



**The Effect of Relationship Marketing on Brand
Advocacy
“An Applied Study on Mobile Telecommunication
Companies in Palestine”**

submitted by

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ABSTRACT

This research investigated the effect of relationship marketing on brand advocacy within mobile telecommunication companies. The research followed a deductive approach and used quantitative analysis as the main methodology.

Data was collected through a questionnaire, resulting in 402 valid responses. Structural equation modeling was then used to test the proposed hypotheses. The findings confirmed that There is a significant correlation between the research variables dimensions. and the relationship marketing has a positive

effect on brand advocacy. Moreover, the research showed no significant demographic differences in respondents' opinions, except for differences related to education level and age. The findings confirmed that relationship marketing has a positive effect on brand advocacy. The data was analyzed using SPSS V. 26 and AMOS V.23.

Keywords: Relationship Marketing, Brand Advocacy

Introduction

Brand advocacy has recently received extra attention in academic circles as a fast, reliable, and effective method for spreading positive information (Shang & Li, 2024). Advocacy is a high-level marketing practice that involves convincing current customers to promote the brand to potential customers and persuade them to purchase (Çelik, 2024). This voluntary process occurs when customers develop positive feelings about a brand and willingly speak favorably about it, thus promoting it (Choi et al., 2021).

The recommendations and opinions of others play a significant role in shaping customer perceptions and influencing their decision-making process (Khawaj et al., 2024). In addition, brand advocacy is considered the pinnacle of the customer-brand relationship (Bashokouh & Naserpour, 2023). Strong consumer-brand relationships influence customer behaviors, including purchasing the brand, praising or defending the brand, and expressing differing views about rival brands (Khawaj et al., 2024).

In the present era, Relationship marketing is transitioning from purely transactional to establishing a strong consumer-brand interaction (Zhou et al.,

2023). This is achieved by creating open communication channels with customers, recognizing their individuality, and keeping promises (Van Tonder, 2016). Furthermore, relationship marketing is most effective when customers are actively involved in the product or service, have personal interactions, and are willing to build a relationship (Leverin & Liljander, 2006). Therefore, the researcher recognized the importance of studying the effect of relationship marketing on brand advocacy.

Theoretical framework

1. Relationship Marketing

Currently, Firms utilize a variety of tactics to maintain customer interest and loyalty to their brands. One such strategy is relationship marketing, which establishes and maintains long-term customer relationships. It is considered a strategic asset for companies, a contemporary marketing trend, and a means of fostering effective partnerships (Ahmadi & Ataei, 2024). Relationship marketing is to develop a deep understanding of individual customers, establish interactive communication channels with consumers, and effectively manage the mutual connections between customers and consumers (Hidayat & Idrus, 2023). A relationship exchange is also important for sustaining, and flourishing (Acosta, 2019). In addition, it is significant for prompt and effective information communication between organizations and their customers (Dixon-Ogbechi, 2008).

In recent decades following the new century, There has been a transition from transactional to relationship marketing. This means that customers want businesses to go beyond simply selling them a product and instead establish a connection with them and provide additional value (Lim et al., 2022). Simultaneously, A consensus among marketing professionals and scholars emerged, stating that the expense incurred from losing a solitary customer would be five times greater than the cost of gaining a new customer (Aldaihani et al., 2019). In particular, Transaction marketing emphasizes selling items or services without much interaction with customers (Cobos et al., 2009)As a result, marketers become more focused on relationship marketing efforts, which aim to provide customers with added value beyond just the product or service they purchase (AL Dmour & Sweidan, 2016). Moreover, The primary factor that influences relationship marketing is the quality of the connection. So, connection quality refers to the entire evaluation of the strength of the relationship and has been proven to significantly impact a firm's performance (Johnson, 2022). See Figure (1) A comparison between transaction marketing and relationship marketing.

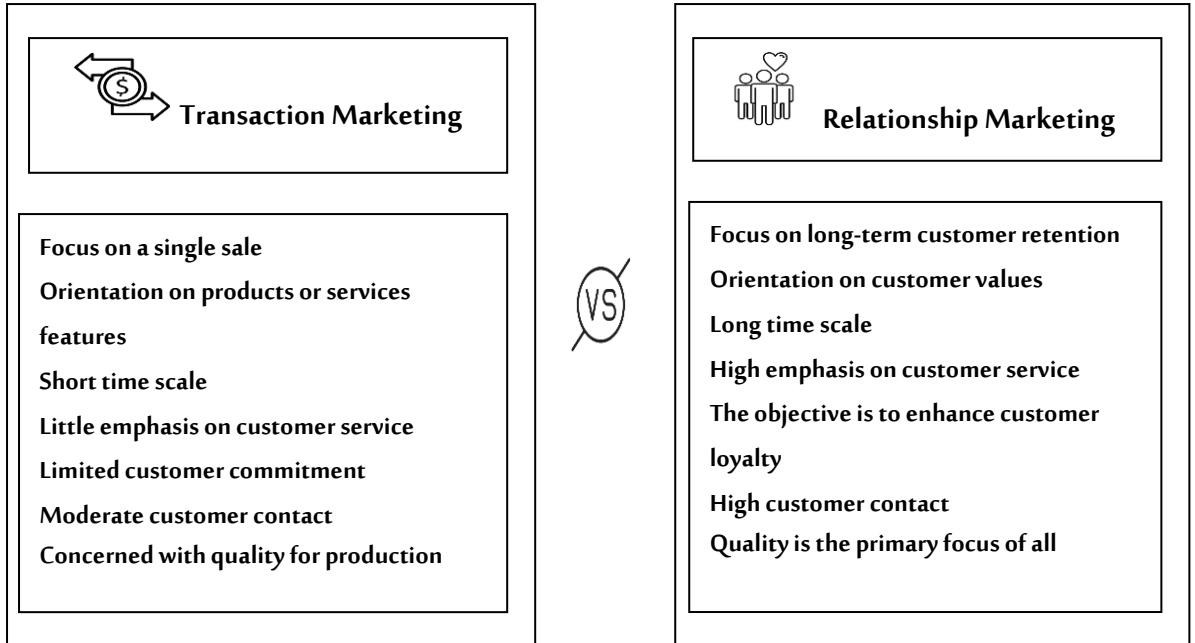


Figure (1) A Comparison between Transaction Marketing and Relationship Marketing

Source: Prepared by the Researcher based on Mtonga, 2018 and Cobos et al., 2009

Upon analyzing the comparison between transactional and relational marketing in the provided table (2.1), it becomes evident that relationship marketing significantly contributes to establishing a strong connection between the firm and its customers. This approach also allows business partners to better understand and effectively meet the demands of their customers. In addition, Relationship marketing has the advantage of improving a company's comprehension of customers, expanding

its market presence, and ultimately decreasing expenses while boosting profitability (Fadeyibi, 2021). It establishes robust customer relationships and competitive advantage (AL Dmour & Sweidan, 2016). Moreover, Enhancing loyalty, security, and stability (Sedalo et al., 2022).

2.1. The Concept of Relationship Marketing:

Interaction marketing focuses on understanding, explaining, and overseeing the continuous cooperative commercial interaction between suppliers and customers (Hunt et al., 2006). It highlights the interaction between a company and its customers (Steinhoff et al., 2019). Relationship marketing is defined as the interplay, connections, and networks between entities (Grönroos, 2004). Relationship marketing is the identification of customers' moods and behaviors to create and maintain a more robust relationship with them (Das, 2009).

Similarly, Relationship marketing refers to the process of attracting, retaining, and improving customer relationships to meet the objectives of both parties (Izogo et al., 2016). Hakim et al. (2021) defined relationship marketing as a marketing strategy that focuses on establishing enduring connections with customers. The objective is establishing trust and dedication, ultimately cultivating loyalty toward the organization. Amoako (2019) proposed Relationship marketing as a method of creating value to maintain current customers, establish strong connections to influence their decision to repurchase, and generate endorsements for the brand. In addition, Christian et al. (2017) defined relationship marketing as a comprehensive attempt to

recognize, sustain, and cultivate connections with individual consumers, to consistently enhance the network for mutual interactions over an extended duration.

In this study, The researcher employed Amoako's (2019) definition of relationship marketing because it was relevant to the topic matter being examined.

2.2. Relationship Marketing Dimensions:

The following table provides a summary of studies that explore the key elements of relationship marketing:

Table (1)
Dimensions of Relationship Marketing

Dimensions Author, year	Trust	Commitment	Communication	Competence	Conflict Handling	Empathy	Bonding	Cooperation	Satisfaction	Reciprocity	Share value
(Callaghan et al., 1995)	✓					✓	✓			✓	
(Sin et al., 2002)	✓		✓			✓	✓			✓	✓
(Ndubisi & wah, 2005)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						
(Ndubisi, 2007)	✓	✓	✓		✓						
(Alrubaiee& Al-Nazer, 2010)	✓	✓	✓				✓		✓		
(Sohail, 2012)	✓	✓	✓		✓						
(Abdullah & Kanyan, 2013)	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓				
(Bojei et al., 2014)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
(Christian et al., 2017)	✓	✓							✓		
(Aldaihani & Ali, 2019)	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓			
(Trenggana et al., 2019)	✓	✓	✓		✓						
(Hakim et al., 2021)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓		

Source: Prepared by the Researcher based on Literature Review

Through table (1), It was found that the previous studies unanimously agreed that the dimensions of relationship marketing are trust, commitment, communication, and conflict handling (Ndubisi & Wah, 2005; Ndubisi, 2007; Alrubaiee & Al-Nazer, 2010; Sweidan et al., 2012; Sohail, 2012; Abdullah & Kanyan, 2013; Christian et al., 2017; Aldaihani & Ali, 2019; Trenggana et al., 2019; Hakim et al., 2021). Accordingly, The researcher will adopt four dimensions, and the following is a definition for each dimension.

2.2.1 Trust:

The concept of relationship marketing is based on the idea that buyers and sellers are long-term partners who exchange products or services based on mutual trust. This concept originates from the marketing ideology (Murphy et al., 2007). Trust is the foundation of relationships between people and an essential component of successful collaboration (Lee et al., 2011). Trust is established through knowledge, contentment, and understanding of others. When there is a high level of trust, it tends to make people happier, which in turn results in increased customer loyalty and a greater likelihood of customers staying with a business (Fadeyibi, 2021).

Additionally, Trust is the act of willingly relying on the abilities, honesty, and diligence of other individuals or groups to fulfill their needs and goals. These needs and interests are agreed upon either directly or indirectly (Rosdiyatma & Andayani, 2023). Also, Trust can be described as the willingness to depend on a business partner who is considered honest and trustworthy by the individual (Pfajfar et al., 2022). Agustin and Singh (2005) established that trust refers to a customer's unwavering belief that the

seller will fulfill their promises and provide the services they have promised. Furthermore, Lee and Trim (2006) proposed that trust can be established by fulfilling commitments made to customers, ensuring security in all transactions.

2.2.2 Commitment:

Customer trust in a company, the quality of its products, and services, also the ease of conducting business are significant factors that contribute to commitment (Aldaihani & Ali, 2019). Individuals who have a higher level of trust tend to show a greater level of commitment towards the group (Capel & Ndubisi, 2011). Besides, Trust and commitment are connected to relationships that result in favorable financial outcomes in the long run (Mtonga, 2018). Commitment is regarded as an implicit sign of ongoing success in the marketing relationship between the customer and the company, without any time limit (Alrubaiee & Al-Nazer, 2010).

Additionally, Relationship commitment is an expression of the customer's overall attitude toward maintaining a valued relationship (Acosta, 2019). Commitment can also be used as a predictor of future purchase frequency, and a construct for understanding loyalty (Hakim et al., 2021). Typically, Commitment is characterized by traits such as stability, sacrifice, and loyalty (Murphy et al., 2007). It can be defined as an assurance that one participant in an interactive relationship is making every effort to ensure the other's involvement and the survival of the relationship (Abdullah & Kanyan, 2013).

2.2.3 Communication:

Effective communication plays a vital role in relationship marketing by keeping a company connected with its customers. It involves providing timely and reliable information about the company's services and overall performance to customers (Acosta, 2019). This helps build awareness, promote quality, value, and performance, and encourage customers to make purchase decisions (Capel & Ndubisi, 2011). Also, By fostering quality customer relationships and through effective communication, a company can develop better relationships with its customers, which leads to increased loyalty, retention, and overall customer satisfaction. As a result, The firm becomes more profitable in the long run (Fadeyibi, 2021).

Buyer-seller communication is the platform on which relationships are built. Where known as communication refers to the human activity that links people together and creates and sustains relationships (Cortez et al., 2023). AL Dmour and Sweidan (2016) defined communication as the human act of transferring a message to others and making it understood in a meaningful way. Communication is also interpreted as can be as maintaining customer value, providing accurate and reliable information, and communicating actively when problems occur (Sin et al., 2005).

2.2.4 Conflict Handling:

Establishing relationships often leads to disagreements and conflicts (Murphy et al., 2007). Conflict is a natural part of teamwork and daily interactions. It arises when one party perceives that its interests are being negatively affected by the actions of the other (Lundula, 2024). If conflicts are not resolved, it can lead to a decrease in customer

confidence and willingness to invest in building or maintaining a relationship with the seller (Sayil et al., 2019). This can be compounded by customer complaints, which can be a major source of concern for companies (Rosdiyatma & Andayani, 2023).

Therefore, Companies should have a conflict resolution strategy in place to retain their customers (Salem, 2021). In addition, The way a company or team handles conflict has a significant effect on its performance (Lundula, 2024). Effective conflict handling can improve the relationship between the parties involved (Sayil et al., 2019). It also helps prevent future disputes, resolve problems, and explore solutions using various techniques such as collaboration, compromise, confrontation, and accommodation (Zegulla et al., 2023).

Recent research in the field of management suggests that when handled effectively, conflicts can lead to the generation of innovative and creative ideas (Fadeyibi, 2021). Hakim et al. (2021) defined conflict handling as the ability of service providers to prevent potential conflicts, resolve conflicts before they escalate, and find solutions to conflicts when they arise. In which the outcome of conflict handling depends on how effectively it is executed and can result in the parties involved either expressing their opinions, displaying loyalty, or leaving the company altogether (Abdela et al., 2023). Bojei (2014) Sees conflict handling as the organizational ability to address and mitigate the impact of existing and potential disputes that may arise in the seller-buyer relationship.

2. Brand Advocacy

Building brand advocacy is a crucial goal for marketers to achieve sustainable success and gain a competitive advantage (Kumgliang & Khamwon, 2022). Brand advocacy offers long-term relational advantages and transactional benefits (Kim et al., 2023). Also, advocacy behaviors can take various forms - from positive word-of-mouth to active support behaviors, such as investing in a company (Kim et al., 2023).

In addition, Brand advocacy is a voluntary activity where customers develop positive feelings about a brand and willingly promote it by speaking favorably (Choi et al., 2021). It also reflects the personality of the individual recommending it (Abdelrazek & El-Bassiouny, 2023). Moreover, when someone makes a statement of advocacy for a particular brand, they explicitly link that brand to their public identity (VanMeter et al., 2018). So, who are these advocates?

Advocates are individuals with a strong passion for a particular brand or company and engage in activities that give customers a sense of meaning about that brand (Yu & Kim, 2020). They frequently post messages about their favorite brands (Cestare, 2019). Coelho et al. (2019) see advocates as customers who are highly committed to the brand, forming emotional connections that reveal a significant level of psychological involvement. They may even conflict with members of other brand communities because they feel the need to defend their brand.

Furthermore, It has been found that recommendations from friends or peers are considered more reliable than paid advertising (Kumgliang & Khamwon, 2023). This is because people are more likely to comply with the opinions of those close to

them, as it reflects on their self-image, which makes interpersonal influence stronger (Abdelrazek & El-Bassiouny, 2023). As well as, Advice from strangers is perceived as more credible than recommendations from well-known influencers (Kumgliang & Khamwon, 2023). In particular, When people see and hear others' opinions, they feel more confident in their decision-making and do not need to seek out further information or worry about the product or service they are considering purchasing (Rini & Sembiring, 2022).

4.1. The Concept of Brand Advocacy

Brand advocacy is often seen as a reflection of a strong relationship between the brand and its customers (Kumgliang & Khamwon, 2023). Also, a result of the trust and emotional connection that a customer has with a brand (Choi et al., 2021). In addition, Brand advocacy involves a customer's voluntary recommendation of a brand to others, along with other positive behaviors such as actively promoting the brand and defending it against critics (Wilk et al., 2020). In particular, When customers trust a brand, they are more likely to recommend it to others (Fatma & Khan, 2023).

Walz and Celuch (2010) defined brand advocacy as the highest degree of endorsement of the customer-brand relationship, as well as the defense or promotion of a brand, product, or company by another customer. According to Abdelkader et al. (2020), Brand advocacy is a positive attitude toward a brand expressed by a satisfied customer through recommending it to others. Current research uses the definition by (Walz & Celuch, 2010).

4.2. Dimensions of Brand Advocacy

According to a study (Xie et al., 2019; Schepers & Nijssen, 2018; Shaari & Ahmad, 2016; Kemp & Bui, 2011) and the purpose of this study, the researcher will adopt brand advocacy (brand evangelism, brand ambassador) and regard it as a unidimensional variable.

The Research Hypotheses

1. Correlation between variables

H1. There is a significant correlation between the research variables dimensions (Relationship Marketing, Brand Advocacy).

2. Relationship Marketing and Brand Advocacy

Relationship marketing is a strategic approach to building brand advocacy, developing strong customer relationships that influence repurchase decisions, and creating value for existing customers (Habib et al., 2021). Brand advocacy is a vital component of relationship marketing, as it refers to the voluntary engagement of customers in promoting a brand (Bhati & Verma, 2020). According to Habib et al. (2021), Relationship marketing is effective in turning consumers into brand advocates. Wilder (2015) also found that advocacy is a result of relationship marketing efforts, as businesses can use their expertise in building relationships to develop motivated brand advocates who will promote the brand at a minimal cost.

Indeed, If a customer feels that a relationship is dependable and trustworthy, then he/she will feel bonded to that relationship because affective trust is important in building a dependable and trustworthy relationship with

customers. It reduces uncertainty and makes customers feel that the relationship is trustworthy and dependable (Kumar Ranganathan et al., 2013). Moreover, Customers tend to have higher levels of trust and satisfaction when they have stronger emotional attachments to human identities (Jillapalli & Wilcox, 2010). Trust fosters loyalty and brand advocacy and has a positive influence across various domains (Kotler et al., 2021). Regarding that, Thomson (2006) indicated that stronger associations occur when consumers perceive their relationships with the brand as being gratifying, dependable, and dedicated.

Furthermore, Customers who experience high levels of satisfaction and commitment are more likely to advocate for the brand (Kumgliang & Khamwon, 2022). Brand advocacy may result from a satisfactory consumer-brand relationship, whereby customers willingly support the brand through their words and actions (Shimul & Phau, 2023). Also, Brand advocates have a deep loyalty to the brand, and their association with it transcends simple utilitarian advantages. They serve as brand militants, with the primary objective of generating positive word-of-mouth, providing a comprehensive brand experience, and ultimately becoming the most ardent supporters of the brand (Mahmood & Haider, 2020). Drawing upon the previous arguments, this study posits the following hypothesis:

H2: There is a significant positive effect of Relationship marketing on Brand Advocacy.

H2a: There is a significant positive effect of Trust on Brand Advocacy.

H2b: There is a significant positive effect of Commitment on Brand Advocacy.

H2c: There is a significant positive effect of Communication on Brand Advocacy.

H2d: There is a significant positive effect of Conflict Handling on Brand Advocacy.

3. Differences in the perceptions of customers of mobile telecommunication companies in Palestine regarding the research variables (relationship marketing, and brand advocacy) according to their different demographic variables (gender, age, educational level, and profession).

Many previous studies that explored the various perspectives of sample participants on variables based on demographic characteristics, primarily relied on questionnaires distributed among the participants. Such demographic characteristics are commonly linked to consumer requirements, usage rates, brand preferences, and desires (Sivesan & Achchuthan, 2013). Du et al. (2007) found that social and economic factors, such as income and education, as well as demographic characteristics such as age and gender, were significant factors that differentiated the survey respondents.

Concerning relationship marketing, demographic characteristics such as country of residence, population group, and level of education have a significant effect on the marketing efforts aimed at building relationships with customers (Rootman et al., 2013). According to Hasani et al. (2018), Demographic characteristics play a vital role in distinguishing individuals based on their approach to conflict handling. Their research established a statistically significant correlation between primary demographic attributes and the selection of conflict-handling approaches. In light of this, The study proposes the following hypothesis.

H3: There are significant differences in the perceptions of customers of mobile telecommunication companies in Palestine regarding the research variables (relationship marketing, and brand advocacy) according to their different demographic variables (gender, age, educational level, and profession).

Many previous studies on relationship marketing have focused primarily on brand loyalty (Wongsansukcharoen, 2022; YEĞİN, 2020; Al Abdulrazak & Gbadamosi, 2017; Wali et al., 2015). There have also been studies that have explored the effect of relationship marketing on brand perception (Geethanga & Dissanayake, 2014) and brand resonance (Habib et al., 2021). Additionally, some studies have investigated the influence of consumer-brand relationships on revisit intent and recommendation intent (Kim, 2006). Another study conducted by Rachbini (2024) found a connection between customer engagement strategies and brand advocacy.

However, despite these studies, none of them specifically addressed the simultaneous effect of relationship marketing on brand advocacy, particularly regarding telecommunications companies' customers - within the researcher's knowledge. This highlighted a research gap, and thus, this study aims to fill that gap by scientifically studying the impact of relationship marketing on brand advocacy.

Research Questions

Q1. What is the nature of the correlation relationship between dimensions of research variables (relationship marketing and brand advocacy)?

Q2. What is the effect of relationship marketing on brand advocacy?

Q3. Are there any differences in customer perceptions of mobile telecommunication companies in Palestine regarding the research variables (relationship marketing and brand advocacy) based on their different demographic variable (gender, age, educational level, and profession)?

Research Objectives

O1. Determining the nature of the correlation between dimensions of the research variables (relationship marketing and brand advocacy).

O2. Measuring the effect of relationship marketing on brand advocacy.

O3. Determining the nature of the differences in customer perceptions of mobile telecommunication companies in Palestine regarding the research variables (relationship marketing and brand advocacy) based on their different demographic variable (gender, age, educational level, and profession).

Research Hypotheses

H1. There is a significant correlation relationship between the research variables dimensions (Relationship Marketing and Brand Advocacy).

H2. There is a significant positive effect of Relationship marketing on Brand Advocacy.

H2a: There is a significant positive effect of Trust on Brand Advocacy.

H2b: There is a significant positive effect of Commitment on Brand Advocacy.

H2c: There is a significant positive effect of Communication on Brand Advocacy.

H2d: There is a significant positive effect of Conflict Handling on Brand Advocacy.

H3. There are significant differences in the customer perceptions of mobile networks in Palestine regarding the dimensions (relationship marketing and brand

advocacy) according to their different demographic variable (gender, age, educational level, and profession).

Conceptual Framework for the Relationships Between Research Variables

Based on research hypotheses, This study develops the Conceptual Framework for the Relationships Between Research Variables depicted in Figure (2).

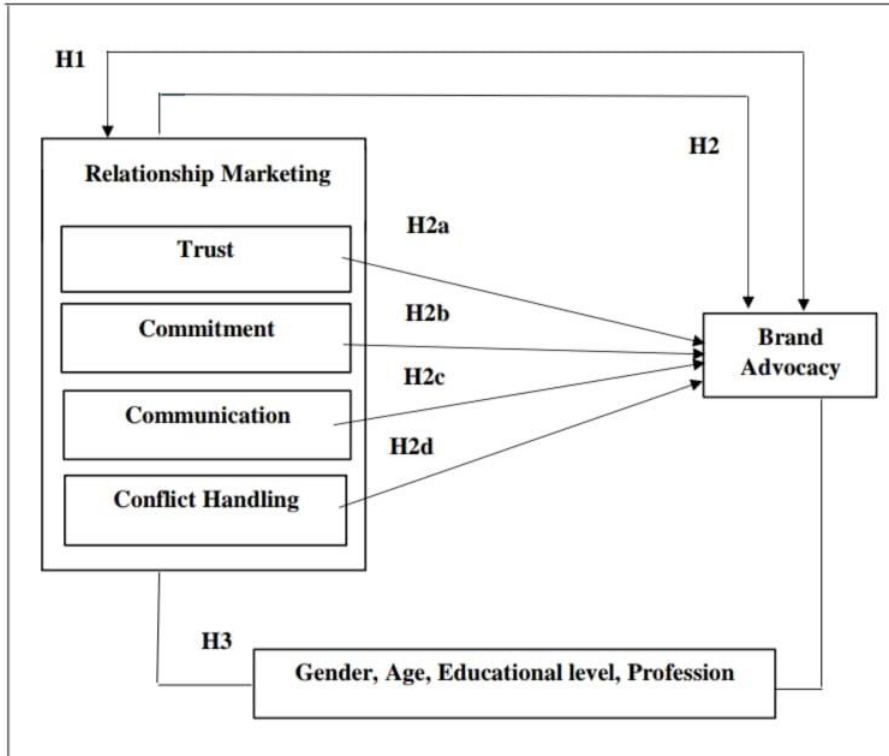


Figure (2) Proposed Conceptual Framework for the Relationship Between Variables

Source: Prepared by the Researcher based on Literature Review

Research Methods

Two major methodologies exist in the social sciences: qualitative research and quantitative research. In this study, the researcher used the quantitative research method. This is related to the advantages of quantitative research it allows for rapid data collection, extrapolation of findings to random samples of adequate

size, accurate data collection, and research outcomes that are relatively independent of the researcher (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

Additionally, Quantitative research involves formulating hypotheses that guide statistical testing, collecting data through instruments that accurately measure study variables, and analyzing the data statistically to validate the hypotheses (Creswell, 2014).

Data Collection

The researcher created an electronic version of the questionnaire using a Google form, and the questionnaire was distributed to telecommunication companies' customers in Palestine by posting the link for the questionnaire on Facebook and WhatsApp groups and various Facebook pages, during the period from February 18 to March 17, 2024. The researcher was seeking to complete (430) questionnaires, and after the end of the period specified for collecting the questionnaire, the number of (402) suitable for statistical analysis was reached with a response rate of 93%.

Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire consisted of two main sections, along with a cover letter. Part One began with a closed-ended question, where participants were asked to answer either "yes" or "no" to indicate if they had interacted with any mobile network companies based in Palestine. Subsequently, participants were requested to choose the specific company with which they had dealt.

In the second section of the first part, the elements measuring research variables were Likert Five Scale sentences. The responses were closed-ended,

allowing respondents to select one of the given options. The following respondents were assigned points: (1) "Strongly Disagree," (2) "Disagree," (3) "Neutral," (4) "Agree," and (5) "Strongly Agree." The second part consisted of four closed-ended demographic questions related to gender, age, education level, and profession.

Variables Measurement

Relationship marketing

Relationship marketing was measured using a set of 29 items from a study by Bojei et al. (2014). This set includes 9 items for measured trust, 6 items for measured commitment, 7 items for measured communication, and 7 items for measured conflict handling.

Brand Advocacy

Brand advocacy was evaluated using a 3-item scale from a study conducted by Badrinarayanan et al. (2018).

Population and Sampling

The population of the current research is all mobile telecommunications companies' customers.

Sampling Unit

The sampling unit in the current research is the customers of mobile telecommunication companies in the Palestine-West Bank.

Sample Size

It is important to have a sufficiently large sample size to generalize research findings to the entire population. According to Taherdoost (2017), a sample size of

384 is considered adequate when the confidence level is 95%, the margin of error is set at 5%, and the population size is more than 100000 without a specific frame.

Sampling Technique

In this study, the researcher used a simple random sampling technique and conducted an online questionnaire. The questionnaire was dispersed to customers of mobile phone companies in Palestine through social media platforms such as WhatsApp groups, Facebook Pages, and Facebook groups.

Reliability

To test reliability Cronbach's alpha was employed, Cronbach's Alpha is a measure of internal consistency or reliability of a set of items (like a survey) that are intended to measure the same construct (Hair et al., 2010). The value of Cronbach's Alpha ranges from 0 to 1, with values closer to 1 indicating higher reliability.

The following table shows all the variables show high reliability with Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.8, indicating that the tools used in the study are internally consistent and reliable for measuring the specified constructs. This contributes to ensuring the validity of the research findings and increases the confidence of researchers and readers in the presented data.

Table (2)
Reliability Test

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach's alpha
Trust	9	.899
Commitment	6	.872
Communication	6	.840
Conflict Handling	7	.875
Relationship marketing	28	.958
Brand Advocacy	3	.898

Source: Prepared by the Researcher based on the Results of Statistical Analysis

Sample Description

Table (3)

Demographic Characteristic Profile of Respondents (N= 402)

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Gender			
Male	111	27.6	2
Female	291	72.4	1
Total	402	100.0	-
Age			
Under 20 years old	62	15.4	3
From 20 to under 30 years old	213	53.0	1
From 30 to under 40 years old	70	17.4	2
From 40 to under 50 years old	41	10.2	4
Over 50 years old	16	4.0	5
Total	402	100.0	-
Educational level			
Less than high school	48	11.9	3
University	297	73.9	1
Postgraduate	57	14.2	2
Total	402	100.0	-
Profession			
An employee in the government sector	47	11.7	4
An employee in the private sector	84	20.9	3
Free work	95	23.6	2
Unemployed	175	43.5	1
Total	401	99.8	
System	1	.2	
Total	402	100.0	

Source: Prepared by the Researcher based on Statistical Analysis

Construct Validity

Construct validity refers to the accuracy with which the statements used in a scale represent the specific concepts of a study, that related to generalizing results based on measurement conditions (Saunders et al., 2009). Also, Construct validity is divided into two categories: convergent validity and discriminant validity. Convergent validity is the degree to which statements used to measure a particular dimension or variable converge or can be combined into a single dimension or variable (Cooper & Schindler, 2013). Discriminant validity is the degree of dissimilarity between each dimension or variable and the others (Hair et al., 2014). To assess the construct validity of the questionnaire, convergent validity, and discriminant validity tests will be tested.

Table (4)
Convergent Validity

Dimensions	Factor Loading		Convergent Validity
	Questions	Factor Loading	AVE
Trust	Q1	**0.669	0.683
	Q2	**0.726	
	Q3	**0.666	
	Q4	**0.715	
	Q5	**0.649	
	Q6	**0.701	
	Q7	**0.655	
	Q8	**0.738	
	Q9	**0.737	

The Effect of Relationship Marketing on Brand Advocacy

Dimensions	Factor Loading		Convergent Validity
	Questions	Factor Loading	AVE
Commitment	Q10	**0.603	0.781
	Q11	**0.772	
	Q12	**0.767	
	Q13	**0.722	
	Q14	**0.765	
	Q15	**0.763	
Communication	Q16	**0.640	0.613
	Q17	0.379	
	Q18	**0.520	
	Q19	**0.744	
	Q20	**0.642	
	Q21	**0.798	
	Q22	**0.762	
Conflict Handling	Q23	**0.582	0.726
	Q24	**0.666	
	Q25	**0.651	
	Q26	**0.777	
	Q27	**0.709	
	Q28	**0.729	
	Q29	**0.694	
Brand Advocacy	Q30	**0.839	0.692
	Q31	**0.871	
	Q32	**0.883	

Source: Prepared by the Researcher based on the Results of Statistical Analysis

According to Table 4, The results of the convergent validity test for the statements of the survey list for measuring the independent variable (relationship marketing) and other variables show strong correlations, with values ranging from 0.560 to 0.777. Indicating a positive correlation between various variables, marked with a high statistical significance (denoted by "***" for a confidence level of 0.01).

In addition, discriminant validity is evaluated in Table 5. This table displays the relationships between the factors and the square roots of AVEs. It demonstrates that the square root of AVE values is greater than the inter-construct correlations (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), indicating that discriminant validity has been established. In conclusion, the measurement model has met all the requirements for assessing validity and reliability.

Table (5)
Discriminant Validity

	Trust	Commitment	Communication	Conflict Handling	Brand Advocacy
Trust	0.827				
Commitment	.847**	0.884			
Communication	.777**	.777**	0.783		
Conflict Handling	.704**	.706**	.777**	0.852	
Brand Advocacy	.686**	.631**	.676**	.615**	0.832

Source: Prepared by the Researcher based on the Results of Statistical Analysis

Testing Hypothesizes

Assessing the correlation coefficients among variables' dimensions:

Table (6) presents a correlation matrix that shows the relationship between certain variables in a study. Each cell in the table represents the Pearson correlation coefficient between the corresponding pair of variables. Correlation measures the degree of the linear relationship between two variables, ranging from -1 to 1. A value of 1 indicates a perfect positive relationship, -1 indicates a perfect negative relationship, and 0 means no relationship.

The results included in this table a significant correlation between relationship marketing dimensions and brand advocacy, there is a positive significant correlation between brand advocacy and trust (0.686), commitment (0.631), communication (0.676), and conflict handling (0.615). Furthermore, all the values are high and accompanied by double asterisks, indicating that all the correlations are significant at the 0.01 significance level. **Therefore, H1: There is a significant correlation relationship between the research variables dimensions (Relationship Marketing, and Brand Advocacy) was supported.**

Table (6)
Correlation Coefficients Between the Dimensions of the Study Variables

	Trust	Commitment	Communication	Conflict Handling	Brand Advocacy
Trust	1				
Commitment	.847**	1			
Communication	.777**	.777**	1		
Conflict Handling	.704**	.706**	.777**	1	
Brand Advocacy	.686**	.631**	.676**	.615**	1

Source: Prepared by the Researcher based on the Results of Statistical Analysis

Assessing the model and hypotheses testing (Direct relationships):

Table (7)
Direct Effect Relationship Marketing on Brand Advocacy

Independent	Dependent	(B)	(T)	(Sig)	Result
Trust	Brand Advocacy	**0.407	5.801	0.000	Supported
Commitment		0.044	0.621	0.535	Not Supported
Communication		0.051	0.774	0.439	Not Supported
Conflict Handling		**0.287	5.044	0.000	Supported
F (Sig.)= 109.139 (0.00)		Adj. R ² =0.519	R ² =0. 52.4	R=0. 724	

Source: Prepared by the Researcher based on the Results of Statistical Analysis

The analysis shows in Table (7), That trust strongly affects brand advocacy, supported by a significant positive coefficient, with a T-statistic much larger than 2, and a p-value of 0.000. This indicates a statistically significant and strong relationship between trust and brand advocacy. However, Commitment does not

have a statistically significant effect on brand advocacy, as shown by a low T-statistic and a p-value well above the 0.05 threshold. Similarly, Communication does not significantly affect brand advocacy, suggesting that it may not be a critical factor for brand advocacy in the context of this data .

On the other hand, Conflict handling is a significant predictor of brand advocacy, with a higher ability to handle conflicts positively correlating with increased Brand Advocacy. This is confirmed by a significant T-value and a p-value of 0.000. The overall model is highly significant as indicated by the F-statistic (109.139) with a p-value of 0.00, suggesting that the model reliably predicts brand advocacy .

Approximately 52.4% of the variance in brand advocacy is explained by the model, indicating a good fit. Where, The correlation coefficient (R) of 0.724 shows a strong positive correlation between the predictors and the outcome variable, brand advocacy. **Therefore, H2 which represents the effect of relationship marketing and brand advocacy was partially supported.**

Testing the differences between the views of the customers of mobile telecommunication companies in Palestine:

The researcher used an ANOVA test to determine if there were significant differences in customers' perceptions of study variables based on demographic characteristics, as shown in table (8):

Table (8)

**Testing Differences Between Customer's Perceptions According to
Demographic Characteristics**

Variable	Gender	T	Sig.	Results
Relationship Marketing	Male	.178	.673	No Difference
	Female			
Brand Advocacy	Male	1.089	.297	No Difference
	Female			
Relationship Marketing	Under 20 years old	3.035	.017	Difference
	From 20 to under 30 years old			
	From 30 to under 40 years old			
	From 40 to under 50 years old			
	Over 50 years old			
Brand Advocacy	Under 20 years old	1.689	.152	No Difference
	From 20 to under 30 years old			
	From 30 to under 40 years old			
	From 40 to under 50 years old			
	Over 50 years old			
Relationship Marketing	Less than high school	.354	.702	No Difference
	University			

The Effect of Relationship Marketing on Brand Advocacy

Variable	Gender	T	Sig.	Results
	Postgraduate			
Brand Advocacy	Less than high school	4.347	.014	Difference
	University			
	Postgraduate			
Relationship Marketing	An employee in the government sector	1.303	.273	No Difference
	An employee in the private sector			
	Free work			
	Not working			
Brand Advocacy	An employee in the government sector	2.276	.079	No Difference
	An employee in the private sector			
	Free work			
	Not working			

Source: Prepared by the Researcher based on Statistical Analysis - (ANOVA) test

Therefore, H3 is partially supported because there are significant differences between the perspectives of mobile telecommunication customers in Palestine regarding certain demographic variables.

Results Discussion

H1. There is a significant correlation relationship between the research variables dimensions (Relationship Marketing and Brand Advocacy).

The current research has revealed a significant positive correlation between the relationship marketing dimensions - trust, commitment, communication, and conflict handling - and brand advocacy. Therefore, customers have confidence in the brand, feel commitment, maintain effective communication with the company, see satisfactory resolution of conflicts are more willing to advocate that brand to others.

H2. There is a significant positive effect of Relationship marketing on Brand Advocacy.

The effect of relationship marketing dimensions on brand advocacy: Trust and conflict handling were found to have a statistically significant positive effect. This means that an approachable and mutual relationship between the customer and the company, based on trust and dealing with disputes and resolving them peacefully, prompts the customer to brand advocacy. This finding is consistent with (Adom et al., 2023) finding that relationship marketing leads to increased conflict handling and strong positive words.

In the context of that, the study of (Kotler et al., 2021) supported the result of this study trust has a positive effect on various areas and is crucial for building customer loyalty and brand advocacy. Moreover, the result is supported by the study conducted by Srivastava et al. (2022) That trust is positively related to brand advocacy. This is also consistent with the results (Rai & Nayak, 2019; Jillapalli & Wilcox, 2010). Noticeably, These results highlight the significance of trust in motivating customers to brand advocacy.

H3. There are significant differences in the customer perceptions of mobile networks in Palestine regarding the dimensions (relationship marketing and brand advocacy) according to their different demographic variable (gender, age, educational level, and profession).

The finding of current research there is Firstly, there were no significant gender differences among customers concerning relationship marketing and brand advocacy. This result aligns with the findings of Oly Ndubisi (2006); and Oly Ndubisi and Madu (2009), who also found no significant differences in relationship marketing based on gender. In addition, the result also agrees with Ng and Su's (2018) study, which suggests that there may not be any significant gender difference in advocacy. Furthermore, this result agrees with Abdelmaaboud et al. (2024) study, which found no significant differences in advocacy based on gender.

Secondly, There were no significant differences in brand advocacy based on age indicating that different ages, customers are equally willing to advocate for a brand. Nevertheless, The presence statistically significant differences in Relationship Marketing.

Thirdly, there were no significant differences in the educational levels of customers of relationship marketing. Nevertheless, there were significant differences among customers in terms of brand advocacy. This indicates that the educational level of customers does not affect the distribution of customers within relationship marketing. However, the level of education affects the participation of individuals in brand advocacy.

This result agreed with (Janwattanaphanit & Jaroenwanit, 2020) that there were significant differences in brand advocacy behavior across different educational levels. Customers with greater levels of education tend to consume higher-quality products and are willing to pay higher costs compared to those with lower levels of education. Finally, There were no significant differences in Profession between customers of relationship marketing and brand advocacy.

Theoretical Importance

The current research is focused on the different facets of relationship marketing and brand advocacy. The research provides a broader examination of these variables and their relationships. Moreover, This study contributes to the body of knowledge in the marketing field by addressing the research gap identified by the researcher, and establishing whether the relationships between the study variables are statistically significant. Additionally, It identifies new gaps that can inspire researchers to conduct further investigations. Furthermore, the present study offers an extended examination of the effect of demographic characteristics on the differences in respondents' perspectives regarding research variables.

Practical Implications

This study aimed to identify ways to strengthen relationships between customers and the brand and motivate them to influence other potential customers. Based on the literature review, the relationship has not been studied in the same depth before, and the field of application still needs more research. Therefore, service providers need to understand the relationships examined in this

research as the research provided a deeper understanding of relationship marketing and brand advocacy.

Managers in telecommunications companies must implement advanced levels of relationship marketing programs to be able to influence customers and get them to advocate the brand. The study is also expected to encourage companies to improve the quality of services provided to customers and ensure their satisfaction.

Recommendation

Given the practical implications, The current study provides actionable recommendations for Mobile Telecommunication Companies in Palestine :

1. Dealing with the customer transparently and providing readily available information regarding the company's policies and their changes easily accessible.
2. Implement a hierarchical structure in the loyalty program that provides increasing rewards to customers based on their frequency of purchases or level of engagement with the brand.
3. Provide incentives to customers who recommend new individuals to the brand by rewarding them with exclusive offers or personalized incentives
4. Establish clear and straightforward protocols for handling complaints and concerns.

Conclusion

The study aimed to examine the connection between relationship marketing and brand advocacy among customers of mobile telecommunication

companies in Palestine. The study found statistically significant relationships between the dimensions of relationship marketing and brand advocacy, showing significant positive correlations. Additionally, the study concluded that trust and conflict handling have a statistically significant positive effect on brand advocacy.

Furthermore, the research results indicated significant differences in customer opinions on brand advocacy among individuals with different educational levels, as well as differences in their perceptions of relationship marketing based on their age groups.

Research Limitations

The current study provides a unique and valuable addition to the current research, within the context of mobile network services. Firstly, the results of this research are limited to customers Palestinian of mobile telecommunication companies' networks. Secondly, the study employed a cross-sectional design, which confines the ability to conclude the evolution of relationship dynamics over time, as it only captures data at a single point in time. Furthermore, the questionnaire was limited mainly to Palestine, specifically the West Bank.

Future Research Directions

Based on the results of the current research, researchers suggest the following:

1. Future research should strive to replicate the study with larger and more diverse populations to assure wider applicability.
2. Future research employs longitudinal designs to acquire further insights into the development of these relationships.

3. Future research expands the geographic extent of collecting information to augment the variety and decentralization of source samples.
4. Future research employs the qualitative approach by conducting personal interviews to foster increased engagement with participants and yield more distinct outcomes.
5. Study the effect of crisis management on relationship marketing and brand advocacy.
6. Study the effect of digital transformation on relationship marketing and brand advocacy.

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