

The Effect of Relationship Marketing on Repurchase Intention with Regulation as a Moderating Variable (Study at Pt Surveyor Indonesia Batam Branch)

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Abstract. *The certification and inspection services industry operates under strict regulatory pressure, where customers' decisions to re-use services are driven not solely by preference but also by binding legal obligations. PT Surveyor Indonesia, Batam Branch, as a state-owned enterprise providing testing, inspection, certification, and consulting services, faces real challenges in the form of a decline in the number of active customers and revenue achievement that missed the target in 2024. This study aims to examine the influence of relationship marketing and regulations on customer repurchase intention, while also examining whether regulations are able to moderate the relationship between the two. A quantitative approach with an explanatory research strategy was used, with 100 active customers of PT Surveyor Indonesia, Batam Branch, as respondents selected through a purposive sampling technique. Data were collected through a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire, then analyzed using the Partial Least Squares – Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) method through the SmartPLS tool. All instruments have passed validity and reliability tests. The results show that relationship marketing has a positive and significant effect on repurchase intention (path coefficient = 0.372; $p = 0.019$), as does regulation (path coefficient = 0.377; $p = 0.001$) with a slightly larger effect. However, regulation is not proven to moderate the effect of relationship marketing on repurchase intention (path coefficient = -0.061; $p = 0.386$). These two variables work independently, not conditioning each other. These findings confirm that building trust, commitment, effective communication, and professional conflict management are relevant relationship strategies for driving customer loyalty in the technical services industry.*

Keywords: *Certification Services; Relationship Marketing; Regulation; Repurchase Intention; PLS-SEM.*

1. Introduction

In the era in today's globalization era, business competition is increasingly fierce, both in the product and service sectors. To maintain customer loyalty to the products and services offered, businesses must do more than simply attract new customers. Customer retention is a crucial tactic for company survival and increasing profitability in the service industry. This supports the notion that retaining existing customers is slightly less expensive than acquiring new ones.

Relationship marketing has long been recognized as an effective approach to building customer loyalty. Berry (1983), who first formally introduced the concept, defined it as a strategy for attracting, retaining, and developing relationships with clients. The essence of Berry's view is quite simple but often overlooked in practice: retaining existing customers is far more profitable than constantly pursuing new ones.

Morgan and Hunt (1994) takes the discussion of relationship marketing to a deeper level. Through the Trust-Commitment Theory, they argue that the success of long-term relationships between companies and customers is determined not by the number of transactions, but by two more psychological factors: trust and commitment. Both play different but complementary roles. Trust makes customers feel safe to continue doing business with a company, believing that the company will not act opportunistically or disappoint them.

For PT Surveyor Indonesia As a state-owned enterprise, customer trust is more than just a value proposition; it's the foundation of the business itself. The services we provide touch on crucial factors like quality standards, regulatory compliance, and ultimately, the client's reputation among external parties. When a client's reputation is at stake, they won't choose their partners carelessly.

PT Surveyor Indonesia Batam Branch operates in one of the most densely industrialized areas in the Riau Islands. Its services include consulting, training, certification, surveys, and inspections, with clients spanning the manufacturing, oil and gas, and maritime sectors. This positions the company as a strategic partner in ensuring the smooth operation of various projects, both public and private.

In a context like this, maintaining good customer relationships isn't an option; it's a business imperative. Clients who feel valued and well-served tend to build trust in the company, and that trust ultimately encourages them to return to the same service.

Decision The desire to use a service again rarely just happens; it's formed from accumulated previous experiences. Customers who are satisfied, appreciated, and see tangible benefits from an established relationship are less likely to feel the need to seek alternatives.

Customer satisfaction is essentially about expectations being met or even exceeded. When the actual experience matches what was previously imagined, customers are not only

satisfied but also have a strong reason to return. This aligns with Oliver's (1980, 1993) Expectation–Confirmation Theory, which states that customers' assessments of their actual experiences, measured relative to their initial expectations, are a key determinant of whether they will reuse a service.

In the certification services sector, this dynamic works somewhat differently than in other industries. Services like inspection, testing, verification, and certification cannot be "tried" before purchase; the results are only felt after the process is complete. Because there's nothing to hold or evaluate beforehand, trust becomes a substitute for unavailable information. Clients choose service providers not just based on price or speed, but on how much they trust that the provider will perform competently, honestly, and consistently.

Trust in this context isn't just a feeling of comfort. It's the belief that a company will meet their needs reliably, with integrity, and without hidden agendas. For PT Surveyor Indonesia, this established trust serves as a bridge to overcome the uncertainty inherent in intangible services and is the reason clients aren't quick to switch to other providers, even when there are other options available.

Customer trust is a crucial asset for PT Surveyor Indonesia because the services provided are linked to quality standards, regulatory compliance, and the client company's reputation. Once trust is established, client companies will continue to do business with PT Surveyor Indonesia, not only because they meet regulatory requirements, but also because of the company's trustworthiness, professionalism, expertise, and integrity.

In Beyond relational factors, there are external variables whose influence cannot be ignored, such as regulations. Companies in the trade, industry, and energy sectors essentially have no choice but to use third-party services for certification and inspection purposes because it is a government-mandated obligation. This means that regulations directly create recurring demand for services like those offered by PT Surveyor Indonesia.

Regulations can ensure that clients will seek out certification providers, but they can't guarantee they'll return to the same provider. As long as there are other institutions that also meet regulatory standards, clients always have the option to switch. This is where relationship marketing becomes a real differentiator. Clients leaving after a project is quite common in this industry, even when the service provided is technically satisfactory. Many companies focus too much on closing the contract and forget that client relationships need to be nurtured beyond the project cycle. Post-project communications are often transactional, focusing on technical details or new price quotes without any real effort to build a more personal connection. Interestingly, some clients actually stay not because of technical factors, but because they have strong personal relationships with specific individuals within the company. This is a clear sign that the relationship approach is working, but it hasn't been implemented systematically and comprehensively.

Kim, Han, and Lee (2001) Studies have shown that trust and effective communication increase customer commitment, ultimately driving repeat purchases and recommendations, especially in service industries such as hospitality. Gwinner et al. (1998) and Hennig-Thurau et al. (2002) add that relational benefits such as trust, social closeness, and perceived personalized treatment are factors that significantly strengthen loyalty. Karami et al. (2023) confirm these findings, stating that relational benefits significantly influence satisfaction, trust, commitment, and even repeat purchase decisions. The same pattern appears relevant in the context of certification services, although research specifically in this sector is still very limited.

Although the literature on relationship marketing is quite extensive, research specifically on the certification services sector is still very rare. Lando (2024) did examine the relationship between service quality and recertification intention, with satisfaction and commitment as intermediary variables, and the results showed that relationship quality plays a significant role. However, the model used did not address the unique elements of relationship marketing in the certification industry: post-audit communication, compliance support, personalized service, or the use of digital platforms to maintain ongoing interactions. Tedja et al. (2024) in the B2B lubricants sector also found that relationship marketing had a positive impact on the intention to continue business relationships, but the context was different: the lubricants industry lacks the high-compliance characteristics that are characteristic of certification services.

There are also measurement issues worth noting. Many previous studies, such as Zeithaml et al. (1996), Oliver (1999), and Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001), measure loyalty or general service usage intentions, rather than concrete, observable repeat purchase behavior. In the certification industry, this presents a significant gap. Repeat purchases are not merely optional; they are part of operational obligations. Companies using services are generally bound by annual contracts, undergo periodic audits, and must regularly renew their certifications. Boiral (2012) explains that certification cycles such as ISO require annual inspections. In other words, repurchase intention here needs to be measured within a different framework than typical B2C research.

From Three research gaps remain to be explored. First, almost no studies directly examine the influence of relationship marketing on repurchase intention in the certification services industry. Second, the relationship marketing dimensions used in previous research are not necessarily appropriate for service contexts that demand high trust and high compliance. Third, measuring repurchase intention based on actual behavior, rather than simply general intentions or loyalty, is still very rare.

Another thing that It's important to note the role of regulation within this framework. Unlike the B2C sector, where purchasing decisions are individual and relatively free, in the B2B technical services sector, decisions involve multiple parties, are based on long-term contracts, and are heavily influenced by formal regulations. Regulation here serves not only

as a set of rules to be followed but can also influence how companies build relationships with customers. Clear service standards can foster trust, but overly stringent regulations can limit the opportunity for building more personal relationships.

Research examining regulation as a moderating variable in the relationship between relationship marketing and repurchase intention is still very limited, particularly in the technical services sector and state-owned enterprises. Jaworski and Kohli (1993) acknowledge that environmental pressures and formal rules influence market responses, but they position regulation only as an external factor, not a moderator. Scott (2008) in his institutional theory acknowledges the role of regulation in shaping organizational behavior, but its application in empirical marketing models, particularly as a moderating variable, is almost non-existent. Wang, Lin, & Tsai (2021) even found that trust in regulators had no significant effect on repurchase intention, while trust in manufacturers had a positive effect. These findings suggest that the regulatory role does not automatically operate as assumed, and therefore, empirical testing in more specific contexts is crucial.

Jessica's (2024) findings reinforce this picture from a different perspective. In her study, celebrity endorsers as a moderating variable were unable to strengthen or weaken the relationship between advertising appeals and repurchase intention. While the context is quite different from the certification industry, the point remains relevant: moderating variables don't always work as hypothesized. This suggests that the role of regulation as a moderator cannot be considered definitive; it needs to be tested in more specific contexts before more general conclusions can be drawn.

This is where the research gap becomes apparent. Few studies have directly examined regulation as a moderating variable in the relationship between relationship marketing and repurchase intention, particularly in the technical services sector and state-owned enterprises (SOEs), which operate under strict regulatory pressure. This study attempts to fill this gap by examining PT Surveyor Indonesia's Batam branch as a representative example of this situation.

Another important aspect to emphasize is the nature of the certification services business itself. Unlike physical products that can be evaluated before purchase, certification services rely heavily on what might be called relational continuity, or the company's ability to build and maintain long-term relationships with clients through consistent communication, trust built over time, and reliability in each subsequent service cycle.

Hennig-Thurau et al. (2002) assert that the success of relationship marketing is ultimately reflected in actual customer behavior, whether they return or not. In this context, data on active customers and repeat purchase rates are not merely operational figures; they reflect the quality of the relationships a company has built with its clients.

In the context of PT Surveyor Indonesia's Batam Branch, the dynamics of the number of active customers and the percentage of repeat customers each year reflect the company's

success (or failure) in building strong relationships with its customers. To further understand this phenomenon, the following data presents active customers and repeat customers over the past three years.

Data on active customers of PT Surveyor Indonesia's Batam Branch over the past three years shows two opposing trends. Overall, the number of active customers has indeed decreased: from 222 in 2022 to 205 in 2024. This is an undeniable sign that the company is losing some of its customer base. But a closer look reveals a more nuanced picture. Returning customers have actually increased, from 126 in 2023 to 141 in 2024, pushing the repurchase rate up from 56.76% to 63.80%. This means that while the total number of customers has decreased, those who remain are becoming more loyal.

This pattern can be understood through Morgan and Hunt's (1994) concept of relationship quality: established trust and commitment make customers reluctant to switch to another provider, even when there are changes in pricing or regulatory policies. Customers who feel a good relationship with a company are less likely to rush to find alternatives.

However, there's one noteworthy figure: of all active customers, only 99% consistently repeat purchases for three consecutive years, or approximately 44.59%. This suggests that the annual increase in repurchase rates doesn't fully reflect long-term loyalty. Some customers do return, but they aren't consistently active for a specific two years, then disappear the following year. The company's ability to retain customers long-term remains an unfinished business.

These customer dynamics don't stand alone; they're directly linked to a company's revenue performance. Customers are a primary source of revenue, so fluctuations in active customer numbers and repeat purchase rates are reflected in the achievement of business targets. To understand the significance of this impact, it's important to examine the revenue KPIs realized over the past three years to see whether they're consistent with the customer trends outlined, or whether there are gaps that need to be addressed. The combination of these two pieces of data provides a stronger basis for assessing the urgency of strengthening relationship marketing strategies.

Based on KPI data, PT Surveyor Indonesia's Batam Branch's revenue performance over the past three years has shown a lack of stability. There are significant year-to-year revenue fluctuations. In 2022 and 2023, revenue even exceeded the company's targets. This indicates that demand for the company's services and operational activities during that period were quite strong. However, this changed in 2024, when revenue only reached 100.65 billion rupiah, significantly lower than the target of 142.83 billion rupiah. This significant decline indicates challenges impacting the company's performance, both in terms of new customer acquisition and the sustainability of sales to existing customers.

When comparing revenue performance with the active and repeat customer data in the previous table, a discrepancy emerges that warrants careful attention. Although the

repurchase rate shows an upward trend, from 56.76% in 2023 to 63.80% in 2024, the number of active customers actually decreased from 221 in 2023 to 205 in 2024. This indicates that some customers continue to repeat purchases, but the overall customer base has decreased. This means the company still has the ability to retain some customers, but has not been successful enough to consistently retain its entire customer base.

Furthermore, when looking at consistent customer data for three consecutive years, only 99 customers consistently made repeat purchases, with a consistent repurchase rate of 44.59%. This finding reinforces the indication that customer loyalty remains a critical issue that requires serious attention. The decline in the number of active customers and the low level of consistent long-term purchases have the potential to directly impact revenue achievement, as was the case in 2024.

From a relationship marketing perspective, this situation indicates that the quality of the relationship between the company and its customers may not be optimal. Aspects such as trust, relationship commitment, communication, and conflict management are thought to be insufficient to foster long-term customer engagement. Morgan & Hunt (1994) emphasized that strong relationship quality is the primary foundation for repurchase intention. When these relationship dimensions are not well-developed, customers tend to engage in transactional behavior, easily switch service providers, and lack commitment to maintaining long-term relationships.

Furthermore, service marketing literature explains that repurchase intention is a crucial indicator of the success of service companies, particularly B2B companies like PT Surveyor Indonesia, which rely heavily on long-term relationships with corporate clients. According to Zeithaml, Bitner & Gremler (2018), successful customer retention can reduce marketing costs, increase revenue stability, and strengthen competitive advantage. Therefore, the decline in revenue in 2024 and the decline in the number of active customers are signals that customer relationship strategies are not yet optimal.

Thus, the company's declining revenue data and unstable active customer data provide a crucial basis for research into the influence of relationship marketing on repurchase intention at PT Surveyor Indonesia, Batam Branch. This research aims to gain an empirical understanding of how the quality of relationships with customers can influence their repurchase intentions, as well as provide input for the company in formulating more effective strategies for increasing customer loyalty.

2. Research Methods

A quantitative approach with an explanatory research strategy was chosen as the methodological framework for this study. This method was chosen based on the goal of not simply describing phenomena but also actively validating hypotheses and examining the causal relationships between variables, namely relationship marketing, regulation, and

repurchase intention. Empirical data collected in the field were used to verify the relevance of existing theories in this specific context.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. The Influence of Relationship Marketing on Repurchase Intention

The first hypothesis test confirmed that relationship marketing has a positive and significant impact on the repurchase intention of customers of PT Surveyor Indonesia, Batam Branch, with a path coefficient value of 0.372 and P values of 0.019. This figure means: the better the quality of the relationship the company builds with its customers based on trust, commitment, communication, and conflict management, the stronger the tendency of customers to use the same service in the following period.

This finding is in line with the commitment-trust framework proposed by Morgan and Hunt (1994). In this theory, trust and commitment are seen as the main elements that bridge various relationship marketing factors towards the formation of loyalty and customer tendencies to make repeat purchases. In the context of PT Surveyor Indonesia, customer trust is formed through consistency of service, clarity of communication, and the company's ability to handle problems professionally as reflected in the high average values of indicators X1.1 (mean = 4.67) and X1.2 (mean = 4.56).

These results are also in line with Ndubisi (2007) who confirmed that relationship marketing dimensions significantly influence customer loyalty in the service industry. In a more specific B2B context, Kim, Han, and Lee (2001) found that relationship quality built through trust and communication can create stronger commitment and encourage repeat purchases. Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, and Gremler (2002) added that relational benefits such as trust and social interaction play an important role in strengthening repeat purchase intentions in the service industry.

The path coefficient value of 0.372 reflects a moderate but still significant influence. In the high-trust and high-compliance certification industry, relationship quality plays a very strategic role. Customers cannot evaluate service quality directly before using it, so trust and reputation become the main basis for purchasing decisions (Zeithaml, Bitner, & Gremler, 2018). Therefore, strengthening relationship marketing through more active post-service communication, a more responsive approach to specific customer needs, and increased responsiveness in responding to complaints can be an effective strategy to strengthen long-term relationships with customers.

3.2. The Influence of Regulation on Repurchase Intention

The second hypothesis confirmed that regulations have a positive and significant effect on repurchase intention, with a path coefficient of 0.377 and a P value of 0.001. This means that regulatory obligations requiring companies to undergo periodic certification and

inspections are indeed one of the main drivers why customers of PT Surveyor Indonesia, Batam Branch, return to the same service.

This finding aligns with Scott's (2008) institutional theory framework, which views regulation not merely as formal rules but as a mechanism that actively shapes organizational behavior, including the decision to continue using the services of a particular party. North (1990) adds another relevant dimension: consistent and predictable rules can reduce uncertainty, fostering long-term collaboration between an organization and its business partners. In the case of PT Surveyor Indonesia, this logic is quite clear. Regulations such as Government Regulation No. 50 of 2012 concerning Occupational Health and Safety Management System (SMK3) and various ISO standards position the company as a verification agency whose presence is not optional; clients do not choose to use its services simply because of preference, but because they are legally required to do so.

Empirically, Prajogo, Tang, & Lai (2012) demonstrated that compliance with quality and safety regulations encourages companies to routinely engage with external certification bodies. Tammilehto (2019) emphasized a similar point: as long as companies are required to meet regulatory operational standards, demand for verification services will persist. This research reinforces these findings while also providing a more specific context, namely the state-owned enterprise services industry in Indonesia, which has been relatively underrepresented in similar literature.

3.3. The Moderating Role of Regulation in the Relationship Between Relationship Marketing and Repurchase Intention

The third hypothesis was not supported. Regulation was not shown to moderate the relationship between relationship marketing and repurchase intention, with a path coefficient of only -0.061, a T statistic of 0.868, and a P value of 0.386, far from the significance threshold. In other words, the presence or absence of regulatory pressure does not change how strongly relationship marketing influences customers' intention to reuse the service.

This finding aligns with Jessica's (2024) findings, which show that moderating variables don't always work as hypothesized. Context is crucial. Wang, Lin, and Tsai (2021) also found that institutional factors, such as regulations, do not automatically strengthen the influence of relational variables on repurchase intention. What's interesting is not the failure of moderation, but rather what lies behind it.

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) provide a relevant explanation here. When rules are internalized and accepted as normal, they no longer need to be questioned. They lose their power. Regulations are no longer perceived as active variables influencing decisions; they become a natural part of the equation, considered normal. Under such conditions, it's understandable that regulations are unable to change how customers respond to a company's relationship marketing strategies.

Findings from Dwumah et al. (2024) in the Journal of African Business reinforce this reading. In the context of the Ghanaian asset management industry, they found that relationship duration, as an external factor, was unable to moderate the relationship between relationship marketing dimensions and customer loyalty. The pattern is similar: factors external to the core customer-company relationship do not always have enough power to shift the strength of the relationship itself.

So, what appears to be happening at PT Surveyor Indonesia's Batam branch is that customers accustomed to the existing regulatory framework are more likely to consider their direct relationship experiences, such as trust, satisfaction with service, and quality of communication, when deciding whether to return. Under these circumstances, regulations become merely a pre-existing element, not a factor capable of altering the influence of relationship marketing on repurchase intention.

4. Conclusion

From the entire analysis process that has been carried out, this research produces three conclusions that are interrelated but each has its own implications. The first hypothesis was accepted. Relationship marketing was proven to have a positive and significant effect on the repurchase intention of customers of PT Surveyor Indonesia, Batam Branch. This finding is quite consistent with the basic logic that when a company is able to build trust, maintain commitments, communicate effectively, and handle conflicts professionally, customers are less likely to feel the need to seek other alternatives. These results also emphasize the relevance of Morgan and Hunt's (1994) commitment-trust theory in the context of B2B certification services, while also demonstrating that a sustainable relational approach is an effective marketing strategy in the technical services industry with high levels of compliance. The second hypothesis was also accepted, and this is perhaps the most interesting finding worth discussing. Regulation not only significantly influences repurchase intention, but its magnitude even exceeds that of relationship marketing. This suggests that in the certification services industry, regulatory obligations are not merely a backdrop; they are a real driver of repeat purchase behavior. Scott (2008) and North (1990) both view formal regulation as a determinant of economic behavior, and this finding empirically demonstrates that customers are not only motivated to return because they feel comfortable with their service provider, but also because they have little choice but to comply with existing obligations. The third hypothesis was rejected. Regulation was not proven to moderate the relationship between relationship marketing and repurchase intention. The interaction effect between regulation and relationship on repurchase intention was very small and not statistically significant. What can be concluded is that the two variables operate independently, not mutually reinforcingly. Jaworski and Kohli (1993) have warned that external environmental factors do not always play a moderating role in relationship marketing, and this context seems to support this. When regulation becomes commonplace, it no longer interferes with how customers assess and respond to a company's relationship efforts.

5. References

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