

THE IMPACT OF RELATIONSHIP QUALITY ON REPURCHASE INTENTION TOWARDS THE CUSTOMERS OF AUTOMOTIVE COMPANIES IN SUDAN

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ABSTRACT: *With the continuous and accelerating changing of the marketing tools, changing of consumer choices, educated consumers, merging of new competitors in the market, the automotive companies will face a fierce competition in automotive market, all these above factors create some challenges for companies such as keeping their and retaining their customers and enhancing the repurchase intention of the customers. Therefore the companies have to adopt new marketing tools such as relationship quality concept to keep and retaining customers, moreover, it is better for automotive companies to pay more effort for retaining customer rather than getting new one, and investigate more to such factors that effecting repurchase intention. There for this paper will aim to find out the relationship quality dimensions affects on repurchase intention depending on the theory of planned behavior intention approach.*

KEYWORDS: Relationship quality, Customer trust, Customer commitment, Customer satisfaction, Repurchase intention

INTRODUCTION

In the era of rapid advances of technology and product parity, globalization, individualization, digitalization, more educated and informed customers, and fierce competition between the automotive companies on attracting and retaining customers, the range of options available to organizations to attract consumers is decreasing, and due to that the challenge for the companies because the customers will need a stronger justification for purchasing a car (Anisimova, 2007). Therefore, there is no longer a guarantee of success, unless the companies find new ways to create value will prosper in the future such as a relationship quality concept to our knowledge ,there is no known researchers investigated the relationship between relationship quality and repurchase intention .In addition , De Cannie`re et al ,(2009) ,considered the components of relationship quality (satisfaction, trust, and commitment)as one relationship quality construct ,therefore, the researchers recommended the coming researcher to focus upon the development of better survey items that would discriminate these conceptually related, but distinct constructs. Therefore this

paper will examine the impact of relationship quality with its three components (trust, commitment and satisfaction) on repurchase intention.

Definition of Relationship Quality

Strong competition which exists today in all businesses motivates the companies to create stronger relationships between themselves and their customers (Gilaninia et al, 2011). The physical contact between a manufacturer brand and its customers is of particular importance as far as relationship quality (Aurier and de Lanauze, 2011). Relationship quality plays an important role when studying the relationships that exist between customers and businesses (Yang et al, 2010). By building relationship with customers, an organization can also gain quality sources of marketing intelligence for better planning of marketing strategy (Ndubisi, 2007).

Building on the previous literature, there are numerous previous studies discussed the relationship quality concept (see Aurier and de Lanauze, 2011; Doaei et al 2011; De Cannier et al, 2010; Ulaga and Eggert, 2006; Emami et al, 2013). Relationship quality concept has been defined from different views. From the context of selling services, Crosby et al, (1990), defined relationship quality as being achieved through the salesperson's ability to reduce perceived uncertainty. In the same line, the relationship quality means that the customer is able to rely on the salesperson's integrity and has confidence in the salespersons (Doaei et al 2011). On the other hand, from customer perspective Henning-Thurau and Klee, (1997) defined the relationship quality as the degree of appropriateness of a relationship to fulfill the needs of the customer. Moreover, relationship quality is defined as voluntary commitment of consumer to maintain their bond or relationship with the firm (Roberts et al, 2003). In contrast according to De Cannier et al, (2009), the customer-firm relationship is fueled by believe in the impact of relationship quality concepts such as trust, commitment and satisfaction and relationship quality was a significant predictor of buying intention.

Dimensions of Relationship quality:

Following the conceptualization of earlier studies,(see Table 1), relationship quality can be regarded as a metaconstruct composed of several key components reflecting the overall nature of relationships between companies and consumers (Henning-Thurau et al, 2002).most of the previous literature, discussed one components of relationship quality such as, trust (Doney and Cannon, 1997; Morgan and Hunt, 1994;),Satisfaction (Fullerton 2005; Zeithaml et al, 1996 and Commitment (Harrison-Walker, 2001; Moorman, Deshpandé and Zaltman, 1993).In addition, Morgan and Hunt, (1994), hypothesize that commitment and trust are key constructs of relationship quality.Due to, the importance of satisfaction and trust, these concepts has been stressed by various authors as indicators of the higher-order construct of relationship quality (Crosby et al, 1990; Naude and Buttle, 2000; Ulaga and Eggert, 2006; Shamdasani et al, 2011). On the other hand, Hennig-Thurau et al, 2002; Roberts's et al, 2003), have added relationship commitment as a dimension of relationship quality commitment as additional dimension of relationship quality. On the other hand, (Woo and Ennew ,2004), conceptualized relationship quality as a higher-order construct using cooperation, adaptation and atmosphere as first-order constructs determining overall relationship quality. The most cited components of the relationship quality in empirical research are trust, commitment and satisfaction (Yang et al, 2010; De Cannie're et al, 2010; Ulaga and Eggert, 2006; Hennig-Thurau et al, 2002).

Moreover, Ndubisi, 2011, reported that the relationship quality constructs consist of empathy, trust, communication, conflict handling and personalization. Although, there is, as yet, no clear consensus in the literature on the set of dimensions that comprise the construct of relationship quality (Hennig-Thurau et al, 2002; Yang et al, 2010). In contrast Naude and Buttle, (2000), state that the decision makers involved in the relationship have an influence in determining the overall relationship quality. (Hennig-Thurau, et al, 2002) have argued and empirically shown that the best understanding of the influence of these three central and often conceptually confusing concepts lies in the approach of their combined effects. Regarding to the issue related to the measuring of relationship quality, Naude and Buttle, (2000) reported that there is not one measure of relationship quality and it is a multidimensional construct. In addition, the measurement of relationship quality is crucial to organizational development in an industrial context, as well as a service context, so that both researchers and practitioners might better understand and handle relationships (Chen and Myagmarsuren, 2011). In line with the previous studies (De Cannie`re et al, 2010; Ulaga and Eggert, 2006; Hennig-Thurau et al, 2002 ;Yang et al, 2010), this research focuses on trust, commitment, and satisfaction as key constructs of relationship quality.

Table 1: Researches on Relationship Quality

Authors	Relationship quality Factors
Doney and Cannon, (1997); Morgan and Hunt, (1994)	Trust
Fullerton 2005; Zeithaml et al, 1996	Satisfaction
Crosby et al, 1990; Naude and Buttle, 2000; Ulaga and Eggert, 2006; Shamdasani et al, 2011	Trust & Satisfaction
Harrison-Walker, (2001); Moorman, Deshpandé and Zaltman, (1993)	Commitment
Morgan and Hunt, 1994.	Trust & Commitment
De Cannie`re et al,(2010);Ulaga and Eggert,(2006); Hennig-Thurau et al,(2002);Yang et al,(2010)	Trust; Commitment; & Satisfaction
Woo and Ennew, (2004),	cooperation, adaptation and atmosphere
Naude and Buttle, (2000)	Trust,satisfaction,coordination,power and profit
Ndubisi et al, (2011)	empathy, trust, communication, conflict handling and personalization

Source: researcher 2014

Concept of Trust: in Relationship Quality Context

The concept of trust is becoming a critical factor of organizations success. From other side, trust is a very important factor in today's business competitive environment (Lin and Lu, 2010). The concept of trust, as one of constructs of relationship quality, is widely thought to be associated with feeling of security, reduces uncertainty, creates a supportive environment and successful relationship development (Naude and Buttle, 2000). According to, Ulaga and Eggert, (2006), when the parties have trust in one another, the two parties can solve the difficulties such as power conflict, low profitability. Trust promotes personal connections between customers and brands (Hess and Story, 2005). The most of the previous literatures on marketing have provided numerous definitions of trust and most of these definitions involve a belief that the exchange partner will act in the best interest of the other partner (Ulaga and Eggert, 2006). The definitions of trust concept can be applied from different views.

From the exchange view, Trust is defined as a willingness to rely on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence (Ki and Hon, 2012). From the services view, trust is defined as the belief of a customer that the service provider will fulfill the service that meets customer needs (Ndubisi, 2007). In the sameline, trust has been defined as one party believing that the other party will fulfill his or her needs (Roberts and *et al*, 2003).

From the confidence view, trust was operationalized as the confident belief that a salesperson can be relied upon to behave in such a manner that the long-term interest of the customer will be served (Naude and Buttle, 2000). From the attitude view towards a brand or product brand, trust has been defined as the willingness of the average consumer to rely on the ability of the brand to perform its stated function (Ha, 2005). From the belief and intention view, trust is defined as a belief or conviction about the other party's intentions within the relationship (Chattananon and Trimetsoontorn, 2009).

Finally, (Morgan and Hunt, 1994) conclude that the general definition of trust is that a party has confidence in the honesty and reliability of his partner. On the other hand, according to the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), trust beliefs create favorable feelings towards the company that are likely to increase a customer's intention to repurchase products from the company. Moreover, (Zboja and Voorhees, 2006), indicated that trust is the dominant antecedent of repurchase intentions .

Customer commitment concept: in Relationship Quality Context

The importance of the commitment concept has been widely acknowledged in the relationship quality literature (Ulaga and Eggert, 2006). There are general consensus among the literature is that the commitment is an important indicator in relationship quality. In addition to trust construct, Morgan and Hunt (1994) identified commitment as another key-mediating that is the central to relational exchange and has been recognized as an influential factor on relationship quality. In the same line Roberts et al, (2003), has been posited to represent a commitment as a key indicator of relationship quality and differentiates the successful relationships from unsuccessful ones. In the previous literatures related to relationship quality, there are numerous definitions for commitment concept from different prospective.

From public relations prospective, commitment is defined as “the extent to which one party believes and feels that the relationship is worth spending energy to maintain and promote (Hon and Grunig, 1999). From the beliefs and attitudes to the brand, commitment is refer to consumers’ ultimate relationship disposition, encompassing beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors toward the brand and their relationship with that brand (Hess and Story, 2005).

Moreover, Ogba and Tan, (2009), reported that, commitment is an enduring attitude for a particular brand or firm, and connected to its brands or products. Commitment is important signal from customer to continue into deeply relationship with the brand .Therefore, Ogba and Tan, (2009), defined commitment concept as emotional feelings and desire to maintain relationship with a brand rather than simply from repeat purchase. From the selling prospective, commitment can be defined as the sacrifices made by the seller and buyer to maintain a relationship. It is meet customer needs and Information sharing with customers (Seyyednejad et al, 2013).

Customer Satisfaction concept: in Relationship Quality Context

In today’s world of fierce competition, customer satisfaction concept has emerged as one of the most powerful tools for sustaining a competitive advantage and plays an important role for a firm’s success and survival (*Hazra, 2013; Abd-El-Salam et al, 2013*). In addition, customer satisfaction is a growing concern to many companies throughout the world, including car manufacturers. Increasingly firms use satisfaction ratings as an indicator of the performance of products and services and as an indicator of the company’s future (*Anisimova, 2013*). (*Chang et al,2014*), linked between customer satisfaction and repurchase intention as if the consumer’s satisfaction is consumer’s expectation to product or service, consumer will be satisfied and lead to the repurchase intention and therefore, companies would like to keep the relationship with old consumers and hope to increase their repurchase intention.

(*Crosby et al, 1990*) defined satisfaction as the consumer's fulfillment response. Moreover, customer satisfaction is considered as one of outcomes of successful relationship and defined as the extent to which each party feels favorably toward the other because positive expectations about the relationship are reinforced (*Hon and Gruing, 1999*).From service context, satisfaction is defined as the overall evaluation based on the total purchase and consumption experience with a good or a service (*Zeithaml et al, 1996*).In same line, (*Hellier and et al, 2003*) define customer satisfaction as the degree of overall pleasure or contentment felt by the customer, resulting from the ability of the service to fulfill the customer’s desires, expectations and needs in relation to the service.

Concept of Repurchase intention:

In a competitive business environment, Maintaining customer repurchase intention and avoiding significant switching behavior to sustain operations and gain competitive advantage is very important (*Kuo et al ,2013*). According to (*Emami et al, 2013*) the cost of attracting new customer is as many times as preserving current customers. In addition, *Chang et al, (2014)* ,the process of keeping an old consumer is easier than getting a new one and due to that, the companies would like to keep the relationship with old consumers and hope to increase their repurchase intention . According to (*Zeithaml et al, 1996*) repurchase intention is one of the five components of behavior intention. The repurchase intention represent of the three types of purchases: trial purchases, repeat

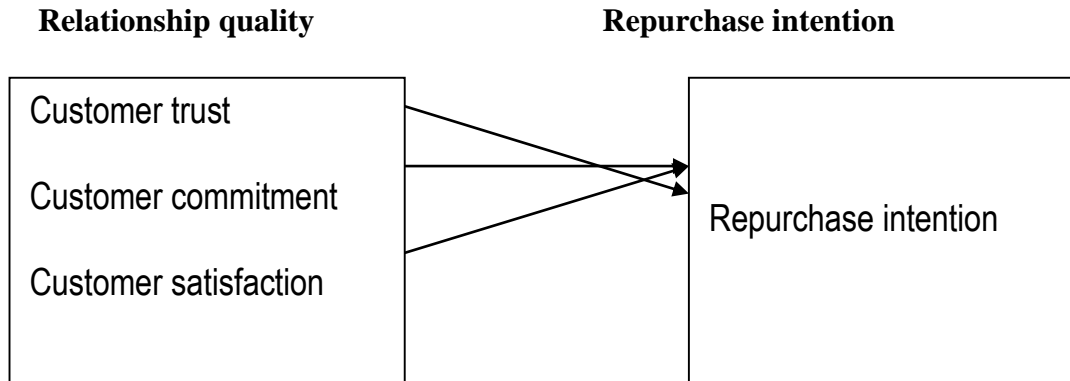
purchases, and long-term commitment purchases (Lin and Chen, 2009). From other side, the formation of customer repurchase intention is no doubt a complicated process therefore, the managers are interested in understanding how an individual's intention to repurchase is formed theoretically and what factors influence such a process empirically (He and Song, 2008).

There are many definitions for repurchase intention concept depend on different views. In service context, repurchase intention is defined as the individual's judgment about buying again a designated service from the same company, taking into accounts his or her current situation and likely circumstances (Hellier et al, 2003). From behavior view, Seiders et al, (2005) define repurchase intentions as the customer's self reported likelihood of engaging in future repurchase behavior. From the online purchasing view, repurchase intention refers to the subjective probability that an individual will Continue to purchase products from the online vendor or store in the future (Chiu et al, 2009). Repurchase intention, on the other hand, from customer view, may be the result of customer attitude and commitment towards repurchasing a particular product (Akbar, 2009 cited in Abdul samad, 2014).

Relationship quality and repurchase intention.

Instituted on the literature review, the integrative framework of the study is anchored on the planned behavior theory as a main theory.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK



This subsection deal with hypotheses in the study which predicts that of relationship quality has a positive relationship with the repurchase intention.

Hypothesis:

H1.1 There is appositive significant relationship between customer trust and repurchase intention.

H1.2 1 There is appositive significant relationship between customer commitment and repurchase intention.

H1.31 There is appositive significant relationship between customer satisfaction and repurchase intention.

METHODOLOGY

Relationship quality is known as a critical factor in enhancing the customer attitude towards the companies and repurchase intention. How the relationship quality impacts on repurchase intention is need for empirical research. The unit of analysis in this study was an automotive customer in Sudan. A structured questionnaire was the instrument of the data collection .A Questionnaire is a pre-formulated written set of questions to which respondent's record their answers. The sampling method was a random sampling. Table 1 presents a summary of the response rate. A total of 500 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents. Therefore, the customers of Sudanese automotive companies were asked in sample of population to fill the questionnaires, a total of 322 questionnaires were return to researcher. The overall response rate was 63%.

Table 1

Total Questionnaires sent to the companies	500
Returned questionnaires (not filled- up)	41
Completed questionnaire received from respondents	322
Returned questionnaires (partially answered)	29
Questionnaires not returned	108
Overall response Rate %	70%
Usable response Rate %	64%

Source: prepared By Researcher(2014).

Table 2 : General characteristics of the respondent sample. (N=322)

Age	less than 21	7	2.2
	21-30	79	24.5
	31-40	118	36.6
	41-50	75	23.3
	51-60	35	10.9
	Above 60	8	2.5
		322	100.0
Gender	Male	261	81.1
	Female	61	18.9
Total		322	100%
Marital Status	single	91	28.3
	married	217	67.4
	Divorced	11	3.4
	widowed	3	.9
	Total	322	100.0

Educational level	Illiterate	1	.3
	khalwa	1	.3
	Secondary	10	3.1
	High school Diploma	8	2.5
	University Degree	169	52.5
	Post Graduate Degree	133	41.3
	Total	322	100 %
Monthly Income	2000 to less than 2500	80	24.8
	2500 to less than 3000	52	16.1
	3000 to less than 3500	37	11.5
	3500 to less than 4000	37	11.5
	4000 to less than 4500	28	8.7
	4500 to less than 5000	31	9.6
	5000 and more	57	17.7
Total	322	100.0	
Preferred company	Giad company	139	43.2
	Dal company	47	14.6
	Elbarbery company	39	12.1
	Bashier auto company	10	3.1
	Golden Arrow company	34	10.6
	others	53	16.5
	Total	322	100.0
Date of purchase	less than one year	70	21.7
	one year to less than two years	52	16.1
	two years to less than four years	86	26.7
	Four years and more	114	35.4
Total	322	100.0	
Kind of payment	Cash	122	37.9
	Installment through company	107	33.2
	Installment through bank	93	28.8
	Total	322	100.0

Source: prepared by researcher, (2014).

Reliability Analysis

Reliability is an assessment of the degree of consistency between multiple measurements of variables (Hair et al., 2010). To test reliability this study used Cronbach's alpha as a diagnostic measure, which assesses the consistency of entire scale, since being the most widely used measure (Sharma, 2000). According to Hair et al., (2010), the lower limit for Cronbach's alpha is 0.70, although it may decrease to 0.60 in exploratory research. While Nunnally, (1978) considered

Cronbach's alpha values greater than 0.60 are to be taken as reliable. The results of the reliability analysis summarized in Table 5.7 confirmed that all the scales display satisfactory level of reliability (Cronbach's alpha exceed the minimum value of 0.6). Therefore, it can be concluded that the measures have acceptable level of reliability.

Table 3: Cronbach's Alpha for Study Variables

Construct	Variable	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha
Repurchase intention	Repurchase intention	3	.918
Relationship quality	Customer trust	7	.906
	customer satisfaction	5	.896
	customer commitment	5	.889

Source: prepared by researcher, (2014).

Table 4 shows the means and standard deviations of three component of relationship quality. The table reveals that the customers of automotive companies in Sudan concern in relationship quality .for the trust (mean=3.59, standard deviation=0.756), for commitment (mean=3.71, standard deviation=0.849), for satisfaction (mean=4.01, standard deviation=0.708). (Given that the scale used a 5-point scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree) it can be concluded that the customers of Sudanese automotive companies is highly concern of relationship quality above the average mean.

Table 4 Descriptive Analysis of Relationship quality

variables	Mean	Std. Deviation
Trust	3.59	.765
commitment	3.71	.849
satisfaction	4.01	.708

Descriptive Analysis for repurchase intention:

Table 5 shows the means and standard deviations of one component of repurchase intention. The table reveals that the customers of automotive companies in Sudan concern in repurchase intention (mean=3.74, standard deviation=0.859) Given that the scale used a 5-point scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree) it can be concluded that the customers of Sudanese automotive companies is highly concern of repurchase intention above the average mean.

Table 5: Descriptive Analysis of repurchase intention

variable	Mean	Std. Deviation
Repurchase Intention	3.74	.859

Source: prepared by researcher, (2014). Note: All variables used a 5-point Likert scale (1= strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree)

Data analysis procedures

Multiple regression analysis was used to test the research hypotheses. This technique is appropriate when the researchers' objective is to predict changes independent variables in response to changes in independent variables (Hair et al., 1998). Table 6 shows the results of the multiple regression equation testing the influence of the customer trust on repurchase intention. In addition the result show that the customer trust is a positive significantly influenced repurchase intention. The results showed that the hypothesis was supported, i.e. there is a positive relationship between customer trust and repurchase intention. ($\beta=0.507$, $p<0.01$). This result gives support to hypotheses H3.1 (customer trust and repurchase intention).

Table 6**Multiple Regressions: customer trust, and Repurchase intention (Beta coefficient)**

Variables	Repurchase intention
Customer trust	.507
R²	.257
Adjusted R²	.255
ΔR^2	.257
F change	110.122

Source: prepared by researcher, (2014). **Note:** Level of significance: ** $p<0.05$, *** $p<0.01$

Table 7 shows the results of the multiple regression equation testing the influence of the customer commitment on repurchase intention. In addition the result show that the customer commitment is a positive significantly influenced repurchase intention. The results showed that the hypothesis was supported, i.e. there is a positive relationship between customer commitment and repurchase intention. ($\beta=0.710$, $p<0.01$). This result gives support to hypotheses H3.1 (customer commitment and repurchase intention).

Table 7**Multiple Regressions: customer commitment, and Repurchase intention (Beta coefficient)**

Variables	Repurchase intention
Customer commitment	.710
R²	.504
Adjusted R²	.502
ΔR^2	.504
F change	322.752

Source: prepared by researcher, (2014). **Note:** Level of significance: ** $p<0.05$, *** $p<0.01$

Table 8 shows the results of the multiple regression equation testing the influence of the customer satisfaction on repurchase intention. In addition the result show that the customer satisfaction is a positive significantly influenced repurchase intention. The results showed that the hypothesis was supported, i.e. there is a positive relationship between customer satisfaction and repurchase intention. ($\beta=0.605$, $p<0.01$). This result gives support to hypotheses H3.1 (customer satisfaction and repurchase intention).

Table 8: Multiple Regressions: customer satisfaction, and Repurchase intention (Beta coefficient)

Variables	Repurchase intention
Corporate satisfaction	.605
R²	.366
Adjusted R²	.364
Δ R²	.366
F change	184.070

Source: prepared by researcher, (2014). Note: Level of significance: **p<0.05, ***p<0.01

Table 9: Summary of Hypotheses Testing Results for the Relationship between Relationship Quality and Repurchase intention

Item	Statement of Hypothesis: There is a positive relationship Between:	Remark
H3.1	between customer trust and repurchase intention	Supported
H3.2	between customer commitment and repurchase intention	Supported
H3.3	between customer satisfaction and repurchase intention	Supported

FINDINGS

The finding of this research demonstrates that the three forms of relationship quality namely :(customer trust, customer satisfaction and customer commitment) have a significant positive relationship with repurchase intention customers of automotive companies in Sudan.

DISCUSSION

The finding of this research demonstrates that three dimensions of relationship quality (customer trust, customer satisfaction and customer commitment) have a significant positive relationship with repurchase intention. The findings point out that the customer trust in automotives companies has a positive relationship with repurchase. Finding of this research agree with Fang et al,(2011) .The study shows that trust, and satisfaction are significant positive predictors of customers' repurchase intention, also the result reveal that the customer commitment has a significant positive relationship with repurchase intention ,this finding aligned with Mosavi and Ghaedi ,(2012) .In same line finding of this research demonstrates that customer satisfaction has a significant positive relationship with repurchase intention this finding agree with; Frank et al ,(2014); AbdulSamad,(2014) stated that Satisfaction has a positive influence on repurchase intention .The results confirm that the significant positive impact of relationship quality on repurchase intention

IMPLICATION TO RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

This paper investigated the relationship between relationship quality and the repurchase intention. This can contribute to a better understanding of the antecedents of the repurchase intention. This study further will add to the theory of planned behavior view by specifying which of attitudes are more influential in creating the customer repurchase intention. Moreover, the research is among

of the first studies that validate the measurement of relationship quality three components. In addition, This paper will provide better understanding about considering the role of relationship quality and identify the main constructs of relationship quality that will effect on consumer repurchase intention and to encourage the marketing managers to use the more effective construct in enhancing the relationship with customers.

CONCLUSION

The automotive companies in Sudan are searching for new marketing tools to exceed its competitive advantage among the competitors, since the competition in the automotive market is becoming more increasingly intensive. The relationship quality can add value to the relationship between the companies and their customers. In competitive environment among the automotive companies in Sudan, the only way to stay alive in the market and to keep and retaining the customer, is to adapt new marketing concept such as relationship quality. This paper call the top management of the company to develop their adopting the relationship quality concept practically. Due to the fierce competition among the automotive companies, there should be more intention to relationship quality contribution in forming the customer attitude and perception.

LIMITATION DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In this study the researcher has used three dimensions of relationship quality represented in the following: customer satisfaction, customer trust and customer commitment. Future research can adopt more and different dimension such as, cooperation, adaptation, communication and atmosphere that may effect on repurchase intention. The study was based on confined on customers of automotive companies in Sudan. Future research may apply the model on different country. The sample also included only the automotive companies in Sudan, so all the respondents of the questionnaire were only from one culture which would be a great accomplishment if a future a study tested respondents who belonged to different cultures. The study also was exclusive to one type of industry (automotive), it is recommended in future research to adapt the model in different industries such as, electronics, tourism and insurance sectors.

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