($B = .327$, $p < 0.01$). corporate familiarity ($B = .118$, $p < 0.01$). The results showed that the value of corporate image and reputation, and corporate familiarity were significantly reduced (in model 2) this indicated that, customer trust partially mediated the relationship between corporate image and reputation, corporate familiarity, and repurchase intention

Table 3

Variables	Repurchase intention	
	Model 1	Model 2
Corporate image and reputation	.477***	.327***
Corporate familiarity	.179***	.118***
Mediating customer trust		.337***
R ²	.348	.426
ΔR^2	.348	.078
F change	82.692***	41.804***

Source: Prepared by author (2023)

Results and Discussion

The results highlight the substantial influence of relationship quality components—customer commitment, satisfaction, and trust—on the relationship between corporate image, reputation, corporate familiarity, and repurchase intention. The observed reduction in the direct impact of these factors on repurchase intention upon introducing relationship quality components suggests a mediation effect. Each relationship quality component exhibits distinct mediation patterns: The study underscores the intricate role of relationship quality in shaping customers repurchase intentions. It emphasizes that while corporate image, reputation, and familiarity play crucial roles, the quality of the relationship customers maintain with a brand—marked by commitment, satisfaction, and trust—partially mediates these influences.

The study's findings resonate with previous research by (Chang et al. 2014; Mosavi & Ghaedi ,2012; Fang et al. 2011; Hsu et al. ,2010), confirming the significant influence of relationship quality components like satisfaction, commitment, and the role of emotions on repurchase intentions. This consistency strengthens the current research's conclusions. Consistently, the study supports the positive impact of satisfaction and commitment on repurchase intentions, aligning with prior research. It also acknowledges the indirect influence of corporate image on consumer behavior through emotions, consistent with Hsu et al.'s findings. The study aligns with Sekaran's conceptual framework, demonstrating how mediating variables operate between corporate brand factors and their impact on repurchase intentions. Focused on automotive companies in Sudan, the research affirms the partial mediation of relationship quality in connecting corporate brand factors to repurchase intentions. However, limitations include the sample size (322 individual customers) and exclusive focus on individual customers, potentially limiting generalizability. Additionally, challenges in obtaining comprehensive secondary data due to the absence of prior studies in Sudan might have affected the research depth.

In conclusion, the study effectively explores relationship quality as a mediator between corporate brand factors and repurchase intentions in the Sudanese automotive industry. For businesses, understanding and nurturing these relationship components are essential for fostering customer loyalty and increasing the likelihood of repeat purchases. Moreover, this study highlights the significance of not only building a positive image but also fostering familiarity and trust to enhance customer retention and encourage future purchases. Acknowledging these limitations highlights avenues for future research to consider diverse industry contexts and longitudinal studies, could offer deeper insights into the evolution of these relationships over time and aid in refining strategies for sustainable customer relationships and business success.

Recommendations for future research involve incorporating diverse dimensions like corporate commitment, activities, association, personality, and value, which might impact repurchase intention. Expanding the model to encompass larger populations and diverse regions within Sudan, exploring various industries, cultures, and specifically, business-to-business perspectives, could yield more comprehensive insights.

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