

# The Impact of Relationship Quality: A Literature Review

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**Abstract.** Relationship quality is an important concept in the field of marketing, and it plays an important role in service marketing. This article systematically reviews the literature on relationship quality, exploring the dimensions of relationship quality and the dual impact it brings. A detailed introduction to the two different effects of relationship quality, namely "blind love" and "hate arises from love", need to make judgments based on specific situations. It is hoped that this study can provide more references for future scholars to study relationship quality.

**Keywords:** Relationship Quality; Service Marketing; Consumer Behavior.

## 1. Introduction

Since the 1980s, with the increasing emphasis on customer relationships, relationship marketing has gradually entered the research focus of scholars. Relationship quality is one of the most important concepts in relationship marketing, representing the quality of the connection between consumers and businesses. However, the current literature review on relationship quality has not been updated for a long time. This article will start with the definition of relationship quality and related research on relationship quality, and conduct a detailed literature review on the impact of relationship quality.

## 2. Definition and Impact of Relationship Quality

### 2.1. Definition of Relationship Quality

There is currently no clear definition of relationship quality in the academic community, and there are mainly the following viewpoints. Moorman (1992) believes that relationship quality refers to valuable and high-quality interactions between both parties. Huntley (2006) defined relationship quality as the level of consumer satisfaction with a company's products, services, and cost-effectiveness. Liu Renhuai (2005) further defined relationship quality as the degree to which both parties evaluate the satisfaction of their own needs in the relationship, essentially maintaining the intangible interests of both parties through summarizing previous research. Holmlund (2008) believes that relationship quality is an intangible quality assessment in interactive relationships, such as service communication and social interaction between trading parties. Vieira (2009) further proposed that relationship quality is a cognitive evaluation of key business interactions between trading parties based on previous research. Verma (2016) defined relationship quality as the overall assessment of the strength of an event relationship. Domestic scholar Xu Yi (2007) believes that relationship quality is a multidimensional concept, and its definition needs to be differentiated based on specific contexts. Liu Wei et al. (2020) argue that relationship quality refers to the strength of the connection between consumers and businesses. According to the context of service marketing, relationship quality is defined as the evaluation of the strength of the relationship between consumers and businesses.

### 2.2. Research on the Relationship Quality

#### 2.2.1. Dimensions of relationship quality

At present, there is a certain consensus in the academic community that relationship quality is essentially a high-order structure concept, which includes several different dimensions. However, scholars currently have different views on the specific dimension differentiation. Crosby (1990)



proposed in relationship marketing that relationship quality is a high-order structure composed of at least two dimensions: trust and satisfaction with the company's marketers. Trust refers to a type of trust formed in long-term interactive relationships, believing that marketers are considering their own long-term interests and have a high degree of certainty and confidence in future development. Satisfaction indicates a high emotional evaluation in long-term interactive relationships, believing that the professional knowledge, personal abilities, and past performance of marketers meet one's expectations. Morgan (1994) proposed that trust and commitment are the two most important dimensions in relationship marketing, indicating that commitment and trust are the core of relationship quality. Commitment represents the desire to maintain valuable relationships, while trust represents dependence on interacting partners. Subsequent scholars have summarized the dimensions of relationship quality into three dimensions: trust, commitment, and satisfaction. Vieira (2008) redefined these three dimensions in specific interpersonal relationships, defining trust as relying on the willingness and ability of salespeople, commitment as both parties adhering to the same motivation to maintain their relationship, and satisfaction as ensuring the future performance of marketers. But there are also scholars who continue to propose new dimensional concepts based on the above three dimensions. Fiol (2009) regards perceived value as an important dimension of relationship quality, and believes that perceived value is the overall perceived evaluation of the value of products and services obtained by consumers in interactions. Li Xueling et al. (2017) evaluated the quality of relationships by incorporating two dimensions, human feelings and emotions, based on local characteristics, emphasizing the maintenance of emotional relationships in the context of Chinese local culture. He Weiyi (2020) believes that starting from the external atmosphere of the interaction between the two parties, the atmosphere of the relationship between the two parties is also an important dimension of the quality of the relationship. At present, the specific division of relationship quality dimensions still needs to be based on specific contexts, selecting trust, commitment, and satisfaction commonly used in the field of relationship marketing as dimensions of relationship quality.

### **2.2.2. The impact of relationship quality**

At present, research on relationship quality mainly focuses on the possible outcomes that relationship quality may cause, namely the impact of relationship quality. Previous studies have confirmed that relationship quality has a positive impact on consumer reputation, repurchase intention, customer loyalty, and business performance. Therefore, selecting the scenario of service failure, exploring the role and impact of relationship quality on consumer behavior after service failure. There are currently two mainstream views. One type is 'blind love', where consumers with high relationship quality are more likely to forgive the companies involved; Another viewpoint is that 'hate arises from love', which means that consumers with high relationship quality will have stronger negative reactions and retaliatory behavior. Below, a literature review will be conducted for each of these two viewpoints.

Firstly, it is 'blind love'. Berry (1995) found that after service failure, relationship quality can increase consumers' tolerance for the service failure they experience and reduce consumer churn [14]. Mattila (2004) used hotels as a research context and found that consumers with high relationship quality are less likely to participate in negative word-of-mouth communication after experiencing service failure, and are more likely to engage in repeat purchase behavior. After experiencing service failure, emotional commitment can effectively reduce the spillover effects of service failure. Shi Juan (2011) proposed that when experiencing service failure events, consumers with high relationship quality are more willing to attribute the failure events to external reasons, thereby reducing the punishment for the involved companies. Zhang Chubing (2014) found through empirical research that relationship quality can improve consumers' recognition of corporate service remedies and enhance the effectiveness of remedies after service failures. Trump (2014) pointed out that when there is high relationship quality between consumers and businesses, consumers will want to minimize negative impacts as much as possible, and high relationship quality will have a buffering effect. Jabeen (2022) found that a good relationship between food delivery platforms and brands has a positive moderating effect on consumers' negative experiences. Lian Yi (2024) found through

empirical research using online travel platforms as a context that consumers with high relationship quality are more likely to exhibit forgiving behavior after service failure events. The research of the above scholars indicates that when service failure events occur, relationship quality may play a positive role and provide a certain buffer space for consumers' negative reactions.

Another is 'hate arises from love'. Goodman (1995) found in his research that after negative events occur, consumption with high relationship quality further amplifies overall dissatisfaction towards the enterprise. Grégoire (2009) found through empirical research that consumers with high relationship quality are more likely to engage in avoidance behavior after experiencing service failure events, and are therefore more difficult for companies to win back after loss. Liu Wei (2020) found that high relationship quality leads to greater disappointment and stronger perceived betrayal after experiencing service failure events. Lee's (2021) study suggests that when consumers receive harm, consumers with high-quality relationships further amplify their negative reactions, and may exhibit more extreme retaliatory behavior compared to consumers with low relationship quality. Li Jinping (2022) found in her research that in the context of live streaming, when consumers face service failure events, high relationship quality is more likely to result in negative impacts perceived by consumers. Temessek Behi (2023) found based on a study of accommodation platform consumers that prior trust has a moderating effect on negative consumer reactions after service double bias, and consumers with high prior trust may experience more severe negative consumer reactions. The research of the above scholars suggests that high relationship quality may further amplify consumers' negative emotions, leading to stronger negative behaviors and venting their emotions to achieve psychological balance.

### 3. Summary

Relationship quality is becoming increasingly important in modern marketing activities, mainly referring to the evaluation of the strength of the relationship between consumers and businesses. According to current research, relationship quality is a multidimensional high-order concept. The mainstream dimensions of relationship quality are satisfaction, trust, and commitment, which represent consumers' recognition of the merchant and their willingness and evaluation to maintain the relationship in the future. Relationship quality, as an important variable in the field of service marketing, currently has two main expressions: "blind love" and "hate arising from love". In previous studies, scholars have not reached a consensus and need to make judgments based on specific contexts.

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